

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN**

**3 DECEMBER 2015**

### **YOUR CALL UPDATE**

In September, the Council held two events aimed at highlighting the work of volunteers. Nearly 100 people attended the Your Call Empowering Communities session at King George's Hall. At the event, I told the invited audience about the next steps of the Your Call campaign and made a call to action to build a volunteering army. Other speakers included the Council's Chief Executive, Ian Brown, from Graham and Brown, Ivy Street community stalwart Christine Connell and One Voice's Zaffer Khan.

In the afternoon, at a separate event, the results of the recently undertaken Cinnamon Faith Audit were unveiled. The report revealed that £4m is given in time such as volunteering by Blackburn with Darwen faith groups to local social action projects, positively impacting over 56,000 residents each year. The Cinnamon Network is a not-for-profit organisation helping local churches across the UK to run projects for those people most at need in their communities.

I also want to thank all members who came to the two recent Your Call workshops. The sessions were well attended and I was pleased to see representation from all political parties. The sessions outlined what support was available for members and concluded with facilitated discussions on how we can take Your Call forward. Many good ideas came out of the workshops. I have tasked officers to put together an action plan of achievable projects that will complement work already being done on this agenda. It is important we maintain momentum from all these events.

### **REMEMBRANCE WEEK EVENTS**

This year's Remembrance Week events were very well attended. Particularly pleasing was the support we received from community groups in the borough. Dozens of volunteers from a variety of different groups helped out on Remembrance Sunday and Remembrance Day in both Blackburn and Darwen. Groups included the Couch to 5k runners from Witton Park who helped marshal the parade from town hall to Corporation Park at the Blackburn Remembrance Sunday service. The West End Girls (WEGs), part of One Voice, supported the Friends of Corporation Park to tidy up the area around the war memorial and other jobs. I am sure all members would like to join me in thanking the volunteers who helped the events run smoothly.

## **VIGIL**

We have been all shocked, angered and saddened by the recent terrorist attacks which have claimed the lives of many in recent weeks. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families. We held one minute silences at both Blackburn and Darwen Town Halls and both were very well attended. We also held a vigil to show solidarity with those affected. Speakers at the vigil included Hafiz Abdul Alim Kheratkar, from the Lancashire Council of Mosques, Rev. Canon Dr Shannon Ledbetter, from the Cathedral and Derek Estill, secretary of the Interfaith Forum. The only way we can defeat those who wish to cause division, to cause harm, to inflict terror and spread poisonous ideas is by everyone standing united against them.

## **INTER FAITH WEEK**

To mark the nationally celebrated Inter Faith Week, I was invited to deliver a key note address at the Blackburn with Darwen Interfaith Forum's annual review. The event took place here in the Council Chamber and more than 50 people attended. The evening was an informative and interactive round-up of last year's activities. I was particularly interested to hear about the work the forum does in schools. As I said in my speech, a united faith sector has a very important role to play in bringing people together. Their work helps build understanding between communities, both religious and non-religious, and breaks down myths that have built up around faiths.