

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

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PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
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### MUSEUM AND ARTS

**India's Gateway; Gujarat, Mumbai & Britain** is a temporary exhibition with family friendly activities that traces the history of Gujarat and Mumbai as age-old centres of trade and migration, focusing on their remarkable links with Britain. Featuring photographs by Tim Smith, the exhibition weaves history together with words and images to explore the lives and experiences of Gujarati communities today.

The exhibition opens on Saturday 18 February with free activities to experience, including open drumming performance and workshop, food tasting, henna and crafts. The event is from 1.00pm – 3.30pm and all are welcome. The exhibition has been externally funded through Arts Council England. University Centre at Blackburn College is one of the partners we are working with on the development and delivery of the displays and events programme, as well as Action Factory and local artists.

**School Visits** to Blackburn museum and Art Gallery are increasing with 870 children visiting from 20 schools in the last quarter. This represents 28 visits bringing 35 classes. 23 out of 28 visits were by Blackburn schools but we have attracted schools from as far away as Blackpool.

Wensley Fold, St Silas and Sacred Heart primary schools also held a celebration event here and we had outreach visits resulting in work with a further 460 children. Our Saturday 'Get Crafty' workshops have been attended by 400 children plus their parents. Student filmmakers from the University and Art students from the College have also used the museum's galleries as a resource for their coursework.

**Found in Blackburn** is an exciting exploration into some of the Town's empty buildings and hidden treasures, alongside the memories of the people who used to inhabit these spaces. The project funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, will take place across the town through January and March and will involve artists, photographers and film-makers leading to a final exhibition starting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2017. Highlights will include an artist in residence in the market painting and sculpting the traders and shoppers, a radio show being made with an artist with Radio Lancashire and opportunities for the community to take part by getting their own cameras from Camera Obscura (community darkroom) which will be developed as part of the exhibition.

## **YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE**

Takeover challenge took place on Thursday 15th December. The event consisted of a workshop run by Lancashire MIND in partnership with YPS & SLYNCS and focused on mental health and well-being for young people. The event allowed young people to discuss issues around mental health and offer proposals to key decision makers around the support young people feel they should receive. Two workshops helped raise young people's awareness of emotional health and well-being. The event also established pledges to demonstrate commitment to the agenda from all involved and identified potential solutions around how to support young people who may suffer from mental health conditions. The event was a fantastic opportunity for young people from across BwD to help shape and design services they receive. Preparations for the youth elections are under way.

All schools, colleges and youth organisations have been contacted to nominate potential candidates for the forthcoming Youth elections which will take place between Monday 13th and Sunday 19th March. The results from the count will be on Monday 20th March at 4.30pm in the Council Chambers.

The Social Action Fund project delivered in partnership between the Young People's Service, SLYNCS and Blackburn Youth Zone held a celebration evening for the 19 projects that were funded. The event held at Blackburn Youth Zone on Friday 16th December 2016 provided young people with the opportunity to show case the positive contributions they made to their local communities by accessing the social action fund. A total of £15,000 was utilised to fund the first cohort of projects and similarly a second cohort of projects will be supported in 2017.

## **LEISURE**

### **Apprenticeship Success**

In 2015 Leisure recruited its first apprentice posts for many years. Workforce succession planning was an important principle as well as the on-site, closer working with Blackburn College at Blackburn Sports and Leisure Centre (BSLC). These first apprentices are now completing their placements and qualifications. BSLC's gym apprentice has successfully secured a contracted post within leisure.

### **Witton Park Arena and Events**

Witton Park was a finalist as one of the top 3 parks in the country for its athletics provision and activities aimed at increasing participation at the recent Fields in Trust Awards. It is heartening to see the increased activities programme and events at Witton Park receive recognition at a National level.

Witton Park will again host the Royal Lancashire Show in 2017. Investment secured through section 106 monies to improve the drainage of the show field is crucial to secure this event and many other event bookings. Show field enhancements will also benefit established events such as the Lions' Bonfire.

The 2016 Annual Bonfire and Fireworks display attracted 15,000 people and enabled families to enjoy the Bonfire and a Fireworks display in a safe environment. The event also raised c. £10,000 for local charities. Closer partnership working between the Lions and the Council has not only reduced costs, but also improved the event itself.

### **Venues**

November saw 2 sell out nights of Joe Brown at DLT and a sell out for the Lancashire Hotpots at KGH. There were also good audiences for Jimmy Carr; Sean Lock (sell-out); Bay City Rollers and UB40. KGH also hosted its first Comic Con with 1,500 visitors bringing a new audience demographic to Blackburn and KGH. Programme diversification is also being focussed on with a repeat S2S event confirmed for April 2017 (1,800 people attended 1st event) as are bookings for 4 nights of Boxing in 2017.

Attracting new audiences has been a real focus for the Venues team following the in-year restructure. Externalising the digital social media engagement to specialists Square Cactus is supporting this priority and showing a positive impact.

### **LIBRARIES**

#### **Summer Reading Challenge:**

Regional results indicate that BwD have performed significantly better than some of our neighbouring authorities including Blackpool, Bury and Rochdale. 1,228 children enrolled in the reading initiative across our libraries and we enlisted the support of 3 young volunteers who promoted the scheme and helped participants to select titles to read and enjoy.

It's worth mentioning that our in-house inter-library branch prize, which is awarded to the library that increases its enrolments and then achieves the highest percentage of completions, was won by Livesey Library. A great achievement for the very committed team of volunteers and a great endorsement of the support they provide.