

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE, CULTURE & YOUNG PEOPLE**

**COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN  
DATE: 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

### **Darwen Library building work**

The exterior and interior remedial work has been rescheduled for April 2013. This will include the repair and possible replacement of some windows in the atrium area of the library. Disruption to services will be kept to a minimum.

### **Blackburn Central Library building work – cladding project**

The tendering process is now complete and it is hoped that work will start late April/early May 2013, with the first phase being the removal of the link bridge on Northgate.

### **Creative Town Funding Success**

Arts Services have been successful in gaining a funding bid to the Arts Council for £85k to investigate the role arts and creative industries could play in transforming Blackburn town centre; kick-starting it with a 2 year creative programme of artistic events, quality commissioning, experiments and artist development. This will include developing a business plan for a creative industries arts centre and develop annual town centre events to attract visitors and provide a positive profile for Blackburn.

The programme gives the opportunity to feed a strong creative narrative into the Place agenda, and support the wider town centre strategy and development, both through work with residents and as a cultural destination. The activity will take place between June 2013 – December 2015.

### **February Half Term and Easter ‘Off For Fun’**

Young Peoples Services contributed in a variety of ways to provide children and young people across the borough with interesting and creative activities over the February half-term and Easter holidays. Building upon the success and promotions of previous years, the ‘Off for Fun’ brochure, distributed to all the borough’s schools, offered a wide range of indoor and outdoor pursuits.

Term-time provision, including Youth Clubs and Play projects continued to operate over both holidays. In addition, YPS successfully delivered a varied programme for 9-16 year olds in the three neighbourhood areas at Shadsworth Leisure Centre, Darwen Youth Centre and Livesey Children’s & All Age Centre. Young people enjoyed participating in a range of sports, team games and arts and crafts, as well as in some of the more adventurous, positive activities on offer.

The Positive Activities' programme was available at a small charge and was, as usual, very popular and well subscribed. Places were offered on a first come first served basis to ensure fair access and opportunity for all who were interested, and participants were keen to try out new skills in activities such as archery, road cycling, keelboating and barge cruising. There were also two barge residentials along the Leeds/Liverpool canal over the Easter holiday, one for 9-12 year olds and the other for 13-16 year olds, as well as power boating sessions on the River Wyre and Fleetwood Channel for 13-19 year olds. Queen's Park Water Recreation Centre opened for the Easter holiday, with regular water sport sessions held for 5-8, 9-12 and 13-16 year olds. Easter also saw off road cycling offered in suitable locations such as Gisburn Forest, depending on the ability of each group. A particular highlight of the Easter holiday programme was the 'Dig It' – night of music for 18 year olds and under held at Blakey's Bar.

Once again successful programmes of activities were delivered during both holidays for children and young people with various physical, learning and behavioural difficulties. They were well attended and parents and children were enthusiastic and keen for more! The programmes were based at Kaleidoscope Youth Centre, where participants made excellent use of the multi-sensory room designed especially for them. There were also outings for swimming, barge trips and bowling, and the February half term week ended with a very popular and successful residential at Kentmere in the Lake District.

### **Youth Elections**

Young people voted for a Youth MP and two Deputy MPs in the run-up to the February half-term holiday, with counting taking place on Monday 18th February 2013. Turnout was 40.7% with 6,106 votes cast; this was a 10% increase in turnout over last year. Duly elected as Youth MP was Harry Bithel, with Jess Slater as First Deputy and Sam Leather as Second Deputy. The Leader of the Council, Kate Hollern, requested that the service establish a shadow Exec Board allocating a portfolio to each of the young people who stood for election.

### **Witton Park**

The Council's Planning committee has approved the planning application for the new £2m athletics and leisure scheme for Witton Park, which will be located adjacent to the main car park and alongside the existing outdoor 6 lane athletics track. The scheme will provide an indoor 60m, 6 lane sprint track with a 20m run off. An indoor throwing cage will also be installed to enable indoor training for javelin, hammer and discuss. The scheme will also provide a 45 station fitness suite along with a multi-purpose room / aerobic studio. The outdoor athletics track will also be refurbished and a 100m sprint track will be laid in front of the new spectator area. The scheme is currently out to tender and based on the current programme, we expect to start construction in May 2013 with the scheme due for completion in January 2014.