

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

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
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COMMUNITY ASSET MANAGEMENT

In December 2016, HFT the operator of Greenfields Community Centre gave notice on their management of the centre. The Council was presented with the challenge of finding a new operator and ensure the group is ready to take over on 1st April 2017.

Following a public meeting held for all groups in January, the procurement process was completed and a community group, East Lancs Umbrella Society was successful in their bid to run the centre.

A number of new tenants and additional hire of the building has been secured in addition to introduction of a standard pricing policy for all groups. These measures have allowed the centre to grow income from approx. £35k up to £60k per annum; any surpluses will be re-invested into the centre and the local community. Training and handover is progressing well to support the volunteers to be ready to commence operations on 1st April 2017. The surface of the community centre car park has been a health and safety concern and resurfacing will be completed as part of the asset transfer.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

This year's Blackburn with Darwen Youth MP Elections have been a great success. Seven Candidates stood for election and they were from a range of backgrounds, ages and gender. The successful candidate was Ummaih Shah who has spent a very productive year learning the role as last year's Deputy Youth MP. Ummaih's election manifesto has the following key aims for her forthcoming year and Blackburn with Darwen Youth Forum and Young Peoples Services will be working hard to support her on:

1. Work experience for Young people to build CV's and references.
2. Awareness of the effects of bullying.
3. More thrilling opportunities for young people.

The 2 elected deputy youth MP's are Ellie Walsh and Aliyah Shah. Ellie is a key member of BwD Youth Forum and has been heavily involved in Darwen Youth Festival and Take over challenge, amongst other campaigns and events, and has gained considerable self-confidence from leading and contributing to some key presentations to Health, Local Government and 3rd sector agencies. Aliyah was nominated by her school Witton Park and she is a keen campaigner on issues effecting young people. Aliyah is keen to pursue her manifesto issues through the youth forum on life skills, tackling mental health issues and helping students cope with exam pressures.

Ummaih, Elle and Aliyah along with 9 other young people form part of the central youth forum. They will be collectively campaigning on bullying, life skills, domestic violence and youth image to name a few and each young person will shadow an executive member throughout the next year.

LEISURE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Memberships / Income

Gym membership (Feb 2017) have exceeded the 7,000 mark and currently stand at 7097. All three main sites have seen growth since December 2016: WPA 1207 to 1301; BSLC 2674 to 2799 and DLC 2745 to 2949. This is excellent news and shows our strong positioning in the market. It does however continue to highlight the space pressures in the gyms – particularly at DLC and BSLC and also puts heavy demand and wear and tear on the equipment. We are working with procurement on a longer term equipment supplier arrangement. The equipment in all 3 main gyms will need replacing over the next 3 years so plans are being put in place to ensure that this can happen, including budget allocations for lease pay back.

Rescues and Resuscitations

In the last month there have been 2 major incidents (one at BSLC and one at DLC) which have required full rescue and resuscitation. At BSLC a young lady collapsed unconscious in the gym at an extremely busy time with staff having to give CPR. At DLC an older man was rescued from the pool and given CPR on poolside. In this case the defibrillator was activated to give lifesaving shocks. In both cases the individuals concerned had a positive outcome albeit involving hospital treatment and staff at both sites reacted immediately with swift professionalism using the training and skills that are included in our weekly staff training sessions.

iESE award for Transformation in Health and Social Care

The Council has won the award for 'Transformation in Health and Social Care' for re:refresh and the Wellbeing Service from the Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise. The award was in recognition of the Council improving services, utilising resources more effectively and achieving better outcomes for people accessing our services to improve the health of residents.

Refresh has enabled a 49% increase gym and swimming attendances, 0.8 million additional swim and gym attendances and has narrowed the participation gaps between Blackburn and Darwen compared to the Northwest and England averages. The Wellbeing Service has increased contacts by 400%; successfully combining public, private and 3rd sector services into a single point of access. re:refresh provides the launch pad for people to make changes and help themselves; reducing their need for other health and social care services.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Darwen Library

Excellent progress is being made to implement the new staff:volunteer blended model at Darwen Library. Jacquie Widdowson, Library Manager has done an excellent job leading the change process and in a relatively short space of time has recruited and inducted 14 volunteers with a further 5 open applications being processed. Of these 19 current / potential volunteers, 5 are also Friends of Darwen Library. It is encouraging that the volunteer group all seem very committed and able and between them have a range of interests and skills which will be of great benefit to the library service.

A volunteer fair was held in the library on Saturday 25th February. A number of volunteer application packs were handed out on the day with hopefully a few more recruits coming forward as a result. The fair presented an opportunity for visitors to meet current volunteers and find out about how they support the library and the events and activities they run. There was also singing from the community choir – Darwen Library Larks, showcasing of the craftwork completed by the Community Living Room group and 2 volunteers were around to talk about their experiences of volunteering for the Home Library Delivery Service. Some of the Friends of Darwen Library were also on hand to provide information about their advocacy work, fundraising, local history support sessions etc.

Venues

The management team has been working hard to re-establish links with existing promoters and creating new relationships with those that have not previously booked shows in Blackburn or Darwen. This approach is showing results with a total of 209 ticketed shows already confirmed for 2017/18 compared to a total of 305 in 2016/17.

Raising the profile of KGH & DLT is a priority moving forward. Marketing budgets have been allocated for each show where previously there was none or very little allocation. We have made a noticeable improvement in audience/customer engagement through social media following the outsourcing to Square Cactus and we have gained an increased number of unpaid for column inches in Lancashire Telegraph through the generation of human interest stories linked to the programming.

We have secured twelve Asian weddings for 2017/18 with a further three weddings provisionally booked. Partnership working for Asian caterers is proving successful providing halal menus. KGH is also hosting a number of award ceremonies and gala dinners over the next few months including The Hive wards and The Mall Awards.