

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES**

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**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: SAYYED OSMAN  
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**TROUBLED FAMILIES PROGRAMME UPDATE - Phase 2 Expanded Troubled Families Programme 2015- 2016** In June 2013, the Government announced plans to expand the Troubled Families Programme for a further five years and reach an additional 400,000 families across England. The expanded Troubled Families Programme reaches out to families with a broader range of problems, including those affected by domestic violence and abuse, with younger children who need help and with a range of physical and mental health problems. Following the claim in October 2014 , Blackburn with Darwen will be eligible for inclusion in Wave 2 of the government's Early Starters for inclusion in the expanded programme, which means we will be able to draw down funding in January 2015. It must be noted that the amount of funding available for the expanded programme is less than half of what was originally available. Funding for this is available for each family who achieves success and will be paid in two parts: an upfront attachment fee of £1,000 per family and a results-based payment of £800 per family.

**NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE CONTRACT UPDATE –** The National Careers Service (NCS) launched a new style service on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014. The emphasis of the service and future income is based on outcomes of customers who gain employment, progress in work and/or achieve qualifications. The service targets both employed and unemployed clients. NCS advisers will continue to offer face to face appointments and workshops and now manage their own caseload of customers. The service is enhanced by ongoing support such as telephone contact , emails, use of facebook and other digital tools. Successful outcomes are to be achieved within a 5 or 6 month timescale.

**HOUSING STANDARDS ENFORCEMENT** The Housing Standards Team have taken successful prosecutions against a further five property owners for failure to hold a licence in the Darwen Selective Licensing Area, and one owner for failure to hold eleven licences in the Griffin Selective Licensing Area.

The fines ranged from £500 to £2,000 with additional costs and victim surcharges ranging from £514 to £1510.

In addition, rent repayment orders are being applied for. These require convicted owners to repay any housing benefit paid in the previous 12 months. If the tenant has paid rent they can also apply for a rent repayment order to cover the rent paid in the previous 12 months.

These prosecutions send out a clear message that the costs of not applying for a licence are far higher than the cost of paying the licence fee.

**Empty Properties Clusters Project** The 14 empty homes on Queen Street in Darwen (previously owned by the Council) have now been fully refurbished by TVH and let for affordable rent. A further 3 properties on Harwood Street are nearing completion and will also be let through the BwithUs scheme. TVH have agreed purchase prices on a further 5 empty properties in central Darwen.

**Empty properties CPO** 40 Gillibrand Street, Darwen has now been CPO'd and vested to the Council, 12 Westwell Street, Darwen and 44 Shadsworth Road, Blackburn are still going through the CPO process and should be concluded within the next couple of months. All three will be offered for sale and refurbishment for reoccupation through a local estate agent.

**Pearl Street and Gretna Walk, Blackburn** TVH have completed the scheme of 6 bungalows at Gretna Street and 14 new larger family homes on the site of the old Brookside Care home. An event was held to celebrate this project completion and was attended by Executive Members for Housing and Regeneration; Local Ward Members and various officers from TVH and the Council. The properties have added much needed new house types to the area and cater for local housing need. All the properties have been let.

**INTEGRATED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY** Executive Board has approved a new Integrated Homelessness Strategy The Strategy and the Review is available on the Council's website at <http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/Pages/Housing-advice-and-support.aspx>