

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE LEISURE AND YOUNG PEOPLE**COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT****PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
DATE: 24-4-14****LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE - LAUNCH OF A NEW SUPPORT SERVICE FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS**

From 1st April the public library service now offers a support and advisory service to local primary schools to assist them with the provision of their school libraries. This is a pilot service and aims to provide support on selecting and managing stock, setting up an effective library, automation of the school library, skills training, as well as literacy initiatives all aimed at key stages 1 and 2.

CENTRAL LIBRARY EXTERIOR RESTORATION

The cladding work on the Northgate elevation is almost complete and the Northgate entrance will shortly reopen. The removal of cladding has already started on the Town Hall Street elevation. Work is progressing well.

KING GEORGES HALL

KGH Promotions Section Q4 has seen a varied portfolio of events held at KGH ranging from Opera and Ballet to American wrestling, stand-up comedy, Club Nights, Tribute bands and classical music.

Good attendances and secondary spend were achieved for both the Club Tropicana club night and Utopia Club night, and the 'Soul Night Out' continues to attract circa 800 ticket sales.

King Georges monthly comedy club continues to expand and now regularly sells out to the increased capacity of 190, up from 150. School proms, weddings and evening dinners are all being targeted as areas of growth for KGH. As well as 2 Masons dinners, and the Annual Mayors ball The Fusion dinner awards are being held in the Concert Hall along with a Veterans dinners, and the Queens Maundy Service lunch.

Work has recently been completed on a new kitchen facility with new floor burners having been installed. This should attract in particular an increased number of weddings.

Contracts are at the negotiation stage for several high-profile acts to visit KGH over the next 2 quarters. Names to be released asap.

KGH BARS & CATERING SECTION

Blakey's Bar and catering income figures are good with bar sales exceeding target by £30K and food sales exceeding target by £38K.

Blakey's continues to serve the town centre well offering increasingly good value for money. Quality of food has increased greatly due to the hard work of the new Head chef and his team.

Pre-concert dinners continue to do well. 20% of the audience attending the Russian State Opera dined in Blakey's before-hand.

Reidy's held its talent night heats in Blakey's during Q4 for the second year running with the final being held in the Windsor suite. A good number of bands and soloist have competed and the standard is again good.

A local scooter club held a charity night in Blakey's and managed to attract over 400 people to the event.

Work has begun on new menus for Blakey's. Effort has been directed into achieving healthier options so that we can achieve the Recipe for Health Gold Standard Award, a new government initiative.

INDOOR BMX/SKATE FACILITY

The tender process for construction of the new BMX / Skate Park at Blackburn Rovers Sports Arena is currently underway. A number of companies specialising in the construction of such facilities have submitted completed tenders to the department for evaluation. Award of the tender will take place late-April, with construction of the park on schedule to be completed in summer 2014.

Consultation regarding the selection of a name for the facility has taken place; suggestions came in via social media (YPS Facebook and 'Indoor Ramp Park Blackburn' Facebook page), local BMX riders and skateboarders (via the local BMX/Skate shop) and the parenting group who brought the initial petition for a skate park facility to the Council. The names have now been shortlisted and selection of the final name is currently in the final stages of consultation and will be formally decided and announced in early April.

NEW LEISURE CENTRE - BLACKBURN

Construction work is on programme and budget. The steelwork for the sports halls is now complete and the steel beams are going up over the pool halls. Excavation of the pool balance tanks has started with the main tanks programmed to be dug out in May/June. Staff from both partners are now working together on the operational systems and programme for the new centre. The Sports halls will be open for curriculum use in September 2014 with the whole building completed in Spring 2015.

WITTON PARK ARENA

The new facility is entering the final stages of completion ready for opening at the end of April. The UK Athletics approved indoor sprint track is already down; this will provide an excellent, year round training venue for Blackburn Harriers, the wider community as well as for performance athletes. Witton Park Arena will also offer a fantastic aerobics studio and 45 station fitness gym, overlooking the country park. The fitness class programme is designed to maximise the building's setting in Witton Park with both traditional classes alongside outdoor 'bootcamp' and endurance sessions.

In addition to the Council's investment, external funding has been secured from both England Athletics and Sport England which will enable further external improvements to the track and a new LED floodlighting scheme. Both of which will start late spring and with the new building will create a fantastic new athletics and leisure facility in the Witton Park.

WELLBEING SERVICE

The Council's Wellbeing Service was launched on 7th April. The new service joins up all the Council services that support health and wellbeing and will make them available via a single point of access; one phone number, one email address, one website and for partners and stakeholders, including GPs one referral form. As a Council, we have a whole range of these services that sit in different departments, have different contact numbers, different referral forms and each has to be accessed separately as they don't really work together. The new service changes all that, making it easier and simpler for citizens to access effective, high quality support help them make changes and lead healthier lives. The service will go beyond looking at single healthy lifestyle issues and instead focus on the whole person. The Wellbeing Service goes beyond traditional health services like weight management, stop smoking and exercise programmes and includes wider issues that are known to affect people's health such as housing conditions, employment and financial worries.

Everyone can benefit from the Wellbeing Service, but it will be especially targeted at people who are considered to be at 'moderate risk' of developing a long term condition. The aim is to intervene at an early stage and support people to make positive changes that will prevent their problems from escalating to a crisis point where they need specialist help. The wellbeing service will be delivered by a team of health trainers, who have specialist knowledge and will be able to carry out assessments and connect people with the right services to provide advice or practical help. By making it easier for people to take better care of themselves now, we will be helping to improve their chances of good health in the future.