

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

WiFi

Free WiFi, funded from the government's WiFi in Public Libraries Grant, can now be accessed in each of the borough's five libraries.

With many Council services now accessible online this also improves access for residents to digital services. For those who are less confident in the use of online resources, library staff can support and help users to build confidence and develop the skills they need to access services and information on line.

Community Living Room

The aim of the Arts Council England funded project is to tackle social exclusion for those people aged 50+ by optimising the welcoming and accessible spaces which libraries offer and by reaching out to local older people through arts promotion. The project which is now in its 3rd phase was originally delivered at Blackburn, Darwen and Mill Hill libraries, but interest is such that the gardening group sessions have now been extended to Livesey Library.

Celebratory Event

A celebratory event was held on the 2nd April to thank the volunteers for their continued contribution and highlight the extensive arts programme which includes singing, handicraft, gardening sessions and courses on art, photography and film making. The 3rd phase of the project will see the transition from supported arts / crafts programmes to fully volunteer organised sessions.

BLACKBURN SPORTS & LEISURE CENTRE

One year on from the official opening of Blackburn Sports and Leisure Centre, the state-of-art facility celebrated its first birthday on Saturday, 19th and Sunday 20th March between 9am and 5pm to mark the milestone.

There was a strong family feel to the celebrations with Nerf Maze sessions, face painting and balloon modelling all free of charge. There were also free personal training tasters, additional taster classes, gym challenges with prizes for all and gym members were invited to bring a friend along for free.

All pool sessions including the slides were opened up to be free of charge, with members of the public instead asked to make a small donation to take part in a tombola to win swimming goggles and pool toys with all proceeds being donated to East Lancashire Hospice with over £650 raised over the 2 days. Both days were well attended and feedback from all those who came to the centre over the two days has been very positive.

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

Comedy remains popular at both DLT and KGH with monthly comedy clubs and nationally known comedians including Frankie Boyle, Ed Byrne and Beardyman.

On the musical front KGH hosted a fantastic night of Collabro, Selector, and a splendid performance from Jason Donovan. In addition James Martin the TV chef visited bringing anecdotes and recipes from Plate Mates and Automobiles. Whilst DLT showcased Talon, Wagon Wheels, Blancmange and the hit 80's band Johnny Hates Jazz. Chris Helme ex Seahorses, attracted a sell-out crowd for a fantastic night in January.

The introduction of Darwen Acoustic Sessions at DLT is steadily growing and are contributes to a regular and diverse programme for the local and wider community; including the National Theatre Live cinema screenings which has seen attendance figures increased by 43% and an increasingly strong holiday programme for children.

For six days Blackburn Cathedral brought Sing Together to the town centre filling KGH with children's voices. This added to the Celebration of Dance, Big Sing and Little Sing putting a real youth feel to the spring months in both DLT and KGH.