

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

CLLR JAN-VIRMANI

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: SAYYED OSMAN  
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### **Griffin Regeneration Area**

We have purchased 156 properties from the 165 properties identified for clearance. There are 9 properties remaining to be purchased in the clearance area. Negotiations are ongoing with owners to purchase these properties once residents have been re-housed.

Asbestos surveys have been completed on 1-33 Norman Street and the tender process to select a demolition contractor is underway. Demolition is planned to be completed in the next few months.

### **Empty Properties**

**Homes Communities Agency First Round** – To date around 191 owners have registered their interest in the scheme. We are progressing applications with our partner TVH. 6 properties have been purchased by TVH and a further 2 awaiting completion, 1 lease has been completed.

**Cluster Bid** –The transfer of 14 properties on Queen Street to Twin Valley Homes have been concluded. The heads of terms for 16 /17 Green Street East have also been agreed and the transfer is being processed by legal services.

**Empty properties CPO'd by the Council** – Four properties have previously been agreed for sale. A further two properties have sales agreed, 109 Infirmary Street Blackburn and 76 Hancock Street, completion of refurbishment on both of these properties is anticipated by March 2014.

**Shorey Bank, Darwen (Keepmoat consortium)** - Negotiations are underway to finalise the heads of terms for the Development Agreement and the Care Contract. Keepmoat have completed site investigations and are waiting on results prior to finalising development plans and engaging with the planning process.

**Orchard Grove, Darwen (TVH)** – To date 73 homes have been completed of which 47 are occupied with the remaining 26 being available for purchase. 22 homes are being constructed in Phase 3 of the development and the whole scheme is planned to be completed by March 2014.

**Pearl Street & Gretna Walk** - Demolition work on the former Brookside site is now complete and contractors began work on site in August. The development is planned to complete in March 2014.

**North Road, Blackburn (Great Places)** – The utility service works have been completed and development work has started on site. The appointed contractor for the development is Harbur Construction and completion is now planned for June 2014.

**The Royals (David Wilson Homes)** – the development continues to progress satisfactorily and is planned to complete in June 2016.

**Moorgate Mill** – Plans to develop 20 one bedroomed apartments to provide housing for people with physical and learning disabilities are progressing well, access roads and foundations are now completed. The scheme is planned to complete in March 2014.

**Affordable Homes Guarantee Programme** - The Council has supported our preferred partner RPs, The Together Housing Group (TVH) and Great Places Housing Group, to secure Affordable Homes funding from the HCA. This will fund the building of 139 additional new affordable homes within the borough.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICES**

The One Stop Shop and Contact Centre have continued to deal with increased customer contact particularly in respect of Council Tax and Benefits. As at the end of September the Contact Centre had received a 48% increase in calls compared to the same period last year, coupled with this increase, the service has also seen longer average call times.

### **PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE**

#### **FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT**

The Public Protection Service has begun its round of inspection visits to retailers storing and selling fireworks as bonfire night approaches. Officers carry out joint visits with officers from Lancashire Fire and Rescue to ensure that fireworks are stored legally, and that fire precautions are being observed. Compliance with this legislation in recent years has been good, with any contraventions being dealt with at the time of visit, so a risk-based approach is being adopted when selecting visits.

In addition, an intelligence-led test purchasing operation will be carried out on the run-up to bonfire night, using information received by the Council and enforcement partners regarding alleged under age sales of fireworks. The PPS is working closely with Lancashire Fire and Rescue, the Police and other Council departments to maximise the effectiveness of its enforcement activity in this respect.

#### **CHANGES TO THE PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE**

With the retirement of Chris Allen at the end of September 2013, Tony Watson has taken over as Head of Environment and Public Protection, with Gary Johnston taking over as Service Manager. The Housing Standards enforcement team now sits in Public Protection, enabling the various enforcement officers within the constituent teams to work more closely together.