

## **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**

An innovative partnership between the borough's Library and Information Service and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisation, 'Blackburn with Darwen Healthy Living' has begun at Roman Road Library. 'Healthy Living' has recruited volunteers who have undertaken training to help them to deliver day to day library services at Roman Road.

The former mobile library garage has been transformed to provide a community gym and toilet facilities, thus maximising use of Council buildings by sharing space and co-locating services. It is hoped that bringing in this new facility will encourage more use of the library service, whilst at the same time improving health and well-being opportunities in the community.

### **YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE**

This year the Children's Commissioner 'raised the bar' and encouraged organisations to go beyond one off / one day activities to 'Takeover Challenge'. Young People's Services collaborated with SLYNCS (a voluntary organisation for young people) to lead the Takeover Challenge and involved other partners such as The Voice Group and Blackburn Youth Zone. Together the partnership engaged and worked with 40 young people aged 13-19 years over the course of three weeks.

The three week programme resulted in young people being informed of Council's priorities / budget reductions and the potential impact on services. Young people had the chance to develop their own solutions to the issues facing the Council and presented their ideas to a 'Dragons Den' of Executive Members.

The young people were first tasked with developing their own creative and innovative project ideas based on what they and their peers felt was important in Blackburn with Darwen. The young people came to a consensus about the top five issues which were: community cohesion, services for young people, leisure services, transport, cleaner and greener spaces.

On the evening itself, young people were questioned thoroughly about the proposals by the Executive Members and after much deliberation, cleaner and greener spaces and community cohesion were the top two issues that elected members felt could achieve maximum impact. The young people will now be working on key projects around these issues and will report progress to the Executive Board over the coming months.

### **LEISURE SERVICES**

A continued focus on increasing income from membership sales and retention has delivered positive growth in 2015. The opening of Blackburn Sports and Leisure Centre along with membership growth at every other site has contributed to a strong performance in this key area of income generation. Between January and December 2015 total health and fitness membership has increased by 2306.

In 2016, marketing activities will focus on attracting the family market and promoting the 'gym, swim and classes' membership to increase our customer base prior to the opening of the new budget gym in Blackburn in Spring 2016.

### **VENUES – (KING GEORGE'S HALL & DARWEN LIBRARY THEATRE)**

Christmas was a busy time at both KGH and DLT. The 2015 KGH and DLT pantomimes, Aladdin and Sleeping Beauty respectively were a huge success with strong box office sales and record attendances.

Both venues offered a packed Christmas season of events bustling with fun and excitement for all sections of the local community; the Annual Civic Carol Concert, Darwen's Annual Christmas Concert, ska legends Bad Manners played Blackburn as part of their annual Christmas UK Tour, DLT's resident Youth Theatre attracted an audience of circa 400 performing A Christmas Carol, seasonal monthly Afternoon Variety Shows and Comedy Clubs were held at both venues and Blakey's festive lunches were very popular and KGH's Christmas party nights were a sell-out.

### **BLACKBURN MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY**

The Blackburn Artists' Society open exhibition is as popular as ever and remains open until 6 February. This exhibition will be followed by a commemorative exhibition of the work of Stephen Pickles. Stephen Pickles was a senior lecturer in Fine Art at Blackburn College who died in 2013. Stephen worked closely with the Museum on many projects and encouraged the students on his courses to join in. Like many of his predecessors his work is in the permanent collection of the Art Gallery, this exhibition combines these works with works held by the College.

WW1 Narratives of Transformation - this exhibition continues the WW1 commemorations, around the Museum and Gallery which are art works and poems by students from Blackburn College Contemporary Fashion/Textiles/Interiors and the English Literature courses. The works reflect the way WW1 changed contemporary lives.

The Museum's magnificent Columbian printing press has been reassembled and is on display in the Skill and Labour gallery where it makes a very imposing addition to the permanent displays. Reassembly was undertaken with help of printers from the St. Brides Foundation and in partnership with the University of London.