

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE, CULTURE AND YOUNG PEOPLE

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE

- **Launch of an ebook service**

The ebook and eaudio book service was launched from 9 June 2014. Library customers can choose up to 4 titles to download from a starter collection of approximately 500 eBooks and a smaller collection of eAudio titles. This free service offers improved remote access to digital library services.

- **Central Library Exterior Restoration**

The Town Hall Street entrance is now closed and access to the building is via the Northgate entrance. The cladding along Town Hall Street has been removed and scaffolding has been erected so that the restoration of the masonry can begin.

PUBLIC HALLS

KING GEORGE'S HALL

The Civic Maundy Recipients' Lunch was the starring event in April. Over 400 people enjoyed the spectacular surroundings of KGH's main concert hall, which was dressed to match the occasion. The food, service, music and staff all received high praise from those attending and it was a fitting way to finish off such a great day for Blackburn with Darwen. The first few months on 2014/15 have been busy: Over an 8-week period KGH hosted Blackburn College's degree and A-level exams; the Mayor's Ball was another success as were the final 2 concerts in the Blackburn Classics season which took place in this period. It was the highest attended Classics series in recent years. Blakey's has been supporting the local town centre landlord initiative 'Friday Night Live' where alongside other neighbouring venues regular, free music events are hosted with the aim of rejuvenating the night time economy.

DARWEN LIBRARY THEATRE

DLT continues to present a varied programme of entertainment with concerts by Billy Pearce, Tom Hingley Band, Vice Squad and the Darwen Mayor's Command Performance. In addition to the professional shows, the venue is also a popular destination for community events such as the monthly 'Afternoon Variety show' and the Film season which continue to attract good houses. The Theatre is also the base for the DLT Reading Group and the Youth Theatre.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Blackburn with Darwen Healthy Lifestyles team, in conjunction with Public Health have been successful in securing £53k of funding from MacMillan for a new Pennine Lancashire Physical Activity Co-ordinator, hosted by Blackburn with Darwen BC. The evidence base for physical activity and cancer rehabilitation is strong and studies have demonstrated that it can have positive effects on health and well-being, quality of life as well as fewer interventions with clinical services. Using this evidence the role will develop and deliver a Breast Cancer pathway for physical activity; working with a range of multidisciplinary partners to recruit and refer patients with breast cancer to their local cancer exercise team across Pennine Lancashire.

BLACKBURN MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Blackburn Museum - 7 June until 15 November 2014 - Their Story, Our Story: Responses to Blackburn and Darwen in the Great War.

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery is collaborating with students of Contemporary Textiles, Fashion and Interiors at University Centre at Blackburn College to produce an exhibition on themes of Conflict, Change and Memory in relation to local experiences of the First World War. The exhibition, the first in what will be a four year programme of events and activities around the centenary of World War One, will showcase new work by the undergraduate students alongside artefacts from the museum collection. Visitors will be encouraged to connect with stories told through personal objects left behind from those affected by this world changing conflict. They will also engage with the processes of the artists and designers in creating their responses to the local experience of war.

TURTON TOWER

Since opening to the public on 8 March the Tower has seen an increase in visitor numbers. Paying visits through the door, organised visits, school groups and events are all contributing to the good figures so far. The growing use of the building will help to ensure the long term survival of this Grade 1 listed building.

ARTS SERVICES

Blackburn is Open - Blackburn is Open is gathering momentum after opening in January, we have worked with over 40 groups and individuals and as well as support on creative businesses. Alongside this there is a range of events and activities which are happening across the town centre.

First Thursdays are on the first Thursday of every month and are a series of arts and cultural activities in different venues across the town. Liz and Lil's host a monthly art and craft market opening until 8 serving food with live music. Rebound bookshop have hosted music and spoken word events, film showings and talks in the museum and Blackburn Peoples Choir opening up Holy Trinity Church. In July it will feature Blackburn College Degree Show and awards ceremony and in August family theatre and arts workshops. More information is available on www.blackburnisopen.co.uk

INDOOR BMX/SKATE FACILITY

The tender process for construction of the new BMX / Skate Park at Blackburn Rovers Sports Arena has been approved and a letter of intent has been issued to the contractor while awaiting the contract to be finalised. A number of companies specialising in the construction of such facilities submitted completed tenders to the department for evaluation. Construction of the park is on schedule and will 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 were shortlisted and Junction4 Skate Park was the preferred name. The Skate Park Manager has been appointed and recruitment for the Skate Park Officer post is currently underway. Junction4 will have social media presence with Twitter and Facebook launching in early June.

NEW LEISURE CENTRE - BLACKBURN

Construction work is on programme and budget. The steel work is now complete and the roof is well underway. The concrete for the pool tanks is now being poured. Work has now started on the sports hall floor and the services fit out. 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.

YOUNG PEOPLE`S SERVICE (YPS)

Youth Elections

The annual youth elections took place week commencing Monday 10th March, the YPS participation team worked with the seven candidates to design and produce individual posters, personal manifestos and recorded their own campaign speeches. A total of 7422 votes were recorded. Harry Kay (Whitehall ward) was elected as Youth MP, Abdul Zafar, (Beardwood with Lammack ward) and Khatheja Asif (Wensley Fold ward) were elected as deputies. The remaining candidates who stood for election and other interested young people have joined the three Youth MPs to establish a Youth Shadow Executive Board. Over the next few weeks, the group will meet with their Executive Board counterparts to discuss ways in which young people can contribute, represent young people's views and influenced decision making processes.

Off for Fun – Easter Holidays

The Off for Fun Easter Programme ran from Monday 7th April – Thursday 17th April and the Spring Bank offer operated from Tuesday 27th May – Sunday 1st June. A wide variety of activities took place across the Borough, for all age ranges from 5 – 19 years. Activities included:

- Play/Youth projects – every afternoon at leisure centres and community centres.
- MUGAs – every evening at six venues across the borough (2 in each neighbourhood area).

- Programme of Positive Activities – including: Barge and Activity residentials, powerboating, sailing and water fun sessions at Queens Park.

The Leisure Inclusion team also offered full and half day provision for Children with Disabilities at Kaleidoscope Youth Centre. Activities included dance & movement, cooking, Easter arts & crafts, boccia (Paralympic Sport similar to Crown Green bowling played in Sports Halls) and sensory activities. All other generic youth provision continued to operate across the borough for the duration of the holiday period.

DARWEN LEISURE CENTRE

The excellent facility mix at Darwen continues to attract high casual usage and membership sales. Figures for May show that sales have stayed strong into the first quarter of 2014-15 keeping total membership numbers around 2,300. This has been supported by improved service levels combined with several successful promotion's and the vibrant group fitness programme with over 60 classes per week. The borough's 8-lane competition pool at Darwen has also become the venue for many events not only do local swimming clubs, schools and volunteer groups such as Brownies and Guides use the centre to hold their galas but the quality facilities also attract competition bookings from outside the borough including a regional University Gala coming up in November. The annual Aquathon which took place on the 18th May 2014 which was a huge success in raising money for local charities. and the annual tri-athlon on Sunday 22nd June 2014 not only attracts entries from many of our local residents in Blackburn with Darwen but also from further afield. Both are establishing themselves in the multi-event calendar.