

## **HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

As members will be aware, last month I shared our position and thoughts on the Refugee and Humanitarian crisis facing the Middle East and North Africa region, notably the situation in Syria. We recognise the significant on-going humanitarian crisis that the people of Syria are living with and the dilemma and challenge this poses Europe.

The position, at present, is still the same. We cannot act autonomously to declare space or numbers. Equally we cannot contemplate what level of service support, accommodation, care and community help we need or can offer. We are working with the Regional Asylum and Refugee Resettlement Partnership, led by Manchester, and in liaison with the Home Office.

It is important to remind colleagues that this council has worked with the Home Office and been a designated dispersal area since 2000 when we supported refugees from Bosnia. Up and till last year we were the only Lancashire authority who was prepared to make this commitment and we provide support and help for 350 Asylum Seekers at any given time.

As I said in my note, we will continue to show compassion and leadership to act responsibly on all matters relating to relieving the suffering of these people, whether families, individuals or children.

## **LANCASHIRE GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Members will be aware that over the last nine months the Lancashire local authorities have been exploring governance options for the area and, having agreed that a more formal governance structure is needed, we have undertaken a statutory Governance Review. This has concluded that a Combined Authority provides the best opportunity for Lancashire to achieve its potential. A 'scheme' is being developed which will outline the governance and decision making arrangements of a Combined Authority.

Whilst, it has taken some time to get to this point, given the complex local government arrangements in Lancashire, we wanted to ensure that all governance options were considered and that proposals were well thought through and robust.

Members will have an opportunity to discuss, shape and influence the emerging combined authority proposals at a forthcoming all member cross party workshop.

All of the 15 councils in Lancashire will be taking the initial decision whether to join a combined authority to their relevant council meetings in November and December. Those authorities that wish to continue developing proposals will then partake in a public consultation exercise in January 2016.

## **FUTURE OF YOUR CALL**

Your Call has come a long way since it was launched in 2011. It has been an extremely successful programme and more than 20,000 people have taken part in activities to improve the borough. In 2013/2014, we had ten times more Your Call events that we did in the previous year.

At Executive Board and at the Good Neighbours Awards and Your Call celebration, I outlined some key measures to build on the success of Your Call. The measures are not intended to overhaul the programme which has been very successful. They are intended to build on that success while making sure the campaign is driven more by elected members.

With elected members at the heart of the programme, Your Call will offer a series of commitments made between the residents, businesses, the community and the Council to support each other to make improvements in their area. These improvements will be linked to three key priority areas; themes we want residents and members to champion.

They are:

- Improvements to make Blackburn with Darwen cleaner and greener
- Improvements to health and wellbeing
- Improving community togetherness and belonging/neighbourliness

By focusing on three key priority areas Your Call will be targeted enough to make a difference and at the same time be aligned to key Council priority areas.

I have tasked officers to set up sessions for members to see what support is available for them to drive Your Call.

## **GOOD NEIGHBOURS AWARDS AND YOUR CALL CELEBRATION**

This year's good Neighbours Awards and Your Call celebration have again been a huge success. More than 100 residents gathered at King George's Hall for the celebration. The awards and celebration were made possible thanks to the partnership of Blackburn with Darwen Clinical Commissioning Group, Capita, Blackburn Rovers and the Lancashire Telegraph.

The main winners were: Joyce Kearton, of Blackburn ; Joyce Baron, of Darwen ; Paul Green, of Blackburn ; Samiya Dalal, of Blackburn ; Janice O'Malley, of Blackburn ; John McCaughran, of Darwen ; Suleman Ismail, of Blackburn ; Angela Dickinson, of Blackburn ; Maria Kiss, of Blackburn

I am sure all members will join me in thanking all the good neighbours and Your Call volunteers.

We will soon start making preparations for next year's Good Neighbours Awards which businesses and partners have already expressed an interest in sponsoring. I hope all members will put forward residents in their wards when nominations open later in the year.

## **COINS**

As you will be aware, this month, Queen Elizabeth II became the longest reigning monarch in British History. She overtook Queen Victoria who reigned from 1837 to 1901. Our current monarch has now served more than 63 years and 216 days.

To mark the occasion, Blackburn with Darwen Council sent out 200 special commemorative collector medals to all schools, children's centres, the borough's branches of the British Legion, the faith sector and other community institutions.

We thought a small memento to mark such a milestone would be useful in any activities they had planned now and in the future. We took the opportunity to thank these community institutions for the part they play in the community.