

Progress on portfolio pledges in 2013

Leaders

Over the past two years the Borough and the Council has done much to ensure that together we meet the challenges we face in these unprecedented tough times. Despite this period of uncertainty I am confident however that as a Council we will: continue to support business and create new jobs, build more houses and improve housing quality, continue to improve health and well - being, ensure no young person is left behind by improving their outcomes, continue to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society continue to be safeguarded and ensure that residents and the Council continue to make our resources go as far as possible enabling us to provide quality services our communities deserve and expect.

Made sure that Your Call goes from strength to strength and that it increases the number of residents taking part in volunteering and who feel they can influence the decisions made in their local area

Since 2013 a major aspect of the Leaders portfolio has been the advancement of the Councils innovative Your Call scheme. Launched in 2011 the Your Call scheme has seen thousands of residents come forward and make their communities a better place to live and work. Taking responsibility for the issues that concern them the most these residents are not only helping the Council deliver vital services they are also challenging and changing the way the Local Authority engages with its communities. Since April 2013 over 17,000 residents have come forward as part of the Your Call scheme and over 1900 Your Call events have taken place.

Increased the number of residents who feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Blackburn with Darwen

Whilst the Your Call scheme has driven innovation within Council departments, it has also helped this portfolio foster stronger inter – community ties throughout the Borough whilst also developing greater community cohesion. Working together the Council, the leaders portfolio, key community champions and residents have, through the your call scheme, helped break down some of the barriers that are frequently reported to be a fundamental issue within both Blackburn and Darwen. By using high profile events within the towns such as the annual good neighbour awards, sponsored by both the Council and local business, we have over 60% of residents who believe that people from other backgrounds get on well together.

Kept residents informed about the services that it delivers

Engaging with our communities involves more than exceptional voluntary work, ensuring that as a Council we consult and then inform them of decisions and outcomes that can or will affect them is of great importance as the public relations and engagement landscape continues to change. To this end the past two years has seen the Council develop its digital communication services as we continue to innovate the ways in which we serve our communities. Since 2013 the Council has adopted and expanded its use of social media as we continue to use the technology available to us to inform as many residents as possible the changes to services as a result of the budget cuts. To date the Council has over 18,000 residents actively engaging with the Council through our social media channels including Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore as part of the Council innovative digital first agenda the Councils own news platform The Shuttle was transferred to an online journal www.theshuttle.org.uk, which is updated daily, ensuring that residents can always access the news, information and events that they have an active interest in.

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However whilst the expansion of the Your Call scheme and the incorporation of new communication tools allows the portfolio to engage and interact with residents on an unprecedented scale, the portfolio must also take responsibility for the expansion and growth of all aspects of the Borough. Over the past two years the portfolio has been working hard with local organisations and partners to develop a new vision for the future of Blackburn with Darwen. In November 2014 the Local Strategic Partnership launched its 6 year Plan for Prosperity which outlined how by 2020 the Partnership will see 2700 jobs added to the local economy, an extra 4000 homes built including over 600 new affordable homes and all of our schools will be rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by OFSTED. By making these commitments and encouraging greater and wider partnership work this portfolio and other portfolios across the Council will ensure that together we prosper, develop and grow.

Regeneration

The past two years has seen the Borough grow and develop as the Council begins to see the benefits of internal investment within its communities.

Increased the number of residents who are in work and who are seeking work

Since 2013 the Borough has continued to grow its labour force and currently over 70% of residents are either in employment or seeking work and further to this the employment rate for residents is at its highest since 2012.

Furthermore the Borough's business network 'The HIVE' has grown rapidly since its inception in 2012 with the first annual HIVE business awards in 2015 celebrating and awarding the companies and people that make Blackburn with Darwen a great place to invest, prosper and grow. More recently the Hive was launched as a CIC. Similarly the past 2 years has seen the formation and continuing development of the Blackburn Business Improvement District (BID) and the department was pleased to support members of the BID in its activities to stimulate the Blackburn Economy, specifically through special events that attract more visitors to the town from across Lancashire including the annual Heritage Festival and the Countryside Comes To Town Event in July 2015.

Delivered major capital schemes in support of our economy

Over the past 24 months the skyline of Blackburn has been transformed as we see the advancement of the Cathedral Quarter Complex, the completion of the orbital route via the construction and opening of the Freckleton Street link road and the continuation of the Pennine Reach Scheme. However whilst the majority of capital projects and major local infrastructure works are progressing to schedule, the Council will note the delays that surrounded the new Blackburn Bus Station. Whilst these delays have been frustrating for all concerned, the appointment of local contractors Eric Wright earlier this year will see the Ainsworth Street Development completed and the former market site prepared for development for the benefit of residents and future generations.

Made Blackburn and Darwen town centres more vibrant places with fewer vacant shop units and market stalls

These investments within the Borough are turning the twin town centres of Blackburn and Darwen into vibrant hubs of prosperity as the economies of both towns continue to grow. Despite the difficult trading conditions and circumstances businesses and local traders are being supported in the town centres and local markets. Blackburn town centre continues to grow through the delivery of the 12 point plan.

Resources

Delivered the required budget savings

Since 2010, and in line with Government ambitions and current legislation, the portfolio has supported and helped other portfolios to deliver the budget savings.

Transformed its services and supported residents in response to the welfare changes and council tax localisation reforms

In response to recent legislation and Government welfare changes, the portfolio has also had to adapt and transform the services and the support it offers to residents in receipt of welfare allowances. In terms of Council Tax relief, the portfolio has adopted new ways of working in order to support Government reforms towards the benefit and similarly the portfolio has also adapted how it delivers the social fund.

Increased the number of customers accessing and using our online services

Along with implementing Governmental reforms at a local level, the portfolio has embraced the Councils digital first policy by ensuring that more services than ever before are available online. Since 2013 the portfolio has more than doubled the number of services that are available digitally with over 90 council services now no more than a mouse click away. Similarly the portfolio has also seen a rise in the number of transactions and payments made through its online services after a quadrupling of payments made in Q1 of 2015 compared to the same period in 2013.

Improved staff attendance at work

The portfolio has continued to improve on its pledge to improve staff attendance at work across the council. The portfolio is supporting and working with all departments by launching new systems that improve sickness management, offering wellbeing incentives and free health and wellbeing checks. Since 2013 the average number of days absent per employee per year has fallen by almost one day. Whilst this falls short of the portfolio original commitment to only 8 days absence per employee on average, the portfolio continues work on improving how departments manage absence and taking early preventative action to limit days lost to sickness will only help the portfolio reach its goal in the months and years to come.

Children's Services

Increased opportunities for children and young people to shape local services that affect their lives

Establishing a Participation Champions network, with champions in all service areas and overseen by senior management, has contributed to an increase in the number of examples where we can evidence that views of our service user views have been sought and influenced service delivery and design. From 2013/14 to the end of quarter 2 2015/16, we have 384 examples which has seen an increase each year (131 in 2013/14, 180 in 2014/15 and a combined 73 for quarter 1 & quarter 2 2015/16).

These examples include:

- Establishing a Communication Passport for children with disabilities – providing a practical approach to passing on key information about children and young people with complex communication difficulties who cannot speak for themselves.

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- Expansion of the 'Investing in Children' accreditation so that we now have 12 service areas accredited – this award recognises and celebrates examples of imaginative practice with children and young people.
- Building on the existing Voice group by creating two further Voice groups – one for Care Leavers and another for our younger children, so that more young people can give us their views and ideas.

Increased the number of families receiving help through our Common Assessment Framework and Early Help offer

The Early Help strategy drives the early intervention work for children, young people and families in the Borough and one of the related indicators is the number of cases open to CAF (Common Assessment Framework) - the means by which families can receive non-statutory, multi-agency support.

The numbers of CAFs have increased from a baseline of 250 in 2012/2013 to 345 at the end of quarter two 2015/6 with 429 CAFs opened in total over the previous 12 months.

Reduced the length of time taken for children in our care to be adopted

The number of children leaving care through adoption or special guardianship remains a success story for the borough, with 43 children leaving through adoption last year (the borough's highest ever figure) and 13 through special guardianship. This means the authority in 2013/14 improved on its previous best ever performance (2012/13: 44) by over a quarter.

For 2014/15 the local authority's adoption service has been recognised as achieving the highest percentage of children leaving care through adoption nationally (37%). Of the 153 local authorities measured, only three other authorities achieved more than 30% with the majority scoring less than 20%.

The rolling 3 year average performance for the length of time between a child entering care and being placed in their adoption placement continues to steadily improve, while also fluctuating a little as individual children receive final adoption orders. Having hovered around 700 days between 2012 and 2014, the number has begun to come down to a figure in the range between 620 and 640 across the past six months. The figure reflects the position for children with completed adoption orders. For the group of children in adoption placements, but without final adoption orders as yet, the number of days spent in care prior to arriving in placement is 501 days, a further substantial improvement. This group of children will receive final adoption orders in the future, which will naturally further improve performance.

Reduced the number of children being re-referred to social care services

The quality of our decision making around cases is reflected in the low proportion of referrals that are re-referrals within 12 months of a previous closure, which remained steady throughout 2014-15 at 16%: markedly better than both similar authorities and regional and national averages, all of which are in the range 21-24%. This is against a slight increase in the number of referrals: across the last year, the number of referrals rose to an average of over 200 in the last quarter. The 279 referrals in March 2015 was the highest number for a single month since 2009.

However, child protection re-registration is proving more of a challenge. Having previously been consistently at a level beneath the national average (16%), through the first three quarters of 2014/15 between a quarter and a third of those becoming subject to a plan had previously been

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subject to a plan. The fourth *quarter* saw a return to previous patterns, with just 10% having previously had a plan. The figure for the rolling last 12 months, as opposed to just quarter 1 and 2 is 22%. The predominant presenting reason for children becoming subject to a plan is domestic abuse, followed by drug and alcohol abuse and mental health issues. The department is reviewing and reconsidering its approach to domestic abuse and supporting families that either struggle to access to help, or sustain engagement with that help.

Made sure that services for children and young people with complex needs are delivered seamlessly with education and health partners

The Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan process has been implemented to provide joined up support from Children's Services, Adults Social Care and Health for children and young people with complex needs from birth up to the age of 25. Our work on the transfer plan has been held up as a model of good practice by the Department for Education (DfE).

We now have a total of 190 submissions for plans, 154 approvals for plans and 105 completed plans. In addition, 94 transfer plans have been issued. Multi-agency training programmes have resulted in almost 900 workers attending awareness briefings and 180 key workers have attended training sessions with an EHC Plan theme.

An independent review of the new EHC planning process is underway; surveys have been circulated to families, professionals and support staff across relevant services and within schools. Findings will be used to enhance the overall experience of children and young people, families and staff. A number of families have taken part in case studies to enable professionals to gain a more in-depth knowledge of their experiences and their ideas for improvements. A review workshop is also planned to bring professionals and families together and the outcomes and subsequent recommendations of the review will be presented in the Autumn term.

Environment

Working with residents to help them clean up their local areas

As a portfolio we recognise that the services that we provide are amongst those that residents value the most and often [residents] take an active and sometimes vocal interest in the performance of our duties. To ensure this we continue to fulfil the high expectations of the Borough's residents and the communities that they belong too, it has been important for the portfolio to foster close relationships with key community champions. By forging and maintaining these relationships the department has been able to extend and strengthen the portfolios commitment to the Councils wider innovative Your Call scheme and further engage our residents with the environmental activities of the department.

Continued to respond and take action on incidents of fly-tipping

Since 2013 the portfolio has taken proactive measures to ensure that it continue to take more actions to prevent incidences of fly tipping than there are actual incidences of fly tipping. Since 2013 the portfolio has continued to up hold its commitment to direct action and currently the ratio of action to incidents stands at 2.8:1 i.e. for every 1 fly tipping incident the local authority fulfils almost 3 preventative or prosecutory actions this in itself building on last year's positive ratio of 2.4:1. To provide these promising results the department has worked hard to re-evaluate the actions it takes towards fly tipping. To this end the actions taken include but are not limited to: the introduction of fixed penalty notices, litigation (where applicable), the naming and shaming

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of those found guilty, the reduction of costs of bulky waste collection at historically heavy periods of fly tipping and the introduction of free weekend bulky waste removal across the borough.

Helped to improve the health and quality of life of residents by tackling issues of noise nuisance and illegal smoking

Further to the progress made with regards fly tipping the, progress on ensuring the health and quality of life for residents has also improved. Over the past 24 months done much to develop a framework in which local Hookah and Shisha bars must operate in the interests of public safety. Working with owners the Authority has taken numerous steps to ensure that all premises that offer Shisha smoking are compliant with all current legislation and continues to intervene in those premises that fail to meet the necessary legal standards for the Borough.

Supported residents groups to play more of a role in managing their local parks and bowling greens

Empowering local communities to take ownership of their own spaces, by continuing to support friends groups and management committees, allows residents a greater say in the operation and management of places often at the very heart of their community. In this regard the portfolio has now seen the ownership of the Borough's bowling greens transfer from Local Authority hands to community ownership. Furthermore the portfolio has also supported over a dozen external funding bids from local environmental community groups, allowing for greater investment and improvement within the Boroughs green spaces with little impact on the portfolios resources.

Reduced the number of roads and street lights that are in need of repair

The invest to save scheme has seen the portfolio invest millions into new technologies with the hope that modernising now will reduce future costs within the Borough's highways infrastructure. As such since 2014 the portfolio has been replacing the traditional sodium street lanterns with new energy efficient LED lanterns. The roll out of this scheme has consistently been ahead of schedule (with over 70% of existing street lights converted) and it is estimated the project will be completed by early 2016.

Along with the installation of new LED street lanterns the portfolio has also invested heavily in prioritising and improving key roads and thoroughfares within the Borough through network recovery and so far over a quarter of a million square metres of badly damaged roads have been repaired or relayed as the portfolio continues to prevent high future costs.

Health and Adult Social Care

Helped residents to live longer healthier lives

In the last 3 years (2008-10 to 2011-13) local life expectancy rose 1.4 years in males (from 75.4 to 76.8) and 1.2 years in females (from 80.0 to 81.2), reducing the gap with England from 3.1 years to 2.6 years in males and from 2.5 years to 1.9 years in females.

Implemented its new responsibilities in relation to improving health and well-being

Successful LGA Peer Review for the Health and Well-being Board deemed to be performing well, with the key points being:

- Strong commitment and energy to deliver
- Public Health has been well embedded within the Council
- Commitment to public engagement
- Healthwatch is working well and bringing a large amount of public voice to the Board

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Effectively managed rising social care demand and reinvested resources into more preventative services

- Major pressures experienced on the adults commissioning budget due to increased levels of demand.
- Through BwD Change Programme, improved demand management through remodelling of service pathways, robust scrutiny at panel, and increased social worker efficiency. On track to make savings of £3 million over the lifetime of the Change Programme.
- Increased diversion away from traditional social care support towards community-supported alternatives.

Evidence: Increase in the numbers of older people supported through Good Neighbour schemes: commissioned and volunteer led

Corporate plan: original 2011/12 baseline of 408 people supported per quarter (commissioned schemes only). New 2014/15 target of 1250 people supported (volunteer led and commissioned) by March 2015 was exceeded throughout the year. Q1 2015/16 = 1,405 people supported in the quarter.

Brought together all of its key commissioning services, to make sure better, more value for money services are delivered in relation to health and well-being

- Promoted the integration of commissioning arrangements across health and social care
- Ensured that all inherited commissions reviewed, updated and revised to ensure a shift of focus to early intervention and prevention and to deliver best value for money
- Further developed work with the 3rd Sector to build community capacity to improve health and well-being
- pooled budgets through Better Care Fund

Supported more vulnerable people to live at home as long as they want to

- Increased the proportion of vulnerable people supported at home, despite increasing demographic pressures due to an ageing population.
- Significantly increased the take-up of assistive technology (telecare), supporting people at home with reduced need for social care support.

Evidence: ASCOF 2a: Permanent admissions to residential and nursing homes, per 100,000 pop over 18.

Corporate plan baseline: 2011/12 - 213 admissions per 100,000 pop over 18; 2014/15 - 186.5; Q1 2015/16 - 39.5 (equivalent to 158 on an annualised basis).

Made sure that more people with care needs, who want to stay in their own homes, are able to do so:

- Increased the proportion of vulnerable people supported in a community setting, through the expansion of available housing with support, eg Moorside Mill development.
- Increased the number of people accessing reablement services by 50% through pathway remodelling and rescheduling - via Change Programme - without additional investment.

Evidence: ASCOF 2b: Proportion of people still at home 91 days after leaving hospital via reablement

Corporate Plan baseline: 2011/12 - 80.7% of people still at home after 91 days; 2014/15 - 91.4%; Q1 2015/16 - 92.9%

Increased the number of residents who take control of the care services that they receive

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- Amended adult social care assessment processes to include as routine the offer of self-directed support (personal budget or direct payment).
- Significant increase since 2011/12 in the take-up of self-directed support, as set out below. Personal budgets are now the 'default option' for service users.

Evidence: ASCOF 1c (previously NI130): Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support, and those receiving direct payments:
Corporate Plan baseline 2011/12 - 38.5%; 2014/15 – 88.2%; Q1 2015 - 84% (but subject to increase as the year progresses; figures are not strictly cumulative).

Leisure, Culture and Young People

Delivered a new, state of the art, leisure facility in Blackburn town centre in partnership with Blackburn College

Delivered a new, state of the art, athletics and leisure facility at Witton Park

As a portfolio we have contributed to the continuing regeneration of the Borough after overseeing the opening of the multi million pound developments of both the new Blackburn Leisure Centre, which was officially opened in March 2015, and the completion, last year, of the new Witton Park sports arena and athletics facility. Together both these investments are not only transforming the infrastructure of the Borough, but creating premier facilities that are encouraging more and more residents to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Increased participation in physical activity and leisure opportunities for the benefit of Blackburn with Darwen residents

Following on for the construction of new and modern leisure facilities within the Borough the portfolio has also seen a marked increase in the number of people attending and using Council facilities, including sports courts and pitches. Over 1.8 million attendances have been logged over the past 2 years with almost 1 million of these occurring within 2015. This showing that residents are not only actively engaging with the Leisure services within the Borough they are also seeing Council facilities as a real viable option for their health and leisure needs.

Increased the number of young people using their culture and leisure services/activities

Furthermore the past 24 months have seen junior visits to the Boroughs leisure services and activities soar with over 1 million visits measured in the period. Furthermore the construction and opening of the new Junction 4 Skate Park within Darwen last year has made the Borough a hub for the sport within East Lancashire. This is not only encouraging more of our young people to engage and interact with the leisure services that the Council provides but also attracting new income as young people from across the region travel to make use of our modern facilities.

Continued to provide and secure attendances at a large number of shows at King Georges Hall and Darwen Library Theatre

However it is not just leisure facilities that have been successful, since 2013 the Borough's cultural facilities have also seen larger attendances within both King George's Hall and Darwen Library Theatre. Together both venues have seen audiences of almost half a million entertained by a wide range of events, concerts, conferences and performances, with the 2014 Christmas Pantomime at King Georges Hall attracting the biggest Pantomime audience in the history of the venue.

Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services

Supported our residents to gain new skills and seek employment

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Over the past 24 months the portfolio has had a heavy focus on ensuring that our communities and young people receive the support they need to acquire new skills and gain employment. The portfolio area helped over 700 residents receive a new qualification that will allow them to not only make a positive change for themselves but also make positive changes towards the strength of the local economy. By supporting and encouraging more residents to pursue further training the portfolio is taking proactive measures to ensure the Council helps to train and retain local talent and as such is helping to create a labour market that can facilitate new investment and continued growth within Blackburn with Darwen.

Made significant progress in meeting housing growth targets

Ensured the development of over 400 new homes

Whilst ensuring that the Borough has a well-trained and educated pool of labour, the department also recognises the need for more residential and housing developments, including the modernisation or even replacement of current stock. To this end the portfolio pledged itself to a series of housing growth targets in 2013 and whilst the past 24 months has seen the Borough develop over 400 new homes, through a co-ordinated partnership strategy, our planning inspectorate approved and ambitious local plan makes provision for more housing developments in the near future.

Continued to prevent people from becoming homeless

However whilst the future of building new quality housing developments within the Borough is secured the portfolio continues to have a greater responsibility in ensuring that as many families and residents as possible remain in their own homes especially in this unprecedented period of tough economic times. As such over the past 2 years the department is proud to say that it has helped prevent over 900 residents, who may have been fearing eviction, becoming homeless. This crucial work is allowing the Council to help transform the lives, circumstances and outcomes for residents and providing a sense of security for the Borough's communities.

Helped our residents to be safer and have less problems with anti-social behaviour

Crime had reduced in Blackburn with Darwen by 5% compared to the previous year by the end of 2014/15 with 4 out of 5 residents also saying their area feels safe or very safe. The number of Anti-Social Behaviour complaints to the police and council reduced by 15% during the same time period with the percentage of people stating that the police and council were doing a good job in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour complaints up year on year. The community trigger, there to challenge the police and council in cases where members of the public feel that their ASB complaints had not been dealt with effectively has not been used.

Schools and Education

Increase the number of children and young people who are attending schools judged as good or outstanding, to ensure our children have the best opportunities to succeed

81% of all schools in Blackburn with Darwen were rated good or better at the end of the 2014/15 school year, representing 84% of our learners. This compares with national figures where 82% of schools are judged good or better, but only 79% of learners are attending schools judged good or better. More learners attend good primary schools and good secondary schools in Blackburn with Darwen than is typical nationally.

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Increase the number of children with special educational needs who make good progress in school, so that these children have the same opportunities as others

The academic progress of primary school aged children with special educational needs in Reading, Writing and Maths from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is better than the national average. Pupils achieving two levels of progress in Reading is 81% compared with a national average of 79%. Similarly, two levels of Writing progress stands at 86% which is 4% higher than the national average whilst progress in Maths provides the greatest difference with 79% of our children achieving two levels of progress compared with a national average of 74%.

The academic progress of children with special educational needs at secondary school level is more mixed, with 46% of pupils achieving 3 levels of progress in English (from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4) compared with a national average of 49%. Performance progress in Maths using the same measure is at the national average (37%).

Ensure that children from our more deprived communities continue to have the opportunity to excel in school, so that we can remove barriers to their success

Data for Blackburn with Darwen schools for 2014/15 suggests that there has been substantial narrowing of the gap in 2014. Nationally released data shows that 63% of primary aged children eligible for free school meals within the borough achieved at least a level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths, compared with 78% for those not eligible. This gap of 15% between the two groups is lower than the national gap, which stands at 18% (64% for those eligible compared with 82% for those not eligible).

In respect of secondary aged children, 41% of students eligible for free school meals obtained 5 or more A*-C grade GCSEs, including English and Maths, as measured by the first result achieved in their GCSEs resulting in a difference of 16% to the performance of other pupils not eligible (57%). National data concerning the performance of groups of pupils with specific characteristics was published in quarter 4 and revealed a much larger national gap of 26% (between the 34% of free school meal eligible pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSEs and the 60% of all other pupils not eligible). This means that 7% more children eligible for free school meals achieved this threshold of performance in Blackburn with Darwen than is typically the case nationally.

Ensure that we are able to offer viable, high quality services to our local schools and education providers, thereby creating the right environment for our schools to be the best they can be

The past year has seen a redesign of the borough's school improvement system. This has led to the establishing of clusters of schools in school improvement groups and the creation of a School Improvement Board, with representatives from each of the school improvement groups, in addition to senior council officers and an independent chair, to oversee the progress of each of the groups and take an overview of the achievement and progress of children and young people in local schools.

The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) four year programme completed in December 2014 – a total investment of £138 million in the borough's secondary schools with the delivery of 4 new build schools and the refurbishment of 4 schools.