

**BUDGET/YOUR CALL**

More and more people in the borough are displaying the Your Call attitude which is pleasing considering the tough times we are facing.

The government's continuing unfair budget cuts to local public services, its cuts to benefits, spun as welfare reform, which are hitting the most vulnerable and the cost of living crisis means many families in this borough are facing hardship.

The tough times are going to get harder with the Council expecting another huge hit to its budget. This will once again have a big impact on the services we provide to the public.

But despite the challenges, there are a lot of things for the borough to be positive about.

Residents are working with us to make the area a better place. Examples include the brilliant work of Rick Wilson who set up a running club at Witton Park.

Rick embodies the Your Call spirit. His work has helped hundreds of people get fit and healthy and he did it all on his own.

I am always happy to give support to people who have an attitude that says we can do something here to make things better. I passionately believe many problems in the community can be solved by members of the community and I believe it's the Council's role to help support them to do it themselves and foster that can-do attitude.

Supporting Your Call and working with residents is just one of the ways we can meet this difficult budget challenge. The Council needs to change and we need to look at new ways of working. I am very keen that the Council embraces new technology and fully support moves for us to become digital by default. For example, social media can help us talk to residents more efficiently and effectively and that is why I have set up an Ask Kate Facebook page. I want residents to use it to ask me questions or raise issues that are important to them and their family. I will be challenging everyone in the Council to think how we can use these new platforms.

**PAT ON THE BACK AWARDS**

I was really honoured to help host the Pat on the Back Awards at Blackburn College and to present the worthy winners with their awards.

Pat on the Back, organised on behalf of Blackburn with Darwen's Local Public Service Board, was set-up to recognise the people who contribute to the borough and strive to make the area a better place to live.

Winners included a team established to tackle burglary in the borough and a football team that encourages people with disabilities.

The judging panels were humbled to see the sheer amount of nominations which have highlighted the excellent work, dedication and tenacity that people have shown working across the public and voluntary sector.

There is little chance to reward the hard-work of people who work in these sectors. This is why our Local Public Service Board felt it important to continue these awards as a way of recognising and honouring the people who make a difference in our wonderful Borough.

All of the people and teams that were nominated should be extremely proud of themselves.

## **FIRST WORLD WAR COMMEMORATIONS**

Work is continuing on plans to mark the centenary of World War One.

As you may have seen, we have published the first edition of the World War One e-newsletter called Lest We Forget to keep people updated on plans, events and projects as they progress.

A working group of officers and residents has been set up which will help co-ordinate activity in the borough.

The newsletter will go out regularly over the period of the commemorations.

I am also pleased to say that the first Your Call grants have gone out to community groups to put on events in their neighbourhoods.

I will provide regular updates on plans and projects to fellow members on a regular basis.

## **LANCASHIRE GROWTH DEAL**

The Lancashire LEPs Strategic Economic Plan was submitted to the Government in March this year. Members will recall that the Strategic Economic Plan will be used as a basis to access funding through a Growth Deal with the Government.

In the submission the LEP identified a six year investment programme seeking £380m with a requirement of around £115m in 2015/16. However, given the demand for funding from all the LEPs, Ministers asked us to revisit our plan and reduce our 'ask'. After a review exercise we are now seeking £215.8m with £45.9m in 2015/15.

Obviously this is very disappointing for some of our partners whose projects will not be funded through the Growth Deal and with support from our local MPs we will continue to press the Government to ensure we secure the funding for our revised plans. We are facing unprecedented cuts in Lancashire compared to areas in the South of England and with the Growth Deal potentially being our only source of investment, it's critical that the Government respond positively to our infrastructure and development plans if we are to attempt to bridge the gap between prosperity in the North and South.

### **REGENERATE PENNINE LANCASHIRE**

Regenerate continues to play a crucial role both in Pennine Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen in delivering business support. Over the last 12 months the company has exceeded its job creation target with 1256 new jobs and 553 jobs safeguarded. 423 jobs have been created in Blackburn with Darwen, 253 new businesses started, 129 businesses supported and almost £1.5m private sector investment levered into the borough.