

# Council Forum

Thursday, 25 January 2018

18:00

Council Chamber, Blackburn Town Hall,

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## AGENDA

### PART I: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PUBLIC

- 1 Chief Executive to read the notice convening the meeting
- 2 Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain
- 3 Apologies for Absence
- 4 Minutes of the Policy Council meeting held on 7th December 2017  
**MINUTES Policy Council 2017** 5 - 12
- 5 Declarations of Interest  
**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FORM** 13 - 13
- 6 Mayoral Communications
- 7 Council Forum  
To consider questions from members of the public received under Procedure Rule 10.
- 8 **To consider Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12 as follows:**  
**MOTION 1**  
This Council is extremely disappointed, on behalf its residents that the Government is continually choosing to ignore the plight of children, families and adults needing our support.  
The Association of Directors of Children's Services, the Local Government Association and others have repeatedly urged the government to urgently address the deepening funding gap facing children's services, expected to be £2bn by 2020. The Government has again failed to listen to and address the continuing funding gap for children's and adult social care. National bodies representing each of these services have repeatedly, and loudly, warned of the serious consequences of the Government ignoring the funding pressures facing Councils like ours.  
Both adults and childrens services also rely on the financial sustainability of other services our Council

provides. The only way to protect the vital services which care for the elderly, the disabled, and to protect children and support families is for central Government to invest additional new money.

As a result of this Governments continuing underfunding of these services, our ability to invest in the preventative aspects in both these services is severely diminished. This i.s leading nationally to children and families entering the child protection system in record numbers and the elderly and disabled not receiving appropriate and necessary care This Council believes the Government needs to provide Councils with a long term, sustainable solution, this is urgently needed to prevent us from becoming another “blue light” service. To give Councils the resources they need to provide the support that all these groups need, when they need it, is the only solution.

Within a system that is already struggling to cope with unprecedented levels of demand, and the reduction in general Government support to our Council, this is becoming impossible. The alternative means risking more and more families and individuals reaching a critical stage where Councils have no choice but to intervene to keep everyone safe.

Councils, national representative bodies, charities and care providers have repeatedly warned of and continue to warn of the serious consequences of funding pressures on all who use our services, their carers and the provider market.

It is fundamentally unfair of the Government to shift the burden of tackling a national funding crisis onto Councils and their residents. In particular the Adult Social Care Council Tax Precept policy has a vastly different effect in different areas as authorities with a lower tax base are not be able to raise as much income as those authorities with a higher tax base. In addition, the ability to raise and collect Council tax is not related to need.

This Council calls upon the relevant Ministers along with our local MP’s to address the very significant issues both our own and other Councils are facing in protecting our most vulnerable children and adults and for the Government to face up to its own Duty of Care as we as a local Council are expected to do.

Mover                      Councillor Vicky McGurk

Secunder                Councillor Julie Gunn

## **MOTION 2**

This Council is concerned at the lack of involvement of Members in the allocation of section 106 monies in local areas. It asks the Executive Member to draw

up a scheme that will involve local Members in the process of determining the use of these monies.

Mover Councillor David Foster

Seconder Councillor Roy Davies

<b>9</b>	<b>Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and Care leavers</b>	
	<b>Ofsted</b>	<b>14 - 21</b>
	<b>Appendix A Letter from the Minister of State Childrens &amp; Families</b>	<b>22 - 23</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Social Integration Strategy 2018-20</b>	
	<b>Social Integration Strategy</b>	<b>24 - 25</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Local Government Finance Settlement</b>	
	<b>Council Forum Provisional Local Govt Finance Settlement 2018 2019</b>	<b>26 - 29</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Local Council Tax Support Scheme</b>	
	<b>Council Tax Support Scheme</b>	<b>30 - 32</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Report of the Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	
	<b>Policy and Corporate Resources</b>	<b>33 - 37</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Reports of the Executive Members with Portfolios</b>	
<b>14.1</b>	<b>Leader</b>	
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	<b>Environment</b>	<b>41 - 42</b>
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	<b>Regeneration</b>	<b>57 - 60</b>
<b>14.9</b>	<b>Children's Services</b>	
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<b>15</b>	<b>To consider any questions received from Members under Procedure Rule 11</b>	

**PART 2: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

Date Published: Thursday, 18 January 2018  
Harry Catherall, Chief Executive

**POLICY COUNCIL**  
**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

**PRESENT** – *The Mayor Councillor Rigby C (in the Chair), Councillors; Akhtar P; Ali; Bateson; Brookfield; Casey; Connor; Daley; Davies; Desai; Entwistle; Fazal; Foster D; Foster K; Gee; Groves; Gibson; Gunn; Harling; Humphrys; Hussain F; Hussain S; Jan-Virmani; Kay; Khan M; Khan Z; Khonat; Lee; Liddle; Mahmood A; Mahmood Q; Marrow; McFall; McGurk; Mulla; Murray; Nuttall; Oates; Patel; Pearson; Perkins; Riley; Shorrocks; Sidat; Slater Jo; Slater Ju; Slater N; Smith D, Smith J; Surve; Talbot; Taylor; Vali; Whittle and Wright.*

**RESOLUTIONS**

**28 Notice Convening Meeting**

The Chief Executive read the notice convening the meeting.

**29 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Akhtar H, Hardman, Hollings, Hussain I, Johnson, Maxfield, Rigby J, Slater Ja and Tapp.

**30 Minutes of the Council Forum Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the Council Forum meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

**31 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were submitted.

**32 Mayoral Communications**

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Pat McFall, for covering a number of engagements for him whilst he was ill and presented her with flowers to mark his gratitude.

The Mayor also made reference to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Council of the Chief Executive, Harry Catherall, and referred to some of the achievements during this period, and the Chief Executive expressed his thanks for the acknowledgement.

### **33 Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12**

The Chief Executive announced that one Notice of Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12 as follows:

*This Council is concerned and disappointed by the Home Secretary's rejection on the 31st October, 2016 of an Inquiry into the policing of events at Orgreave.*

*This Council observes that the Independent Police Commission said in their redacted report released in June 2015 "that there was evidence of excessive violence by police officers, and a false narrative from police exaggerating violence by miners, perjury by officers giving evidence to prosecute the arrested men, and an apparent cover-up of that perjury by senior officers".*

*This Council believes in the light of such statements that the Home Secretary needs to review her decision and ensure that there is a full public inquiry into the events at the Orgreave coking plant on 18th June 1984.*

*This Council notes that 95 miners were arrested and charged with offences, but were all later acquitted amid claims that police at the time had fabricated evidence.*

*The Council will write to the Home Secretary and ask the two MPs representing both of our towns to do the same; to ask that she takes into account the opinion of this Council and accepts that there is widespread public concern about events at Orgreave and calls for her to order an inquiry into them.*

Moved by Councillor Julie Gunn  
Seconded by Councillor Dave Harling

Following debate on the Motion, there then followed a Vote on the Motion.

**RESOLVED** – That the Motion be carried.

*At this point of the meeting, the Chief Executive advised that in line with the Constitution, the Policy Council would now be held in Committee.*

### **34 Corporate Plan and Priorities to 2020**

A report was submitted which updated Members on the six corporate priorities, the key strategies in place to achieve these priorities and the future policy direction for the Council. The Leader of the Council introduced the report and the Chief Executive presented a video which contained highlights and achievements from the last 12 months.

Policy Council 2015 adopted the current Corporate Plan which set out the Council's aims and ambitions up to 2019. As part of this, Policy Council 2016 agreed the continuation of the six corporate priorities to 2020:

1. Creating more **jobs** and supporting business growth.
2. Improving **housing** quality and building more houses.
3. Improving **health and well-being**.
4. Improving outcomes for our **young people**.
5. Safeguarding the most **vulnerable people**.
6. **Making your money go further**.

Further to this, Policy Council in 2016 also adopted the implementation of four development themes that underpin all the work the local authority undertakes and these were:

- Image and marketing of the Borough.
- Fairness / Equality / Cohesion.
- Partnership working:
  - With businesses and other public sector organisations (to maximise impact of BwD spend)
  - With residents - empowering communities through volunteering and asset based working (more effective use of all our assets, people and places)
  - Other key stakeholders
- Digital First.

As per previous years, robust performance management arrangements continued to be in place to monitor and ensure the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

The performance framework continued to see performance discussed and challenged with Directors and also included a direct challenge from the Leader of the Council to the Executive Members on a six monthly basis.

Appendix One tracked the progress of performance against the Council's strategic objectives for the April 2017 to September 2017 period.

Appendix Two provided exception reports for priorities which are considered to be off track.

There were 108 measures within the Corporate Plan linked to the Council's priority objectives.

Of the 108 measures information for the period was as follows:

- 3% (3 actual) had been forecast as "red" where performance was, or was likely to be off track

- 23% (25 actual) had been forecast “amber” where delivery was on track and currently being managed
- 72% (78 actual) had been forecast “green” or on track
- 2% (2 actual) of the measures a RAG rating was not available

The report also highlighted some of the achievements over the past 12 months, which the Chief Executive had referred to in his presentation/video.

The Council had made significant budget savings since 2010 and whilst the Council was now in a relatively stable period due to strong financial planning, there were still challenges ahead as demand for services continued to increase.

The next 12 months would see all out elections as a result of the new ward boundaries and a reduction in the number of Councillors and Wards. New ward profiles were being developed which would provide Councillors with data sets and intelligence for their own ward areas which could be used to help shape and inform future policy.

In April 2018 it would be the 20th anniversary of Blackburn with Darwen Council becoming a unitary authority. The Council would be taking the opportunity to reflect on achievements and celebrate the various milestones and focus on the highlights from the past two decades. A celebration event in 2018 was being organised and would showcase a variety of projects and events which had made a real difference to communities over the past 20 years.

The report also highlighted the key activity which would take place over the next 12 months.

Environmental and sustainability considerations were fundamental concerns for a number of key service areas and were big policy challenges for both central government and local government. A commitment for 2018 was to develop a new climate change / environmental policy / strategy.

In line with the Council’s previous practice it was suggested the Policy Council agree to the lifting of the `Local Living Wage` from £7.85 per hour to £8.45 per hour, i.e. the Living Wage Foundation rate from 2016/17. It was suggested that Policy Council adopt the previous year’s Living Wage Foundation rates on a recurring basis to reflect the local economy and the Council’s continued intention to support lower paid employees. It was also proposed that the Policy Council commend its approach to supporting a local living wage to all the schools in the Borough whom it is hoped would positively support as they had done in previous years.

**RESOLVED** - That Policy Council:

- Note the content of the report;



- Re-affirm the Council's six corporate priorities and four themes up to 2020;
- Note the overall performance against the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives as illustrated in appendix one;
- Note the remedial action to improve delivery against those priorities which are giving cause for concern, as outlined in appendix two;
- Adopt the Climate Change / Environmental policy statement – with a commitment to develop a policy / strategy in 2018; and
- Agree to increase the Local Living Wage for Council employees from £7.85 to £8.45 per hour from April 2018, commending adoption also by schools and to agree the pattern for future increases as set out in the report.

*At this point of the meeting, the Chief Executive advised that in line with the Constitution, Policy Council would move out of Committee.*

### **35 Governance – Council May 2018**

A report was submitted which asked the Council to determine and approve corporate governance arrangements for the Council to take effect from May 2018.

As a consequence of the Boundary Review and the changes to wards, the numbers of Councillors would be reducing from 64 to 51 in May 2018 and the wards would be reducing from 23 to 17. All 51 `new` Councillors would be elected with all current terms of office ceasing in May 2018.

The structure of the Council would therefore be changing and the new arrangements need to be reflected in the Council's constitution.

To facilitate the timely drafting of the revised constitution the Council was asked to determine, within legislative parameters its plans for the future structure and governance arrangements of the Council post these changes to the size of the decision-making and scrutiny bodies of the Council.

The report presented recommendations for consideration which if adopted required the Council's Constitution to be updated and re-published in May 2018.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- 1 That Council note that the election of a reduced number of 51 Councillors compared to the current 64 councillors, requires a review of the corporate governance structure of the Council and to also notes that the final recommendations on the electoral changes are currently subject to Parliamentary approval;

- 2 The proposed changes to the election cycle as set out in this report be agreed and the Chief Executive authorised to formally request the Secretary of State's approval to defer the elections due in May 2019 and amend the future election cycle;
- 3 The continuation of the Executive arrangements - Leader and Executive Board model as the form of corporate governance (Article 7 – Constitution) be agreed;
- 4 It be recommended that in view of the electoral changes and subject to 3 above, to adopt a reduction in the total number of Executive Board Members from Leader plus 9 to Leader plus 8 Executive Board Members as set out in this report. (The Council notes that a Leader for the Council will be elected at the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2018 who will then confirm the composition and the Executive Member appointments to the Executive Board);
- 5 It be recommended to the Leader that subject to 3 and 4 above, that there should be 7 Executive Members with portfolios, with details to be confirmed at the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2018;
- 6 That from May 2018 there will be 3 Overview and Scrutiny Committees, each Committee as now with 11 members, plus the Call-In Committee as now with 9 members, with the frequency of meetings to be considered at a subsequent meeting of the Council;
- 7 That the current arrangements for the Mayoralty for 2018/19 i.e. the current Deputy Mayor to become Mayor (subject to her re-election) be agreed and request the Annual Council in May 2018 determine the rotation arrangements for 2019/20 onwards;
- 8 It be agreed that reflecting the overall reduction in Council members, to reduce the numbers of members on the Planning & Highways Committee from 15 to 13, Licensing Committee from 13 to 11, Standards Committee to remain at 9 and the Audit & Governance Committee to remain at 6, (noting that proportionality will be reviewed as usual following the elections in May 2018);
- 9 It be noted that there are no proposals to change the arrangements from those currently set out in the Constitution for 'Other Committees of the Council';
- 10 That the changes to Advisory and Consultative Groups as set out in the report be agreed;

- 11 That a report reviewing Council representation on Outside Bodies be prepared and presented to Council Forum for consideration in the New Year;
- 12 That it be recommended from 2018/19 the nomination of 4 councillors to the Health & Wellbeing Board be as follows, Leader (or Deputy Leader) of the Council, Leader (or Deputy Leader) of the main opposition party, Executive member with portfolio responsibility for Adult Social Services & Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for Children's Services – noting that subject to 3 above the Executive Leader will formally confirm the nominations at Annual Council in May 2018;
- 13 Note that decisions relating to the numbers of Councillors and roles within the revised governance will be reported to the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for consideration;
- 14 That the Chief Executive be delegated powers to make any minor changes to the polling districts affected by the Ward Boundary Review and whenever such needs arise; and
- 15 Subject to 1-14 above authorise the Director of HR, Legal & Corporate Services update the Council Constitution to reflect the new Council governance arrangements to take effect in May 2018 following the election of 51 Councillors on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018.

### **36 Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018**

Members received an update the on the 2018 Parliamentary Boundary Review being undertaken by the Boundary Commission for the Blackburn Borough Constituency area. On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) published proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries as it opened its third and final consultation.

Following a decision by Parliament to reduce the number of constituencies in the UK to 600 from 650, and to ensure that the number of electors in each constituency is within 5% either side of the electoral quota, the BCE had been asked to make independent recommendations about where the boundaries of English Constituencies should be.

The final consultation ended in December with citizens having until 11 December 2017 to have their say. Following this third and final consultation, the Boundary Commissioners would consider all the evidence submitted throughout the process. They would then decide on their final recommendations before submitting them to Parliament in September 2018. The Council was asked to consider expressing its view on the final proposals

noting that if agreed by Parliament, the new constituencies would be in use at the next scheduled General Election in 2022.

**RESOLVED -**

1. That the Boundary Commission for England proposals for Parliamentary boundaries for the Blackburn Borough Constituency Area be noted;
2. Note that the third and final consultation had been running from 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and would conclude on 11 December 2017; and
3. That support for the current proposal be confirmed, which remained unchanged from the initial proposal and, that the Chief Executive be authorised to write to the Commission accordingly expressing the Council's view.

**37 Report of the Standards Committee**

Members were advised that in September 2017, the Government published a consultation on updating the Disqualification criteria for Councillors and Mayors. The consultation paper set out the Government's proposals for updating the criteria disqualifying individuals from standing for, or holding office, as a local authority member, directly-elected mayor or member of the London Assembly.

The Government was inviting everyone to comment but particularly had sought the views of prospective and current Councillors amongst others.

The Standards Committee initially considered this consultation at their meeting in October and Members had since advised on their further views.

The Standards Committee's response was set out in the Appendix to the report, with consultation closing on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

**RESOLVED -** That the report be noted.

Signed at a meeting of the Council  
on the                      day of  
(being the next ensuing meeting of the Council) by

MAYOR

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN  
ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

**Members attending a Council, Committee, Board or other meeting with a personal interest in a matter on the Agenda must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and, if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Interest under paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Conduct, should leave the meeting during discussion and voting on the item.**

**Members declaring an interest(s) should complete this form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer at the commencement of the meeting and declare such an interest at the appropriate point on the agenda.**

MEETING:                      **COUNCIL FORUM**

DATE:                              **25<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

AGENDA ITEM NO.:

DESCRIPTION (BRIEF):

NATURE OF INTEREST:

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY/OTHER (delete as appropriate)

SIGNED :

PRINT NAME:

(Paragraphs 8 to 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council refer)



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR MAUREEN BATESON</b>
<b>TO:</b>	<b>FULL COUNCIL</b>
<b>ON:</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2018</b>

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**SUBJECT Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and Care leavers**

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## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To update all Members with regard to the Council's recent Ofsted inspection, completed as part of Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework (SIF) between 25<sup>th</sup> September and 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017. As Members will recall, a link to the full report was distributed on the original publication date (8<sup>th</sup> December 2017); the link has been provided in the Background Papers section of this report.

Inspectors judged the following areas:

- Children's Services overall **(good)**
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection **(requires improvement)**
- The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence **(good)**
  - Adoption performance **(good)**
  - The experience and progress of care leavers **(good)**
- Leadership, management and governance **(good)**

There is a separate judgement for the Local Safeguarding Children Board, which was also judged to be good.

Nine recommendations have been made in respect of Children's Social Care and three recommendations for the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB); more detail concerning these recommendations is contained in section 5 of this report.

The judgement puts the Council in the top third of local authorities nationally and it's one of only six out of 23 in the North West to have this rating.

## **2. OPTIONS**

Not applicable.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members:

- Note the findings of the Ofsted inspection, including the recommendations made.
- Note the four inspection frameworks under which the council continues to be regulated by Ofsted.
- Note that the action plan developed in response to this inspection will be subject to Scrutiny review.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework (SIF) has been in place from November 2013 until November 2017. Blackburn with Darwen was one of the last two authorities to be inspected under this framework; our previous inspection of safeguarding services was the Safeguarding and Looked After Children (SLAC) inspection of January 2012, when we were judged 'good'.

A four point judgement scale is used by Ofsted: outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.

The inspection lasted 4 weeks, with inspectors on site during weeks 1, 3 and 4. During week 2, the authority was required to complete an audit of 20 cases selected by inspectors and to prepare a written report on findings for the inspection team to evaluate.

There were 8 inspectors on site over the course of the 4 weeks, in addition to 2 shadow inspectors, a quality assurance manager (HMI) and a senior data analyst. Inspectors interviewed over 100 people in scheduled meetings, as well as the staff they talked to as they based themselves in social work teams during parts of the inspection. In addition to the 20 cases formally audited by ourselves and case tracked by inspectors, inspectors also had direct access to our management information systems and looked at over 150 cases.

As part of the inspection the team scrutinised a significant range of evidence, including data, reports, documentation (strategies, policies and action plans for example), survey results as well as previous inspection reports of the Local Authority and performance profiles.

### **5. RATIONALE**

#### **5.1 Brief overview of findings**

Inspectors found that the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and her senior management team have an accurate view of the strengths and areas needing further development. Improvements since the previous SLAC inspection of 2012 were noted, including family support workers, advanced practitioners and implementation of our risk model.

Inspectors saw that during 2016/17, capacity was an issue as the Council continued to

face significant financial pressures while demand for services continued to increase. As a result, work in the assessment teams was not as good as it had been and for some children less at risk, there were delays in them receiving support.

The Council's response to the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review in November 2016 and the political agreement and support to reinstate £2.5m into the budget was recognised by inspectors as critical to the early signs of improvement now being made in this area. However, the area still requires improvement to be consistently good.

Early help is a strength, delivered through our Children Centres where there is evidence of good partnership working to deliver services in an integrated way. As a result, some children can continue living at home safely.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is effective, with good out of hours support provided by the Emergency Duty Team (EDT). Children at immediate risk of harm receive an appropriate and timely response to protect them from harm. This includes work around child sexual exploitation and children who go missing from home. However the response to children suffering chronic neglect is not always made quickly enough to improve outcomes, for example delays in pre-proceedings.

Partners work together well to provide good support for children who are subject to either Child In Need or Child Protection Plans. Children are seen regularly, with their views recorded. There is good support for children with disabilities, although preparation for adulthood needs to start sooner.

Children who are looked after spoke positively to inspectors about being looked after by Blackburn with Darwen and spoke highly of the care they receive, and about positive and trusting relationships with their social workers. Political and senior leaders champion the needs of children in their care, promoting corporate responsibilities amongst chief officers. Inspectors found that children who are looked after achieve well at primary school, but less so at secondary. The quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) is not yet consistently good, and under-reporting of the use and impact of pupil premium funding means that we do not fully understand the impact on children.

Participation of children and young people is recognised as a strength, with a range of opportunities for children to influence practice.

The adoption service is good; inspectors saw evidence of tenacious practice for children who are harder to place, supported by clear senior management direction in which 'doing the right thing' for children is the priority. Feedback from adopters was very positive about delivery of services and both pre- and post-adoption support.

Care leavers are supported well by personal advisors who are in touch with all care leavers. They use their voice well to inform their services. They feel safe in their accommodation, and most progress on to employment, education or training. While there are apprenticeships ring-fenced to care leavers within the Children's Services department of the Council, there is not yet a consistent corporate approach to increasing the range of opportunities available to them.

The LSCB is meeting its statutory responsibilities, with strong governance arrangements



that support and promote a strong multi-agency safeguarding culture. It is proactive and responsive, disseminating learning well and effectively raising awareness of key issues such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and domestic abuse. The independent Chair of the LSCB understands strengths and weaknesses of partner agencies well, and regular meetings between the Chair, the DCS and the Chief Executive support key board issues being made clear. Board members attend meetings regularly and are committed to progressing the work of the Board.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The report sets out 9 recommendations in the main body of the report:

- Ensure that all assessments are timely and updated to reflect changes in the children's lives and take account of their history and identity needs.
- Ensure children's plans contain clear actions, timescales and outcomes and that actions are progressed effectively to avoid drift and delay for the child.
- Ensure that the transition arrangements for disabled children are focused on the needs of the individual child and that clear plans are in place well before their 18th birthday.
- Improve the quality and timeliness of pre-proceedings work, particularly in relation to chronic neglect, and ensure that monitoring systems are in place to prevent delay.
- Ensure that life story work and later life letters are available for children looked after to assist each child's understanding of their history and plan for their future.
- Ensure that PEPs for children looked after involve children and young people and are specific about targets and achievements, and the impact of pupil premium funds is monitored and used to best effect.
- Improve work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers.
- Ensure that supervision for all staff is both regular and reflective, and promotes high-quality social work practice.
- Ensure that the performance monitoring framework analyses and reports children's individual experiences as well as compliance of activity undertaken by social workers.

LSCB recommendations:

- Ensure that the LSCB has a good understanding of the resource challenges faced by agencies and how this impacts on the individual experiences of children and their families.
- Ensure that there is good participation throughout the LSCB by expediting lay member recruitment and improving attendance at subgroups.
- Ensure that the annual report is published in a timely manner to assist with planning

and delivering priorities with partner agencies.

The Department has developed an action plan to address each of these recommendations. At the annual conversation with the Director for Children's Services and senior officers on January 5<sup>th</sup> 2018, Ofsted discussed actions taken to date by the council to address recommendations contained within their report and requested a copy of the action plan for their review and agreement.

### **5.3 Future Inspections**

Since 2012, the Council has been subject to the two main safeguarding inspections (SLAC and SIF), an Ofsted thematic inspection of assessments and two external Peer Reviews. This has been a relatively quiet period and it is unlikely we will go for such a length of time with so few formal Ofsted inspection/visits going forward.

There are four Ofsted inspections that the Council could be subject to at any time:

#### **5.3.1 Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)**

The new ILACS framework begins in the new year and replaces the single inspection framework (SIF), as the main regulatory/accountability tool. Pilot inspections have already been undertaken within the region. Ofsted describe the ILACS as being part of a system rather than a programme of inspections, with a shift to a layered approach to inspection that includes:

- Annual self-evaluation of social work practice, focusing on:
  - What we know about the quality and impact of social work practice with children and families in our authority
  - How do we know it?
  - What are our plans to maintain or improve practice?
- An annual conversation with each local authority
- Focused visits on potential areas of improvement or strength (2 for authorities last judged to require improvement; for authorities last judged to be good or outstanding, this will depend on Ofsted's ongoing assessment of concerns or areas of good practice). A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI – see section 5.3.3) may take place instead of a focused visit.
- Judgement inspection based on previous inspection result:
  - Local authorities previously judged to be good or better will get a one-week short inspection every three years.
  - Those that required improvement to be good will get a two-week standard inspection every three years.
  - Inadequate authorities will be subject to a series of monitoring visits, followed by a full SIF re-inspection.

This will increase the frequency of engagement between local authorities and Ofsted. Performance data and other local intelligence will be used in addition to the information gained through the above system to enable Ofsted to risk assess each local authority on a regular basis (at least annually) and to decide on the best point for inspection.

### **5.3.2 Local Area Inspections of Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND)**

*“Ofsted inspection of local area responsibilities for disabled children and young people and those who have special educational needs”*

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) work together to undertake inspections of the effectiveness of local areas in fulfilling their responsibilities towards disabled children and young people and those who have special educational needs, as part of the duties contained in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

All local authority areas will be inspected over a five year period, between May 2016 and 2021. The inspection teams will consist of a HMI from Ofsted, a CQC Inspector and a trained inspector from a local authority. These are not graded inspections but instead reports feature strengths and areas requiring further development. For local areas who are significantly failing in their duties, Ofsted determine that a written statement of action is required, which requires the local area (Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group) to submit a written statement of action within 70 days of receipt of the inspection report.

There was an understanding that a local authority would not be inspected under the SEND framework until their SIF was completed; this now means that we are now candidates for inspection. Additionally, Lancashire County Council was very recently inspected under this framework, with the final letter being unpublished at the time of writing this report. However, inspectors will have covered aspects of our own services due to the geographical footprint and so it is possible that this makes it more likely that Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool will be inspected in the next year. Finally, there were two areas for improvement identified in the recent SIF inspection which the inspectorate may wish to return to in the event of an inspection: Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) for looked after children, and earlier transition into adulthood for children with learning disabilities. It is also possible that these findings from the SIF may make an inspection in the New Year more likely.

### **5.3.3 Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI)**

JTAI inspections are designed to assess the effectiveness of arrangements and services for children in need of help and protection, and each series of JTAI inspections has a specific theme. The inspection team will typically consist of 3 Ofsted inspectors, 3 CQC inspectors, 3 HMI Constabulary inspectors and 2 HMI Probation inspectors. Inspections take place over a 3 week period.

Inspections in support of each JTAI theme have typically included between 4 and 6 local authorities; an individual report for the local authority is published and then a thematic report is also published to share learning and promote good practice.

The themes announced/completed so far are:

- Child sexual exploitation and children who go missing (February - June 2016) COMPLETE
- Children living with domestic abuse (September 2016 - March 2017) COMPLETE
- Children subject to neglect (May 2017 - March 2018) ONGOING

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE) (March - September 2018) PLANNED
- Children at risk of, and subject to, sexual abuse in the family (October 2018 - March 2019) PLANNED

As our CSE services were viewed positively by inspectors during their recent visit, this could make us more likely for selection in the CSE deep-dive theme.

### **5.3.4 Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting Improvement in Schools**

The inspection of a local authority's arrangements for supporting school improvement provides an independent external evaluation of how well it carries out its statutory duties in relation to promoting high standards in schools and among other providers, so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential.

Ofsted will evaluate a number of areas including: the effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement; the clarity and transparency of policy and strategy for supporting school improvement; how clearly the local authority has defined its monitoring, challenge, support and intervention roles; and the way the local authority uses any available funding to effect improvement, including how it is focused on areas of greatest need.

The inspection takes place over 2 weeks and consists of 4 Ofsted inspectors.

Under this inspection framework, Ofsted are not inspecting all authorities within a specific interval and will carry out focused inspections where there are concerns about the effectiveness of a local authority's education functions. For example, where the proportion of children attending good or outstanding schools is lower than found nationally, where there is a higher than average number of schools in an Ofsted category or where attainment levels are lower than the national average, where the trend of improvement is weak. Current performance levels across the borough's schools (& inspection judgements) make inspection under this regime less likely at present.

## **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There may be changes to policies required as a result of the Ofsted recommendations; these will be approved appropriately.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct immediate financial implications arising from this report, however implementation of the recommendations may have resource and/or financial implications. If this is the case, as these are identified they will be discussed and approved appropriately.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications arising from publication of the Ofsted report.

## 9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of the recommendations will impact on resource, however the detail will be scoped out separately with the appropriate approvals gained before implementation. It is also worth noting that the report states that inspectors were reassured by council leaders that the additional resources provided in early 2017 would continue to be available for children's social care to ensure that children are properly protected.

## 10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

EIA checklist completed, full EIA not required.

## 11. CONSULTATIONS

There have been no consultations undertaken with regard to this report.

### Councillor Maureen Bateson

Contact Officer: Linda Clegg, Director of Children's Services

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Background Papers:

- 1) Link to the published inspection report (as shared with Members on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2017):  
[https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local\\_authority\\_reports/blackburn\\_and\\_darwen/052\\_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/blackburn_and_darwen/052_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf)
- 2) The Minister of State for Children's and Families, Robert Goodwill MP, acknowledged the Ofsted judgement in a letter to the Council Leader on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017 – please see Appendix A.

Background documents are any files, guidance or other materials that have been relied upon in producing the paper. Any background documents listed must be available for public inspection upon request.



**Robert Goodwill MP**  
Minister of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Councillor Mohammed Khan OBE  
Leader of the Council  
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council  
Leaders Office  
Floor 2, Old Town Hall  
King William Street  
Blackburn  
BB1 7DY

18<sup>th</sup> December 2017

*Dear Mohammed,*

**BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN BOROUGH COUNCIL: OFSTED SINGLE INSPECTION (8 DECEMBER 2017)**

I am writing following Ofsted's publication of its report on Blackburn with Darwen Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, and the review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding board. Ofsted has judged services overall to be 'good'; the local safeguarding board is also judged to be 'good'.

I recognise that local authorities face significant challenges in delivering effective children's social care services, but the fact that they are so important to the most vulnerable children locally means that it is essential that they are delivered to a high standard. That Blackburn with Darwen has achieved a rating of good demonstrates that this can be achieved and I would like to congratulate everyone involved at the council on their contribution to this very positive outcome.

The Ofsted report shows that Blackburn with Darwen has made some good improvements since its last inspection, including its use of family support workers and advanced practitioners. Partnership working is clearly a strength and, as a result, services are well co-ordinated. The report highlights many examples of strong practice and demonstrates a welcome focus on doing the right thing for children. I am particularly pleased to read of council's commitment to, and ambition for, children and young people in its care.

It is positive that the DCS and senior leaders have an accurate view of the areas still in need of development and that there is now strong support from across the council for the service. I hope you will use these strengths in addressing the remaining areas for improvement identified in the Ofsted report, particularly with regard to services for children in need of help and protection.

Finally, I am keen to encourage effective local authorities to share their learning on improving and delivering good quality services with other authorities facing similar challenges. The Department for Education contracts with high-performing local authorities that have been rated good or outstanding by Ofsted to provide expert advice to councils in intervention for their children's social care services. Should you be interested in finding out more about this, please contact David Foster ([david.foster@education.gov.uk](mailto:david.foster@education.gov.uk)) – he would be delighted to hear from you.

I am copying this letter to: Cllr Maureen Bateson MBE (Lead Member for Children's Social Care Services); Harry Catherall (Chief Executive); Linda Clegg (Director of Children's Services); Jake Berry MP; and Kate Hollern MP.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Robert Goodwill', written over a large, faint circular watermark or stamp.

**Robert Goodwill MP**  
**Minister of State for Children and Families**



**REPORT OF: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**  
**TO: COUNCIL FORUM**  
**ON: 25 JANUARY 2018**

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**SUBJECT Social Integration Strategy 2018-20**

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## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To seek approval for the adoption of the Social Integration Strategy 2018-20.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the contents of the report and adopt the strategy.
- b) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the leader to co-design/deliver a two-year action plan.
- c) Receive a report on progress and achievements, at the end of the two-year cycle.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

Our Borough is a vibrant and diverse place, made up of different races, cultures, beliefs and attitudes. Our people, location, character and shared assets are what make the Borough a great place to live, work and visit. The Council has been nationally recognised for its work over many years. The strategy was embedded in other key policies across the Council and given its importance, we have developed a social integration strategy to raise the profile and prominence of a key Council priority.

## **4. RATIONALE**

To build on our many strengths and opportunities and to drive further improvement.

## **5. KEY ISSUES**

We want to see all communities feel part of the borough by playing a greater part in civic life, and in accessing leisure, culture and sport opportunities. We want our residents to have shared values and aspirations - to want for others what they would want for themselves and their families.

The strategy is underpinned by the facilitation, enablement and encouraging of linking opportunities, understanding and respect in communities and growing the local economy and skills agenda.

Linking opportunities: We want to see people in all communities get the best start in life and be supported to become well-rounded and successful adults.

Understanding and respect in communities: we want to see people from different backgrounds get together to make the Borough a better place.

Growth of our local economy and skills agenda: we want to see Blackburn with Darwen be a great place to live, study, work and visit. A place where people have access to opportunities and the ability to realise aspirations and potential.



## 6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The social integration strategy is supportive to the Council's Corporate Plan priority objectives and strategic themes for delivery.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. Staffing resource is available through mainstream provision and delivery which supports the social integration agenda.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Emerging national policy / legislation is scheduled to be presented Spring 2018. The proposals from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government include the implementation of policies seeking to support integration and social cohesion.

## 9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The strategy will be championed by the Leader and the Chief Executive. Its aims will be achieved through targeted and mainstream delivery. The Your Call campaign will be integral in engaging with and delivering alongside individuals, community groups and partners.

## 10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The social integration strategy supports equality objectives towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

## 11. CONSULTATIONS


The Council entered into consultation during 2017 with staff, partners and members of the public. For example, staff consultation, May 2017-onwards and public/partner consultation September 2017-onwards.

### Chief Officer/Director

Contact Officer: Harry Catherall – Chief Executive  
Sayyed Osman – Director Adult Services and Prevention

Date: 17 January 2018

Background Papers: **The draft BwD Social Integration Strategy is available at <http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/Lists/DownloadableDocuments/Draft-Social-Integration-Strategy-%28January-2018%29.pdf>**

	<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES</b>
	<b>TO:</b>	<b>COUNCIL FORUM</b>
	<b>ON:</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> January 2018</b>

**SUBJECT: 2018/19 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To provide an update to Council on the 2018/19 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Council is asked to note the key points contained with the provisional settlement which impact upon the authority and which will be considered and incorporated into the financial reports to be presented to Finance Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

**3.0 INTRODUCTION**

The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced by the Secretary of State Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid MP in an oral statement to the House of Commons on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

The announcement set out the provisional allocations for 2018/19 which had been originally announced in December 2015 as part of the 4 year settlement offer which the Council agreed to accept at Council Forum in October 2016.

The publication of the provisional settlement on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2017 marked the start of the consultation which ended on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and to which the Council has submitted a response. It is expected that the final 2018/19 settlement will be laid before the House of Commons for approval in February.

This report provides a brief summary of the key points within the settlement, with specific focus on those funding streams of particular relevance to the Council.

**4.0 KEY ISSUES**

The key points included within the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2018/19 are;

1. No additional funding has been provided from central government above that which was expected; this means a cut in government funding through Revenue Support Grant to this authority of £3.2M, i.e. 5%, compared to 2017/18. In addition there is no funding for inflationary or demand-led cost pressures.
2. Referendum principles will apply to Council Tax increases in excess of 2.99% for 2018/19 and 2019/20. This is an increase on the current 2017/18 referendum limit of 1.99% and is intended to bring council tax in line with current levels of inflation (CPI).

3. Continuation of the Adult Social Care precept provided that the increases do not exceed 6% over the period 2017/18 to 2019/20.
4. A continuation of the maximum increase in Council Tax for District councils, i.e. up to the higher of 3% or £5 for a Band D property, but for Police and Crime Commissioners, an increase up to the higher of 3% or £12 for a Band D property.
5. Following the 2017 General Election and the omission of the Local Government Finance Bill from the Queen's speech, the Government changed its plan to introduce 100% Business Rates Retention to one of 'increased' Business Rates Retention; due to the General Election, the implementation date of 2019/20 was also changed to 2020/21. In the provisional settlement announcement the Communities Secretary stated that the Government's aim is to increase the local share of business rates retention to 75% in 2020/21. This will incorporate existing grants into the new scheme, such as the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Public Health Grant. The remaining 25% government share will be returned to HM Treasury to be recycled back into local government. Within the scheme, local authorities will be able to keep the same share of their growth from their baseline levels assessed in 2020/21 when the system is reset.
6. The Government uses the term 'Core Spending Power' to define and compare local authorities' funding each year. The 2018/19 provisional settlement confirmed a national increase of 1.5% in Core Spending Power (CSP) compared to the 2017/18 settlement; for Blackburn with Darwen the increase in CSP, as defined by the Government, is 1.6%. The figures are slightly different to those published in previous years as they now include Section 31 grant compensation for capped multipliers, i.e. compensation for changes in the uprating of the business rates multiplier from RPI to CPI, as announced in the Autumn budget. The compensation has also been provided for this under-indexation going back to 2014/15.

For 2018/19 Core Spending Power consists of;

- Settlement Funding Assessment (RSG and Baseline Funding)
  - Sc31 Compensation grant for changes in the uprating of the business rate multiplier (as noted above)
  - Council Tax – with the figures based on assumptions made by Government about decisions this Council will make in respect of Council Tax that;
    - i. the tax base grows
    - ii. Council Tax is increased to the new basic referendum limit of 2.99% in both 2018/19 and 2019/20 and
    - iii. Adult Social Care precept of 3% is applied in 2018/19
  - Improved Better Care Fund
  - New Homes Bonus
7. Further reduction in the number of payment years for New Homes Bonus (NHB) from 5 years in 2017/18 to 4 years in 2018/19. NHB will continue to be paid on housing growth above 0.4%.

8. Continuation of the capital receipts flexibilities for a further 3 years enabling local authorities to use capital receipts from the sale of their own assets to meet any costs incurred which reduce costs or demand for services in future years.
9. The technical consultation on the 'Fair Funding Review: a review of relative needs and resources' was also published on 19<sup>th</sup> December for implementation in 2020/21. The current system of annual funding allocations has 15 separate needs formulas and several tailored distributions for services supported by specific grants. These formulas involve 120 indicators of need which reflect factors that have been identified as driving costs of service delivery. Whilst calls have been made for a much simpler approach to funding allocation, this must be balanced against the need for accuracy and the need to retain the required level complexity whilst increasing transparency. The consultation closes on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

## **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The budget process is the mechanism by which the Council allocates resources so that it can achieve its policy objectives agreed at Policy Council. The provisional financial settlement impacts directly on the resources available to the Council for 2018/19 and as such will be incorporated in to the 2018/19 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy to be presented to Finance Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

## **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications are outlined above.

## **7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Council is legally obliged to set a balanced budget in accordance with the Local Government Act 1992, and must have regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its Council Tax payers and non-domestic rate payers. Under Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 the Council has a general duty to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs. The Council is currently working through the financial implications of the provisional financial settlement and will report to Finance Council on this in February 2018.

## **8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Once confirmed, the resources and implications of the finance settlement will be incorporated into the 2018/19 budget which will be presented to Finance Council in February 2018. Decisions taken in setting and allocating the budget will in turn affect the resources allocated to individual service areas.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

Any proposals which emanate from changes made as a result of the finalisation of the finance settlement and the resulting 2018/19 Budget, will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate, before implementation

## **10.0 CONSULTATIONS**

The Council is committed to consultation with residents, businesses and partners and stakeholders and has recently undertaken a Budget Consultation for 2018/19. The results of this exercise are currently being collated and will be reported to Finance Council in February 2018.

**Chief Officer/Member**

Contact Member: Councillor Andy Kay, Executive Member for Resources

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Background Papers: Full details of the settlement can be found on the Department of Communities and Local Government pages on the GOV.UK website.



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF FINANCE &amp; IT</b>
<b>TO:</b>	<b>COUNCIL FORUM</b>
<b>ON:</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2018</b>

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**SUBJECT: Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19**

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## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To seek approval for the adoption of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2018/19.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) That the contents of the report are noted;
- b) That the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme that was approved by Council in January 2017 is continued for the financial year 2018/19, and;
- c) That any subsequent technical amendments to the Council Tax Support Scheme that may be required following legislative changes are delegated to the Director of Finance & IT in consultation with the Executive Member, Resources.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

### **Local Council Tax Support Scheme**

The Welfare Reform Act contained provisions which abolished Council Tax Benefit and recommended localised schemes to be administered by Local Authorities throughout England with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

As a consequence of the legislation, it was agreed at Council on 31st January 2013 that the localised scheme adopted by Blackburn with Darwen BC would be means tested in the same way as Council Tax Benefit, however, awards would be 20% less for working age claimants than the previous national scheme.

Full Council has confirmed in previous years that this scheme would continue to apply. This report fulfils the Council's obligation to consider the local scheme each financial year and formally agree the provision for 2018/19.

## **4. KEY ISSUES**

### **4.1 Local Council Tax Support**

In preparation for setting the budget for 2018/19, the Council is obliged to formally continue the scheme already agreed or make any adjustments prior to 1st February 2018. This report seeks to fulfil the necessary legal requirements and confirm Blackburn with Darwen BC's Council Tax Support scheme for 2018/19.

It is proposed that the Council Tax Support scheme for 2018/19 is amended as follows:

#### **Universal Credit**

The notices received from the Department of Work and Pensions regarding claimants of Universal Credit will now be considered as an acceptable claim form for the Council Tax Support scheme. In order to receive this notice, the claimant must have already stated to the Department of Work and Pensions an intention to claim Council Tax Support. This change will improve the current application process and reduce barriers to customers claiming the support. In addition, the time taken to award the entitlement will be reduced substantially.

#### **Uprating**

In each financial year all claim types are amended to take into account any central government changes known as 'uprating'. In line with previous years, these changes will be made prior to the annual billing process in March 2018.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

By maintaining the main body of the Local Council Tax Support scheme from 2017/18 and only making minor changes detailed in section 4, key issues, there are no significant policy changes to consider.

The full scheme is available on request.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Whilst any increase in the number of claimants or the amount of Council Tax Support awarded would increase the financial cost to the Council, the actual expenditure has consistently decreased over a number of years. There is no reason to suspect that this trend will not continue into 2018/19.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Localised Council Tax Support Scheme must be agreed before the 31<sup>st</sup> January each year by full Council.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no other resource implications associated with this report.

## 9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

In preparing for the transfer of council tax benefit to local authorities, the DCLG completed an initial Equality Impact Assessment in January 2012, and an updated Impact Assessment in June 2012. In addition, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council prepared a high level Equality Impact Assessment. As the scheme remains the same, the EIA is still valid and applicable for 2018/19.

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

The Council, as a billing authority, was required to enter into public consultation to develop and adopt a localised Council Tax Support scheme for implementation across Blackburn with Darwen from 1st April 2013. As the scheme will remain the same for 2018/19 there is no further requirement to undertake a new consultation exercise.

### **Chief Officer/Member**

Contact Officer: Louise Mattinson, Director of Finance & IT

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2018

Background Papers: Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19



## **REPORT OF THE POLICY AND CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Councillors Jim Shorrock**

**Kevin Connor**

**PORTFOLIO COORDINATING**

**DIRECTOR: Denise Park**

### **Progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.**

Set out below is the progress made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on their work programmes during the December Cycle of meetings.

#### **1. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

The Committee met on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and looked a number of topics to progress their work programme.

The issues considered by the Committee and the progress made are as follows:-

##### **Youth Service**

The Committee continue to give a voice to the work being carried out by our Youth MP and Deputies supported by the Youth Service. The Committee noted that they have been very busy and that they continue to develop work programmes that lead the way both in the North- West and nationally. Their work programmes include working on the development of the curriculum to prepare for life and seeking to shape Mental Health Services to meet the needs of Young People. The campaign to gain entitlement to vote at the age of 16 is also a key theme of the work of the Youth Service.

The Committee noted that the work on Mental Health Services would complement the work being undertaken by the Committee jointly with the Health and Adults OSC and agreed to include the work of the Youth Forum in this review to ensure that the needs of young people were addressed.

##### **Leisure Services- Refresh Update**

The Committee looked at the work of the Executive Member for Leisure and Culture in relation to the Refresh programme. The Committee focused on how the introduction of nominal charging had affected take up of leisure activities in comparison to previous years and prior to the introduction of charges. The Committee also received information in response to their request relating to the implications for the most vulnerable young people. The Committee requested that the Executive Member examine if there were any ways that they could ascertain why people who used leisure facilities before and were not doing so now and the reasons for this. This will give the Committee a picture of how the introduction of charges has

influenced usage by the most deprived families. The Committee can then consider recommendations on strategies to mitigate this in the future.

The Committee will also consider the positive impact of the recent success in gaining funding from Sport England for East Lancashire and how this will affect delivery of leisure Services in the Borough.

### **Funding Changes for Schools.**

The Committee received an update on funding changes and the implications for schools in the borough. The possible implications for the schools were outlined and the actions being taken to mitigate risk should the projections pan out as expected. The final allocations would be confirmed on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and allocations reported to the schools forum on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2018. Individual school allocations would be sent to them on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018. The Committee agreed to keep the funding allocation to schools and the issues that arise under review.

### **Ofsted of Children's Services.**

The Committee noted that the Full Council was to consider the Ofsted review that had taken place recently. This meant that the Committee in January would not be able to consider the report as it met prior to that date. With the agreement of the Committee the meeting would be postponed until after the date of the Council Forum and the Committee would consider the recommendations outlined in the Ofsted report, together with any issues referred to it as part of their review.

## **2. Regeneration and Neighbourhoods**

The Regeneration and Neighbourhoods OSC met on 6<sup>th</sup> December and progressed their work programme through consideration of the issue of Community Safety, Community Relations and Cohesion. The Committee looked at the work that was being undertaken and the key risks and issues that were being addressed. The Committee made the following recommendations' that will be taken forward into their final report on the topic.

1. That the Committee endorse the Social Integration Strategy.
2. That the important work of elected members be noted and that members be reminded of their roles.
3. That the training needs of members be addressed to ensure that they have the tools to do the job.
4. That the aim for every directorate to own and feed into the social integration action plan be supported.
5. That the Committee request that a report be submitted setting out examples of the work that is taking place in directorate, the steps to deliver this work, how they will measure success and a time-line over which this will be delivered setting out key milestones.

6. That the Committee note the need for strong Leadership within the Council to continue to champion and support integration and cohesion.
7. That the Committee support the commitment to work with the government on new integration programmes into the future for the benefit of the borough.

The Committee will continue its work programme at the next meeting and will examine road safety and issues associated with this area of provision and enforcement. The Committee will also review the income from Parking

### **3. Health and Adults OSC**

The Committee met on 4<sup>th</sup> December and received presentations on the Local Delivery Partnership. The partnership would transform health delivery in the region and deliver change across Lancashire and South Cumbria. The partnership had been identified as advanced by NHS England and demonstrating the strength of the collective efforts of organisation in the region to maintain and improve performance and provided a strong platform to build on.

The Committee also received information on the Pennine Lancashire Together a Healthier Future Transformation Programme. The programme was a continuing development of detailed design and proposed implementation plans. It also progressed the development of the shadow Accountable Care Partnership for Pennine Lancashire. The Committee considered the proposed outcomes of the plan and how these would be progressed. The Committee were informed of the financial challenges that would need to be faced together with the opportunities to improve services, invest in preventative services and use of digital technologies. The steps towards the accountable care partnership were set out and the public engagement that had taken place throughout the year.

The Committee drew attention the issues that would be faced by residents of the borough in particular with the creation of hubs and the transportation problems and costs that may present difficulties. The Committee will continue to monitor the development of the partnership to ensure that the best services were provided to meet the needs of residents.

The Committee will look to progress its work programme in the next few meetings and will look at the following issues-

- The scrutiny of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Social care and the NHS
- Contracts taken over from the NHS
- Mental Health
- Health Watch.

#### 4. **Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

The Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued with its work programme looking at key issues relating to RIPA and the Shape of the New Council.

##### The Use of RIPA.

The Committee looked at the use of the Councils powers under RIPA. They were informed that there had been no requests for use of RIPA since the last report to the Committee in February 2017. The Committee noted that the Councils Procedural guide had been generally positive and was found to be “comprehensive and provided sound guidance to practitioners” further training was also being undertaken for officers on the use of the Council’s powers. The Committee noted the current situation.

##### The New Council.

The Committee noted that there were a number of key issues that had been determined by the Policy Council including

- The reduction in the number of members from 64 to 51, with 17 wards with 3 seats.
- The elections (following the all-out election in May 2018) would be by thirds and
- Leadership of the Council would be through a Leader with an Executive Board.

The Committee welcome and acknowledge the acceptance by the Leader and Policy Council, of the thoughts, scope and outline the Committee proposed for the Council structure post May 2018. This gives credence to the Committees work over several months to ensure a seamless transition in the Councils twentieth anniversary year. The recommendations of the Policy and Corporate Resources OSC relating to scrutiny had been incorporated with three Committees looking at Place, People and Resources. The Committee would keep the issue under review and ensure that the governance requirements were addressed.

##### Progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Committee looked at the work of the three other Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the key recommendations and issues arising from their work programmes. These recommendations and the Executives response to them will continue to be monitored to ensure that scrutiny adds value to the work of the executive and to the services delivered to the residents of the Borough.

**Jim Shorrocks Chair, Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

**Kevin Connor vice- Chair, Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

**January 2018**

## REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018

### **Sport England place pilot**

As members will be aware, Blackburn with Darwen Council, on behalf of Pennine Lancashire, successfully bid for funding from Sports England to trail-blaze new ways of transforming sport and activity. We are one of 12 areas which will receive funding to create innovative partnerships that make it easier for people to access sport and physical activity.

Pennine Lancashire's priority group will be almost 40,000 people with depression or anxiety and stress. This group is more likely to have other long term conditions as well as other challenges so supporting them to get active and involved in sport will make a big difference to their lives.

This is really good news for Blackburn with Darwen and the wider area. The funding will help us come up with some really innovative and long lasting solutions. Working closely with Sport England the formulation of the detailed long term delivery plan will inform grant funding and how it can be best used across Pennine Lancashire.

This success is also a tangible example of what we can achieve by working together. The bid judges praised the strong ties that exist between local government, the NHS and community and voluntary sector seen through the work being done by the Together A Healthier Future programme.

### **Digital Health Schools Programme**

An exciting new digital programme for schools combining health apps with the national curriculum has launched at two Blackburn schools. St Thomas's Centre on Lambeth Street and Witton Park Academy will now join schools from across Lancashire participating in the 'Digital Healthy Schools' scheme.

The programme teaches pupils to think about how mobile apps can help them manage their health. It is being funded by the Healthier Lancashire and South Cumbria Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) and being delivered by Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Applications (ORCHA).

I am delighted pupils in our borough will benefit from this programme. Helping students engage with technology to manage their health is something that will be important for their future wellbeing.

### **Health and Care**

As members will be aware, the draft Pennine Plan has been published for people to have their say. I have circulated a draft and an executive summary and there is an easy read version on the programme's website.

It's really important that residents get the chance to have their say on this plan so I would be grateful if members could continue to highlight it as well as taking time to share their views.

If you have any queries about the programme please contact the programme director [Dionne.standbridge@nhs.net](mailto:Dionne.standbridge@nhs.net)

You can also send your questions and queries to me and I will make sure they are received by the programme. More details can be found at: [www.togetherahealthierfuture.org.uk](http://www.togetherahealthierfuture.org.uk)

### **Good neighbour awards**

Thank you to all members who have submitted nominations for this year's Good Neighbour Awards, which is one of our key Your Call events we hold each year.

As you know, the awards help celebrate all the people in the borough who go the extra mile to make Blackburn with Darwen a better place.

We have had over 100 nominations from all across the borough, which is the most ever received. Each nomination is heart-warming and they all confirm that the borough is one of the friendliest and most neighbourly areas in the country.

I was really pleased with the number of partners who signed up to support the awards such as MGS Technical Plastics, Blackburn with Darwen CCG, Capita, McDonald's and Blackburn Rovers. As well as our media partners the Lancashire Telegraph.

I look forward to celebrating all the nominees at the awards evening on 15<sup>th</sup> February at King George's Hall.

### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

Holocaust Memorial Day is a day to remember all the victims of genocide, oppression and torture and to honour survivors. The commemoration will take place on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018, 1.30pm at Blackburn Town Hall.

The event is a partnership effort, with contributions on the day from BwD Council, the Interfaith Forum and schools from across the Borough.

The day commemorates all those who were affected by the Holocaust, in which millions lost their lives. The ceremony will act as a point of remembrance for more recent genocides such as those in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur.

The day will also give us time to reflect on shameful periods in the history of the modern world, including the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar (formerly Burma).

The theme for 2018 will be exploring how language has been used in the past and how it is used in the present day.

Elected Members and residents are invited to attend. For more information, please contact Democratic Services.

### **Fairerpower Red Rose Energy partnership**

Fairerpower Red Rose was formally launched in Blackburn with Darwen on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Residents of the Borough now have access to a competitively priced, customer focused energy service that may help them to save money on their energy bills. The Fairerpower site is: <http://fairerpower.co.uk/red-rose/> and the offer should also now be appearing on energy price comparison web sites.

Since the launch, the scheme has since been publicised in the Lancashire Telegraph, The Shuttle and Team Talk. Partners, including BwD CVS, Care Network and the Healthy Living Centre, have all been introduced to Fairerpower Red Rose and, in the New Year, the Fairerpower Commissioning Manager will give presentations about Fairerpower Red Rose to these organisations and their partners to spread the message.

The Council will also continue to publicise Fairerpower Red Rose and encourage residents to compare prices and switch energy provider where this will save them money.

### **Ward profiles and data**

A training session has been scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> February, 6pm in the Council Chamber, which will cover some of the key sources of data and statistics available to Members, as well as the new ward profiles for the 17 new wards. I would urge all members to attend.



## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

**COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN  
DATE: 25 JANUARY 2018**

### **CAR PARK MARSHALING – PLEASINGTON CEMETERY**

The Council organised an accredited training programme for car park marshals in February 2017 and we were delighted to recruit 24 volunteers, who attended this training. Following this training, the Council launched the volunteer car park marshalling scheme to assist traffic management when large Muslim burials were booked at Pleasington Cemetery.

Brent Stevenson Stonemasons fully funded the purchase of 12 high visibility jackets and 12 walkie talkies for the volunteer car park marshals to ensure that the marshals are easily identifiable and can maintain regular communication with each other when a funeral is taking place.

The Council will be organising a further accredited training programme for up to 25 new volunteer car park marshals in February/March 2018 to ensure we have sufficient qualified volunteer marshals to provide support for Muslim burials.

### **BROWN STREET CAR PARK**

Brown Street car park opened on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016 as a new Pay & Display car park for Blackburn Town Centre.

Over the course of the first few months the usage figures and income from the car park were low; this was always expected as it does take time for road users to change their parking habits. However as the year progressed, Brown Street has proven to be more and more popular with road users coming into Blackburn Town Centre and is now one of the Council's busiest car parks.

### **OLD BANK LANE CAR PARK SCHEME**

The Old Bank Lane Car Park scheme is progressing on schedule and should be open for public use from April 2018. The car park is located next to Royal Blackburn Hospital and will provide 500 car parking spaces for visitors to the Hospital and local businesses, whilst at the same time, alleviating significant road traffic congestion on Haslingdon road.

### **PAY AND DISPLAY INCOME**

In March 2017, 52 new Pay and Display car parking machines were installed throughout Blackburn Town centre, replacing 72 older P+D machines which were dilapidated and breaking down on a regular basis. The new machines accept coin, card and contactless payment. There have been no faults with the machines since they were installed and as a result, P&D income for the year on both on-street and off-street parking bays is £389,260, this is 17% higher than over the same period in the previous year.

## **GREEN WASTE**

Following the success of the first year of the green waste subscription scheme, the opportunity to subscribe for 2018 collections went live on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Up to Christmas, there had been 4,127 households that have signed up for the “early – bird” offer of £20 per bin subscription.

Householders can sign up to the subscription scheme online, or over the telephone via the councils contact centre, or with cash/cheque payments accepted at the libraries across the borough and also at Davyfield Road depot. Of those having signed up thus far, 145 are new subscribers to the service, who did not participate last year.

The price for the service increases to £25 per bin from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018. The prices for the 2018 subscription scheme are the same as those for the 2017 scheme.

## **LITTER AND DOG FOULING ENFORCEMENT**

Kingdom Services Group commenced litter and dog fouling enforcement across the borough on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017, as part of a trial scheme. Up to the end of December 2017, there had been 2,055 fixed penalties notices (FPNs) issued, 337 of which were issued in Darwen.

To date some 14 FPNs have been issued for dog fouling. The vast majority of dog owners across the Borough look after their dogs responsibly and pick up dog mess; unfortunately some dog owners behave less responsibly, therefore Kingdom will continue to focus on this issuing FPN's to irresponsible dog owners throughout 2018.

The payment rate for FPNs is increasing month on month, with a current payment rate in excess of 45%. In the event of FPNs being unpaid, legal action through the courts will be taken.

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

**COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN  
DATE: 25 JANUARY 2018**

### **LEISURE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

#### **Partnership with Blackburn Rovers Community Trust**

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) and Blackburn Rovers Community Trust (BRCT) have entered into a partnership to strengthen sports development opportunities within Blackburn with Darwen. The partnership will seek to develop a new sports offer to schools which will be led by BRCT under the new title of the 'School Sports Partnership – Powered by Blackburn Rovers Community Trust'.

#### **Wellbeing Service**

The Wellbeing Service was recently invited to present at the Kings Fund Annual Conference at the end of November 2017 as an example of best practice for its integrated approach for tackling multiple unhealthy lifestyle behaviours. This is a significant national event with system leaders and practitioners attending to discover, learn and celebrate ways of delivering better services with a focus on population health, wellbeing and prevention.

### **LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES**

#### **Community Living Rooms**

Community Living Rooms are popular, relaxed and friendly groups who meet regularly in the welcoming surroundings of the borough's libraries. They include Blackburn Library Art Group (Thurs 10-12noon), Darwen Library Crafters (Mon 10-12noon), Darwen Library Larks choir (Mon 1.30-3pm) and the Sew & Sow group (Tues 10-12noon alternating between sewing sessions at Mill Hill and gardening sessions at Livesey Library). For more information, please contact Andrew Orr [andrew.orr@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.orr@blackburn.gov.uk) or (01254) 587941.

#### **Animals Agents prize winner announced**

Last summer the library ran a prize draw for children and young people who read 6 books to complete our Summer Reading Challenge during the school holidays. With 1,382 enrolments and 646 completions we had a lot of entry forms to check through, but the winner was Asmaa Khan who has been presented with an iPad mini, donated by BorrowBox (our ebook supplier).

### **VENUES**

Beauty and the Beast at KGH achieved record breaking attendances of 19,369 / 91% tickets sold (exceeding Aladdin's 18,947 / 88% tickets sold in 2015). The secondary spend on merchandise and confectionary was also consistently high for every performance which will contribute to a positive overall position. KGH also had strong ticket sales for The Darkness and a sell-out show for Shed Seven.

In 2018 KGH have secured a return visit by Jools Holland following his immensely popular Blackburn debut in 2017. The Mersey Beatles: Get Back Tour will play one of their very limited tour dates at KGH promoted by Live Nation who haven't booked KGH for several years.

At DLT the comedy club programming is strengthening and on the back of its growing reputation comedians are returning to DLT as part of their tours; at the end of 2017 there were sell out tour shows by Jeremy Hardy and Tom Allen. The 2018 season begins with two sell out dates for An Audience with Brian Blessed and Mark Steel is well on the way for a sell out for May 2018.

## **YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

### **Annual Youth MP Debate, House of Commons**

On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November, our Youth MP, Ummaih Shah took part in the annual Youth MP debates in the House of Commons chaired by the speaker Jon Bercow. Youth MP's from across the country debated the following five issues: Votes at 16; A curriculum to prepare us for life; Protect LGBT; Transport and Mental health

All the Youth MP's voted to decide which two issues should become the UK youth parliament's priority campaigns for the year ahead; Votes at 16 and a curriculum to prepare us for life were identified as the two areas of focus. To meet these commitments locally, BwD Youth Forum are continuing to campaign for votes at 16 and have recently met MP Kate Hollern and are awaiting a meeting with MP Jake Berry.

The young people have been working with YPS to develop a youth work curriculum on 'Life skills' to be delivered across all youth clubs in the borough. The young people have developed a Finance curriculum pack to help their peers manage finances and learn valuable budgeting skills and a health curriculum pack to assist young people with the skills to stay healthy, active and improve their wellbeing.

### **Takeover Challenge:**

On November 29<sup>th</sup> the BwD Youth Forum organised the annual Takeover Challenge event in King Georges Hall. Young people decided to invite three partner agencies to help deliver interactive workshops on three key topics:

- Domestic abuse- supported by the Wish Centre
- Substance misuse- supported by Go2
- Mental health- supported by Lancashire Mind

The above three issues are campaigns BwD Youth Forum and the Youth MPs are currently leading on and felt it was important to raise awareness on the key issues affecting children and young people across the Borough. Over 130 participants from secondary schools, colleges and youth organisations along with key professionals engaged positively in the event. Feedback from young people and professional was overwhelmingly positive.

## **ARTS AND HERITAGE SERVICES**

### **LEVEL 2**

In November, Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery launched a research and study space was launched alongside an international conference in partnership with the University of London and Blackburn College University centre. The events were well attended and included speakers from Princeton University as well as Cambridge, Oxford and London University.

Level 2 is open to the public and alongside an academic study space there are handling boxes and objects which allow the public to get up close to the collections. A series of events and activities are also programmed throughout 2018.

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PREVENTION

COUNCILLOR  
ARSHID MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR:  
SAYYED OSMAN  
DATE: January 2018

### **Community Safety**

Crime And Anti-Social Behaviour Survey - Blackburn with Darwen Council as part of the Pennine Lancashire Community Safety Partnership is asking residents and local businesses to respond to their crime and anti-social behaviour survey. The results will help set the priorities. The link to the survey is here <https://www.snapsurveys.com/wh/s.asp?k=151275266058> with paper copies are available from the town hall and libraries in Blackburn and Darwen.

Older Driver Safety - Blackburn with Darwen Council are hosting an older driver road safety event on the 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> March of this year on behalf of Pennine Lancashire Road Safety Partnership. As part of their 'driving safer for longer' campaign the event will cover health, prescribed medication, public transport developments, car safety checks, and safer driving amongst their themes.

### **Housing**

Extension Of Mandatory HMO Licensing Rules -The Department for Communities and Local Government have confirmed that during 2018 they are to extend mandatory HMO licensing to all HMO's occupied by 5 or more people living in two or more separate households. They also intend to clarify the minimum room size for rooms used for sleeping accommodation in HMO's.

This is likely to result in a significant increase in the number of licensed HMO's in the Borough.

Selective Licensing - The cost of a licence in the Darwen Selective Licensing Area will increase to the normal rate for all full applications received after 16<sup>th</sup> February 2018. This is due to the Early bird period having lapsed.

### **Homeless Reduction Act**

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017 and Government has formally announced that it is their intention to commence the Act in April 2018. The Act significantly reforms England's homelessness legislation, ensuring that more people get the help they need to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. It will provide more help to single homeless people, it extends the period of 'threatened

with homelessness' from 28 to 56 days giving local authorities a 56 day duty to prevent homelessness and a subsequent 56 day duty to relieve homelessness for all households, irrespective of any priority need or local connection.

The new Act is the most significant change in legislation governing homelessness since 1996 and it is the first time that homelessness prevention becomes a statutory duty. It will require a substantial change in the way that the Housing Needs and Homelessness services respond to requests for housing assistance and homeless applications and how they work with other services and partner agencies to do this. We could see an expected increase in 'footfall' of around 50%.

### **Neighbourhoods**

Employability- A series of workshops are being delivered to prepare residents for Universal Credit. This is part of a wider drive across all our services to support people to understand the implications of Universal Credit and to minimise any negative impact. We are working closely with DWP to ensure the offer compliments the support they are providing. The council's Adult Learning Team have joined forces with Lancashire Adult Learning and Blackpool Adult Learning to ensure there is a consistent offer to DWP customers across the county. The work dovetails with our ESIF project, Strengthening Communities, Volunteering in Lancashire (SCVL). SCVL currently has 93 people signed up and receiving a range of support to move them closer to employment.

Talk English - The Talk English programme which was due to end in March 2017 received funding for a further year and has won a national award at the Festival of Learning Awards 2017. We deliver Talk English in BwD as part of a North West collaboration - follow this link to read all about it, see photos and a short video about the project.

<https://www.festivaloflearning.org.uk/award-winners/talk-english-project/>

Adult Learning Brochure - Our new Adult Learning brochure is now available at [www.bwdlearning.org](http://www.bwdlearning.org) . The brochure can also be downloaded from our Facebook page. Brochures will be delivered to venues next week. If you require any copies please contact Gulnaz Usman –

[gulnaz.usman@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:gulnaz.usman@blackburn.gov.uk)

Brian Mercer Trust Fund Pot – Your Call - Round two of the small grants fund was advertised just before Christmas with a closing date of 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018. Up to £500 per grant is available for BwD community groups to access. The criteria for successful applications includes the recruiting and supporting of volunteers. A further £10K of the fund is earmarked for equipment which groups may need to support their activity. Groups can apply for both pots of cash and the application form [is available for download here](#).





## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES – 25th January 2018

COUNCILLOR ANDY KAY

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
CHIEF OFFICER: DENISE PARK

### **Benefits**

The Benefits Team continue to work closely with staff from the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) in preparation for the 'full' service roll out of Universal Credit. It has been confirmed that Blackburn with Darwen's date will be the 14th February 2018.

Following a full review of roll out in other areas, it has been agreed that two Customer Service staff will be co-located in the DWP office, along with resources from Shelter. The co-location will provide support for those claimants with no digital skills and provide for more effective signposting to other Council services. Shelter will also work closely with the DWP to address debt, housing and welfare issues that arise from Universal Credit.

### **Council Tax and Business Rates**

It was previously reported to Council Forum that the Council Tax and Business Rates Teams would be adopting the use of bankruptcy proceedings against companies and individuals who have large unpaid arrears. In the last few months the new approach has enabled the council to collect or resolve arrears of £504,620.

Following a review of the processes applied and outcomes of those cases that have been progressed through to bankruptcy proceedings, it has been agreed that further cases will be selected and processed accordingly.

### **Digital**

The Digital Board and dedicated Digital Task Team (DTT) have continued to review individual service areas within the Council. These reviews have enabled digital baselines to be developed and documented and digital roadmaps produced for each service reviewed, against which future progress can be measured.

Both the 'website' and the 'digital borough' workstreams have continued to review key aspects of the programme. The website workstream has now fully reviewed the current website and considered the development options available in order to produce a business case for consideration.

The team working on the 'digital borough' have now modelled the digital facilities and support available across the borough from the public, voluntary and business sectors. The next phase will look to identify gaps in provision, and how this information can be shared and communicated across organisations and with citizens.

### **IT**

IT continue to implement new and upgraded systems to deliver improved services and efficiencies including a new Leisure Management System, a new ticketing system for King George's Hall and Darwen Library Theatre, digitisation of Registrars on-line, Planning Services, Property Management and Revenues and Benefits, with other system implementations in the early stages of development including a new Legal Case Management system and implementation of a new Pennine Lancashire Building Control system.

Work is also continuing on the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which takes effect in May 2018 and sets out clear guidelines on how EU citizen data is handled and on the ownership rights of each citizen over their data.

## **HR & Apprentices Update**

The team reports another successful year delivering HR services to schools and focus on continuous improvement to customers internally and externally. Further self-service functionality via the HR system will be introduced for managers across the Council as will the final stages of the transition to one monthly payroll for all Council employees by February 2018. This completes a programme of efficiency changes which has resulted in savings for the council.

The annual apprenticeship recruitment has been a success again this year with 17 new apprentices in post. HR continue to monitor the use of the apprentice levy to ensure the Council can maximise the opportunities for employees.

## **Governance & Democracy**

Democratic Services are working towards putting in place arrangements for the 'new Council' in May 2018 and the team will be focusing on the administration for the "all out" elections. To date electoral canvass and registration has been undertaken and the electoral register of the existing wards and boundaries was published on 1 December 2017. The Blackburn with Darwen (Electoral Changes) Order 2017 was made by Parliament on 13 December 2017. Work is now being undertaken for the preparation of the new electoral register based on the new ward and boundaries created by the Order, and will be published on 1 February 2018.

Complaints are now managed in one service, and we have seen a 35% reduction in complaints escalating to the Ombudsman this last year compared to 2016. The Council has received no decisions of maladministration that has led to a full report being issued against us. We have also overturned two decisions of 'fault' by successfully challenging the Ombudsman and their investigations.

## **Legal Services**

The Coroner areas of Preston and West Lancashire, East Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen formally merged on 1st December 2017. Known as Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen, the new jurisdiction will be led by Dr James Adeley as the Senior Coroner, supported by Mr Richard Taylor and Mr James Newman as Area Coroners. The merger follows a formal consultation period by the Ministry of Justice during August and September this year, and will see the jurisdiction dealing with approximately 4,500 deaths per year.

As well as saving costs the amalgamation will provide opportunities to improve the service to bereaved families including the introduction of CT post-mortem examinations rather than traditional autopsies and the larger size of jurisdiction will also allow the majority of Lancashire to be better prepared to deal with larger incidents.

On 11th December 2017 following a prosecution by the Council at Preston Crown Court Derek Bradshaw received 19 months imprisonment for three offences of participating in a fraudulent business, contrary to section 9 of the Fraud Act 2006 to which he pleaded guilty. The Council previously prosecuted this defendant as a result of which on 6th March 2015 he was sentenced for fraud and obtaining credit as a bankrupt in connection with building work for members of the public. In short he pleaded guilty to taking £36-38,000 from home owners to do building work, made a start but never finished the work. He was sentenced to 27 Months custody for the first count and 12 months concurrent for the second.

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS & EDUCATION**

**COUNCILLOR DAVE HARLING**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING**

**DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG**

**DATE: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

### **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Blackburn with Darwen Primary schools continue to do well. Overall performance in the main measure (% of children at expected levels or better in Reading, Writing and Maths) rose by 8% on last year, to be within 1% of the national average. Many local schools improved by more than that and the performance at some of the schools in the performance tables is truly outstanding, given the challenges that local schools and families face.

Performance in Maths remains especially strong and the performance of vulnerable groups remains stronger than their peers nationally, whether children in our care; children with identified special educational needs, or disadvantaged children. The performance of local secondary schools remains stronger still – in aggregate at the national average in terms of the qualifications students leave school with; and second best in the whole of the north for the progress that students make during their time in secondary school. Again, there is particular strength in Maths, but also in English and Science.

### **SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

In the Primary School Performance Tables, published by the Government shortly before Christmas, children at St Barnabas & St Paul's Church of England Primary School on Oakenhurst Road, were revealed to make the best progress in Mathematics of any school in the whole of England – first out of over 16,000 schools in the country. In addition, provisional information about the GCSE performance of secondary schools also published by the Department for Education shows that Tauheedul Islam Girls High School and Tauheedul Islam Boys High School remain first and third nationally for the progress made by students during their school career (out of over 6,500 secondary schools).

### **SCHOOL INSPECTIONS UPDATE**

Eight Ofsted school inspection reports have been published since the last Council Forum report. Roe Lee Park Primary school improved on their previous judgement and secured 'good' in all areas. Holy Souls Roman Catholic Primary was also judged to be 'good' with personal development, behaviour and welfare deemed to be 'outstanding.'

St. Barnabas' CofE Primary Academy received it's first inspection since becoming an Academy in October 2014 and was judged as 'good' in all areas with the inspector commenting that pupils thrive within a calm and purposeful learning environment.

Three primary schools had short inspections and all maintained their previous judgement of 'good.' These were Lammack Primary School, Ashleigh Primary and Darwen St James' CofE Primary Academy.

Two schools, St. Aidan's CofE primary and Darwen Vale received 'requires improvement' judgements, however St. Aidan's received a 'good' for early year's provision and for personal development, behaviour and welfare.

## **CAROL CONCERT IN THE CATHEDRAL**

300 primary aged pupils from across 18 schools took part in two Christmas concerts at Blackburn Cathedral. Each school sang their own individual song as well as joining together with the Master Choir to sing two songs and three Carols. On the second night the audience also enjoyed a fantastic performance by the Bolton's Youth String Orchestra 'Bolton New Century Strings'.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) STRATEGY 2017-2020**

A new SEND strategy has been developed with the involvement of Blackburn with Darwen children and young people and their families. The purpose of this strategy is to set out how Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackburn with Darwen' Clinical Commissioning Group and partners (including education and health providers) will work together to provide services and support for children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND and their families.

The strategy has been shaped by a programme of engagement activities designed to ensure that the strategy was genuinely co-produced with stakeholders and reflects the views of our local community.

Families made it clear that they want tailored support, that is delivered at the right time by professionals who respect their views and place them at the centre of the decision making process. Families want to be aware of the support, advice and guidance services that are available for them and that information on how to access these and the eligibility criteria for these services is transparent. The strategy can be viewed at the Blackburn with Darwen Local Offer Website.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) STRATEGIC REVIEW**

A strategic review of SEND provision in Blackburn with Darwen is being undertaken by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI) in partnership with Contact. Both organisations are strategic partners of the Department for Education, with significant experience working with local areas across the country to implement the SEND reforms. They will evaluate how well the SEND system works in Blackburn with Darwen, how it supports children and young people with SEND from early years and across schools and colleges.

Initial desktop research and review of the Council's Local Offer website has been completed and attention has turned to stakeholder engagement with a variety of stakeholder groups consulted. The report will be submitted in January 2018 and will include findings and recommendations to support the local area to develop their 0-25 high needs provision. The report will also help to influence the Local Authority's SEND inspection self-evaluation form.

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE COUNCILLOR MUSTAFA DESAI**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING DIRECTORS:  
DOMINIC HARRISON (HEALTH)  
SAYYED OSMAN (ADULT SOCIAL CARE)  
DATE: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

### **HEALTH**

#### **EAT WELL MOVE MORE SHAPE UP STRATEGY 2017-2020**

In November, the Council's Executive Board signed off the plans for a Breastfeeding Friendly Borough. To support the ambition of giving every child in Blackburn with Darwen the Best Start in Life, the Council will be working with the Baby Friendly team at East Lancashire Hospitals Trust to support breastfeeding mums to continue to breastfeed their baby for as long as they wish. The plan will encourage the whole community to support mums to feel confident to breastfeed wherever they want to and to normalise breastfeeding.

To tackle obesity and physical inactivity, the Schools Catering Manager, Public Health Nursing Service and Blackburn Rovers Football Community Trust are supporting the roll out to every primary school of a locally designed school food policy, along with the promotion of the Daily Mile and associated training to support teachers to embed this into the school day.

The partners of the strategy will be supporting the revised Change 4 Life Sugar Smart campaign launched in January 2018 via their social media channels. The campaign encourages parents to be aware of the amount of hidden sugar in food and recommends that children be given a maximum of two 100 calorie snacks per day. This will help to reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers and will also reduce levels of tooth decay.

#### **'TIME TO CHANGE' HUB**

Blackburn with Darwen Council and partners Lancashire Mind and One Voice have been named a Time to Change Hub for working together to improve local attitudes and behaviours towards people experiencing mental health problems. The Hub has been created using insights from the national Time to Change campaign, run by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness, combined with knowledge gained from the local community, which will enable more people to take action to challenge stigma and discrimination across the borough.

Local people with lived experience of mental ill-health and who are passionate about changing attitudes in their community will work as champions in the Hub. Partners will work with local people, schools and community groups, and local employers are being encouraged to sign up to the Time to Change Employer Pledge which demonstrates their commitment to changing how we think and act about mental health in the workplace and make sure that employees who are facing these problems feel supported.

#### **NEW PUBLIC HEALTH DASHBOARD**

In October, Public Health England (PHE) launched a new local authority public health dashboard, which will support councillors and senior council officers in making decisions on how they prioritise resources across the following range of public health service areas: best possible start in life, child obesity, drug [Page 50 of 68](#) alcohol treatment, NHS Health Checks, sexual health services and tobacco control.

Compared with 16 similarly deprived local authorities, Blackburn with Darwen has :-

- Three service areas substantially better than average – child obesity, drug treatment, sexual health services
- Three better than average - best possible start in life, alcohol treatment and tobacco control
- One worse than average - NHS Health Checks

## **ADULT SOCIAL CARE**

### **SHORT TERM BREAKS SERVICE INSPECTION**

St Aidan's Short Term Breaks service was rated 'good' following a recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. The inspector reported that "the home was relaxed, happy and people were smiling and appeared comfortable. Staff were patient and took time to understand people and used various methods to encourage people to express themselves." The report also noted that relatives, care coordinators, keyworkers and appropriate healthcare professionals had been involved in the care planning process.

Relatives were also asked their opinion of the service and responses included, "my relative really looks forward to going to the home and is really safe. We are all reassured by that." "The service is excellent. The manager and their staff are really good and caring." "Staff keep us involved and informed with what's going on and we are encouraged to meet regularly."

### **SUCCESSFUL CO- LOCATION OF THE LEARNING DISABILITY TEAM WITH LANCASHIRE CARE FOUNDATION TRUST (LCFT)**

In October 2016 the Learning Disability Social Work team co-located with the LCFT Community Learning Disability Team within Darwen Resource Centre. The team comprises of local authority Social Workers and Assessment and Reviewing Officers alongside Community Nurses, Support Workers, Psychiatry, Psychology and Speech and Language Therapists from the Community Learning Disability Team.

Reflecting on the first year of co-location, the move has provided service users with a single point of access for health and social care learning disability services which has resulted in a more effective service that can respond faster to crisis situations. Benefits for Social Workers include access to support and guidance from health professionals and up to date health information regarding service users.

### **LOCALITY INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAMS**

Four locality Integrated Neighbourhood Teams continue to be developed across Blackburn with Darwen, with the Darwen Team now in place. Co-located at Darwen Health Centre is a team of Social Workers, Reablement staff and Independent Living Services representatives with staff sharing office space with colleagues from district nursing, the rapid assessment team, mental health services and the voluntary sector. The West Team office based at Barbara Castle Way Health Centre is due to open in January 2018 and plans are being developed for the North and East Teams.

Weekly meetings are attended by all relevant stakeholders including social workers, reablement, community nursing teams, hospice specialist nurses, mental health teams, therapists, neighbourhoods representatives and community connectors, voluntary sector organisations and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

A Locality & Integration Lead for the Council is now in post to work alongside Lancashire Care Foundation Trust to develop the teams and support the integration.

## **CRAFT WORKSHOP PROGRAMME AT THE MAKING ROOMS**

The Making Rooms in Blackburn has been awarded funding from National Lottery 'Awards for All' to deliver a craft workshop programme for people with a learning disability. The activities will utilise the digital design and fabrication processes at the Making Rooms.

Following consultation with service users, carers and staff at the Stansfeld Centre, a programme of activities was put together to provide personal empowerment, enhance confidence and develop new skills. The 24-week programme consists of a 2-hour workshop once a week. The workshops will cover 6 different craft activities, including wool art, t-shirt printing, pottery, puzzle making, candle making and pixel art collage.

## **APPLE HOUSE AND BALMORAL HOUSING UPDATE**

Apple House and Balmoral housing developments for people with learning disabilities are progressing well with Apple House now complete and new tenants moving in. The 12 one bedrooled flats have all been allocated and the new residents are planning to grow their own vegetables and build garden furniture from recycled materials.

For Balmoral, all 9 flats have been allocated, with many of the new tenants relocating from houses which were becoming unsuitable for their needs, due to declining mobility. The new residents will be developing the garden and have requested a greenhouse and shed.

## **RIVERSIDE HEIGHTS**

The first phase of the housing with care scheme bungalows at Riverside Heights in Darwen will be released during the last week in January. The scheme is for local people aged 50 years and over with an assessed need for care and/or support. All 12 properties have been allocated to people nominated by Social Services and the two bedrooled bungalows have been finished to a high standard.

## **ALBION MILL**

Work will commence soon on the new extra and intermediate care scheme (Albion Mill) which is a joint venture between the local authority and Blackburn with Darwen Clinical Commissioning Group. Plans have been revised following a stakeholder event in August and a ground breaking ceremony will be held in the Spring.



## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION**

**COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: IAN RICHARDSON**

**DATE: 25 January 2018**

### **RAIL**

Over the last decade the Council has continued to invest in the Borough's rail infrastructure, to meet ambitious growth and sustainable transport objectives. Investment from the Council and Central Government's Growth Deal has enabled the operation of all-day half hourly rail services to Manchester from December 2017, as specified within the newly let Northern Rail franchise through Rail North. The borough has seen strong recent growth in terms of rail patronage. Blackburn, as a major hub for travel in East Lancashire, was used by over 1.27 million passengers in 2016/17 (up 10% from 2015/16) and Darwen by over 300,000 passengers (up 37% from 2015/16) although the figure in 2015/16 was affected by engineering works on the line. The Council continues to push for future improvements, including better services to Preston, West Yorkshire and Ribble Valley through Transport for the North and Network Rail investment strategies and programmes.

### **DARWEN TOWN CENTRE**

The public realm design for the Market Square was presented to the Design Reference Group at DACA for comment in November and is now agreed. Detailed surveys, design development, material palette and planting plans are now underway with tenders out the last week of February to contractors who have expressed an interest through the new framework. Updated 3D visuals will be available in early February and will be promoted on the site, through the media and to residents to keep everyone fully informed. A new external entrance for the Annex will also be installed with improved signage. We have programmed the contractors to be on site in April and work is also being undertaken to get operational issues and construction phasing informed by the needs of the markets and surrounding businesses as well as the events planned during the period. The work will be completed by the Autumn in good time for the Christmas trading period.

### **CATHEDRAL QUARTER**

In December, Cathedral Square hosted the Grace Davies homecoming X Factor Concert for ITV. This was a fantastic success with approximately 4,000 people attending and enjoying the experience of live music from Grace accompanied by Sharon Osbourne and was the finale to a day spent in the Borough visiting all her old haunts. Starbucks opened in December filling the last of the ground floor units in Cathedral Square following on from Café Northcote, Turtle Bay and A Mano Italian restaurant. All have reported good Christmas trading periods. The offices in One Cathedral Square are now almost fully occupied with only one 2<sup>nd</sup> floor suite remaining which is currently being marketed.

### **MILL HILL PILOT 20mph LIMIT**

The Mill Hill 20 mph pilot has been in trial for three years now. The scheme was designed with the primary focus of being sign only with no engineering features to establish if this alone would bring the speeds down. The results have proved conclusively that without any engineering features and or physical alterations to the highway that 20mph signs do not affect driver behaviour and this potentially leads to

a dangerous situation for road users. The pilot has ended and the roads will revert to 30pmh limit.

### **NORTHGATE REGENERATION**

The £16.9 million regeneration of the Northgate area is progressing with detailed design underway on a number of schemes. The investment includes the new Cinema, Blakey Moor Townscape Heritage scheme, improved public realm in front of King George’s Hall and the Square in front of the Victoria Street building as well as the planned improvements to access and the highways infrastructure into the north side of the town centre. We are now progressing the acquisition of part of the Blakey Moor terrace after lengthy negotiations and work is underway on 35 Northgate (former Baroque). The area is becoming the focus of the new embryonic night time economy alongside Cathedral Quarter with new businesses opened including Bees Knees, Shhh Cocktail Bar, and the Lemon Tree with Hugo Burritos to follow.

The planning application for the new Cinema and car park on the former Waves site will be submitted week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> January.

### **HOUSING UPDATE**

We have 11 active developers in the Borough working across 15 sites yielding over 1300 homes. In addition we are in discussions with two new entrants to the market who will soon be commencing with developments in Darwen. One of the market entrants is a large housebuilder new to Blackburn and the other is a small boutique developer who will soon be submitting an application for the Belgrave Mill site in Darwen. This was a previously stalled site and shows great confidence in the market within Darwen. A list of the developers is shown in the below table.

<b>Developer</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>No of houses</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Persimmon Homes	Parsonage Rd	85	On site in construction
Wainhomes	Gib Lane Phase B	79	On site in construction
Wainhomes	Red House Gardens	35	On site in construction
Wainhomes	Yew Tree Drive	272	Mobilising
Hearle Homes	Crossfield Street	38	On site in construction
Edgworth Developments	Crowthorn Village	25	On site in construction
McDermott Homes	Eclipse Mill	51	On site in construction
McDermott Homes	Roman Road	15	On site in construction
Together Housing	Ellenshaw	46	On site in construction
Kingswood Homes	Gib Lane Phase A	167	On site in construction
Story Homes	Gib Lane Phase C	205	On site in construction
Places for People	Newfield Drive	36	Completed
To be published when contracts exchanged, late January	Pole Lane North	126	Mobilising to commence in Feb 2018
Keepmoat	Shorey Bank	119	On site in construction
Flitcraft	Waterfield Mill	27	Mobilising to commence in Feb 2018

Younique Housing	Belgrave Mill	61	Planning application to submit Feb 2018, hope to start on site in Summer 2018
		1387	

## HOUSING SALES UPDATE

- Kingswood Homes (Green Hills at Gib Lane) – 17 units sold / reserved, even though the show home is yet to open (due end Jan).
- McDermott Homes (Eclipse Mill at Feniscowles) – 10 units reserved, developer really pleased with the sales rate.
- Persimmon Homes (Parsonage Road) - 62 units sold / reserved.
- Wainhomes (Gib Lane) – 33 units sold /reserved.
- Wainhomes (Bear Hotel site) – 18 units sold / reserved.

In terms of developer feedback:

- Completions and reservations are progressing well, better than anticipated.
- Buyers are coming from a mix of areas, although there have been more local buyers to date.
- The urban extension sites are selling to professional working people, as expected because they are larger family houses.
- Buyers are advising developers that the new sites are popular because there has been very little new build development in some parts of the borough for a considerable time.
- Buyers have commented that they were considering moving out of town due to lack of suitable new build options, but are now staying due to the new developments. According to one of the main housebuilders, this pent up demand has resulted in a good level of sales.
- Despite having no formal sales presence on one of the inner urban private sites, the units are already selling well to local buyers – mainly first time buyers.
- The Yew Tree Drive site in North Blackburn, which has not yet started construction, is seeing a great deal of interest from potential purchasers residing outside the borough – people who currently live in the Ribble Valley, South Ribble and Preston, but work in Blackburn. There's also a good level of interest from purchasers from within the Borough.

## HIVE

The Hive network has continued to grow with membership now standing at over 385 local businesses and organisations. The network continues to promote the borough as an excellent place to do business, continues to link businesses with educational establishments through the Hive Business School and enables excellent links between the Council and the private sector.

The Hive Steering Group continue to meet monthly and have recently finalised their latest Business Plan. There is also a member engagement survey planned over the next two months to create a clear vision for Hive and

will shape Hive priorities and work programmes over the next 3 years.

**FESTIVAL OF MAKING**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> national Festival of Making will be held in Blackburn Town Centre over the weekend of May 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 2018.

## **NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN CARE & CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INFORMATION**

Recent regional analysis and national publicity has pointed to increasing demand pressures on children's services. The North West region and the North generally has seen rising numbers of children in care over the past 12 months, especially children and young people in older age groups with very complex social and behavioural issues. Blackburn with Darwen has moved towards the regional norm with a marked rise in the number of children in care and the number placed in the most costly residential placements.

The number of cases open to Children's Social Care has risen through the autumn and winter and currently stands at 1660. The number of Children in Care is 394: 60 higher than the equivalent period 12 months ago. There has been a fall in the number of children subject to child protection plans – down to 256 having been as high as 370 during the late Spring. Over 500 children are being supported by Early Help services, 17 children have been adopted since April 2017 and 17 children are currently placed in adoptive placements.

## **REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY LAUNCH**

The Regional Adoption Agency 'Adoption NoW' launched on 20th November and has brought together adoption services from Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside, as well as incorporating voluntary agencies Adoption Matters and Caritas Care. Many staff will continue to have Duke Street as their main base but will share some central resources in Bolton.

Adoption NoW will cover adopter recruitment, post adoption support and family finding for children. The aim is to pool resources so that more specialist recruitment of adopters can take place to increase the number of adopters available. There is a real need for new adopters to come forward for children of all ages and level of need, but particularly for sibling groups. With an increase in adopters, it is hoped that this will decrease the amount of time that children are waiting for the right family and increase the number of in-house matches.

## **CHRISTMAS ROUND UP**

- *Secret Santa*

Thank you to all who have donated to the local charity, Secret Santa, which has worked to raise money over the past 12 months to provide 700 new Christmas gift bundles to children and young people in need across the borough. The children's centre network was used as a distribution point with age appropriate gift sets shared with children and young people aged 0-16+, of which 500 sets were gifted to children supported by Children's Services. Other beneficiaries included children, young people and families supported by Nightsafe, the WISH Centre, Maryvale Mother and Baby Unit, the Homeless Families Unit and the Foster Carers Association.

Thank you also for the generous gift donations from Council staff, Lions Club Darwen, PM & M Chartered Accounts, Hollins Grove Congregational Church, SAM's Charity, St Silas' Church, St Bartholomew's Church and Rucomfy bean bags.

- *Children's Centres Activities*

In December, Great Places Housing and the Kingdom Outreach charity delivered 'cooking on a budget' workshops in children's centres for 50 families open to social care. Across the 2 hours families discussed 'cooking on a budget' and took part in a demonstration on how to prepare a roast dinner and then had a meal together. As a thank you for taking part, the families received a food shopping voucher on 22<sup>nd</sup> December and pantomime tickets.

Each children's centre nursery held a carol or nativity concert where parents were invited to come and sing along with their children. Across the children's centre network children also enjoyed Christmas parties and on 14th December the community cafes served Christmas lunch.

- *Foster Families Christmas Party*

Foster Families enjoyed a visit from Santa at their annual Christmas Party on 17<sup>th</sup> December at Longshaw Sports & Social Club, with additional gifts from the Secret Santa charity. Highlights included an entertainer and a raffle and all proceeds from the event will support future Foster Carer Association activities.

- *Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Forum Christmas Party*

15 children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities who are members of the SEND Forum, enjoyed a fantastic Disco and Magic Show Christmas party with their parents and siblings at Cherry Tree Cricket Club. The forum consults with children and young people about local SEND provision and development including leisure and social opportunities, health, education, and social care experiences.

At the last forum the children and young people made their own clay Christmas tree decorations which were presented to them as gifts at the party in addition to a selection box and Christmas pencils from Santa.

## **CARING DADS PROGRAMME**

A multi-agency Caring Dads programme is providing opportunities for fathers in the borough to make positive changes in their relationship with their children and the mother of their children. The approach recognises the importance of working with fathers in order to change controlling, abusive and neglectful behaviours. Research indicates that men are more likely to engage with services to address their abusive behaviours if they think it will benefit their relationship with their children.

The 17 group work sessions encourage participants to reflect on their own childhood experiences, consider how they want their children to feel, and what they need to do as parents to ensure that their children can experience safety and emotional warmth. Models and strategies include child centred parenting, cognitive behavioural therapy, and goal-centred and solution focused approaches.

## **LITTLE HARWOOD REMEMBRANCE DAY**

Young people under the supervision of the Youth Justice Service team received praise for their work on the Little Harwood War Memorial and Darwen Cemetery in preparation for the Remembrance Day service in November. As part of their Court Order and to contribute to paying back communities for their offending behaviour, seven young people and two volunteers weeded, cleared leaves and tidied the area over a 2 month period.

## **GAME CHANGER EVENT FOR CHILDEN IN CARE**

In November, I attended a 'Game Changer' event at Blackpool Pleasure Beach with staff and five Blackburn with Darwen young people in care and care leavers to explore experiences of being in care and what could be better. We were among 200 young people and professionals from across 17 local areas who took part in the Youth Focus North West event. On the day Children England, which supports children's charities, fed back on a survey of children and young people in care across the region. The top priorities voiced by Blackburn with Darwen children and young people were contact with birth brothers or sisters; having a key trusted adult to talk to; not being made to feel different because you are living in care and having the same opportunities and rules as children who are not in care. This feedback was used to shape discussions on the day.

## **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION WEEK – NOVEMBER 2017**

The Engage Team kick started their Children Sexual Exploitation (CSE) awareness activities by launching a CSE screening toolkit to Designated Education Safeguarding Leads. The toolkit can be used by any professional working with children who are at risk of or being sexually exploited. The theme of CSE Week 2017 was to improve the education of young people around the risks of CSE and across the week awareness sessions were delivered to parents of children with disabilities, foster carers and pupils at Witton Park Academy.

Social Workers got involved by learning more about trauma bonding, healthy relationships and consent, and bespoke training was offered to local pharmacies and GP surgeries via health colleagues.

Council officers and the police visited local hotels and guest houses to highlight the responsibilities of the sector and offered support. The police also shared awareness raising posts on social media and across the week seven arrests were made.