

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

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING

DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN

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BLACKBURN SPORTS & LEISURE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

The work on the new centre is progressing well with only minor delays and completion is expected March. The Sports Halls have been in use by the college since September and community groups from November. The first floor facilities – the gym and aerobics studio are almost complete with final flooring finishes and decoration underway. Tiling to both pool tanks is complete and the main pool has received its 25m length certification. Most of the lockers and cubicles have now been installed. The commissioning of the plant, testing the flumes and building systems will take place over the last couple of months of the building contract.

WITTON PARK ARENA ATHLETICS TRACK

The newly refurbished athletics track has re-opened following an upgrade to the facility which was funded by a Sport England Inspired Facilities grant of £150,000 and £170,000 from the Council. The track has been re-surfaced and extended to eight lanes in front of the new spectator area at Witton Park Arena. Upgrades have also been added to the long jump pits and runways and a fantastic new throws cage for hammer and discus has also been installed too. To complete the external works a new LED floodlight scheme, fully funded by Sport England is also now operating. Witton Park Arena is the first athletics track in the UK to have LED floodlights installed and will be used as a pilot for Sport England to monitor energy efficiencies generated.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE

Public Consultation

A 12 week public consultation period began on 6 January 2015 to scope the future delivery of services at Livesey, Mill Hill and Roman Road community branch libraries. A series of public consultation meetings have been held to gather views and to see if there is any interest from individuals or community groups in supporting the running of the libraries. Outcomes from the public consultation activities will help to shape the future library service offer.

YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES

Youth MP Visit to Houses of Parliament

In November 2014, Harry Kay, the Youth MP for Blackburn with Darwen joined 285 Members of the UK Youth Parliament in a debate at the House of Commons, chaired by the Speaker Rt Hon John Bercow MP. The Youth MP's debated the top 5 issues chosen by 865,000 young people across UK through the 'Make Your Mark' Campaign. The top 5 topics were; Votes at 16; Living Wage; Mental Health & Young People; Work Experience and Exam Results.

Take Over Day

On Friday 21st November, as part of National Takeover Day, 75 young people from various secondary schools, colleges, youth clubs “took over” Blackburn with Darwen Council. The morning session held at Blackburn Youth Zone, allowed young people to work in groups supported by Executive Members to understand the Council’s budgets and consider allocation of resources. In the afternoon, the groups gathered in the Council Chamber to bring their ideas together and take part in a debate, ultimately deciding a Council budget from their perspectives. The meeting was chaired by Youth MP Harry Kay, Deputy Youth MP Katheja Asif, supported by the Leader of the Council.

Junction 4 Skate Park

Junction4 Skate Park now has a total of 2336 likes on the Facebook page alone and has registered a total of 656 members since opening in September 2014. In order to increased membership further, we offered free taster sessions over the Christmas period, which is normally a quiet time for skate parks. The sessions were offered from 27th - 31st December and were a resounding success. In the 5 day period a total of 481 people participated, the ages ranged from 5 years to young adults (18+). The Park reached its maximum capacity in 7 of the sessions and some people travelled from the very outer regions of the northwest to participate, it has enabled the park to hit the ground running in 2015!

VENUES – (KING GEORGE’S HALL & DARWEN LIBRARY THEATRE)

King George’s Hall

A tremendous amount of work has gone in to re-establishing KGH on the rock’n’pop touring circuit. Successful gigs in this quarter included The Courteeners, Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott, Happy Mondays, Funeral For A Friend, Heaven 17, Blancmange, Wheatus, Spear of Destiny, Steve Strange, Wedding Present, Young Rebel Set, and the Clone Roses. This period saw the opening of the 2014/15 Blackburn Classics Season with well-attended concerts performed by the BBC Philharmonic and the Halle Orchestras. Season ticket sales have risen for the first time in five years.

Family entertainment came in the form of Peppa Pig, Milkshake, and our Christmas Pantomime Snow White. Wider activities with KGH included the successful return of professional boxing to Blackburn, the Premiere of the Universal Picture ‘Northern Soul’ which was filmed here at KGH in 2012; screened to a star-studded audience which included several members of the cast. The Christmas period was particularly busy for Blakey’s hosting numerous private events including Christmas party nights, Christmas lunches, birthdays, christenings and a wedding.

DARWEN LIBRARY THEATRE

Concert highlights included the Searchers, Lindisfarne, Martin Stephenson, the Houghton Weavers and Andy Fairweather Low. We hosted the 5th Annual Darwen Jazz Festival, headlined by Shakatak. National Theatre productions are now beamed live to DLT their productions of ‘Frankenstein’ and ‘John’ shown live. Comedy star Dave Spikey performed two sell-out ‘gigs, warming up for his forthcoming UK tour.