

## Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016

### Work of Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Prevention, Councillor Arshid Mahmood

#### Introduction

The Portfolio has been re-shaped, customer services, trading standards and housing growth has been moved to other Portfolios. Some new priorities have been placed in the Portfolio's remit however these do not have any direct staffing or budget resource and are meant to be cross cutting. The following areas have been introduced into the Portfolio:

- Community engagement & capacity building
- Area based community & voluntary groups & organisations
- Volunteering
- Prevention & demand management strategies
- Asylum seeker policies & support services

We have tried to bring to Members attention key priorities by services within the portfolio. Much of the work of the Portfolio is cross cutting promoting collaboration and support of other Portfolios and partners.

It is important to note some over-riding priorities such as the need to:

- Work with the leadership to progress the transformation programme in line with Council's budget challenges and cuts.
- Ensure that we have services that provide strong opportunities to support our Vision on Prevention, Early Intervention and Demand Management
- To develop an overarching volunteer strategy and offer for the Borough

#### Summary of Priorities

1. **Transforming Lives** - Deliver Troubled Families contract and effect integration with the 'Transforming Lives' agenda bringing about closer collaboration and integration of front line universal and step down services to help manage existing demand and prevent future demand through early intervention. This is a cross cutting theme which benefit Childrens, Adults and Public Health. We will deliver from an integrated neighbourhood workforce working in partnership with the Constabulary, Lancashire Fire and Rescue and Health. The approach and its implementation delivers the Health and Wellbeing Strategy themes of 'Start Well', 'Live Well' and 'Age Well'.

2. **Volunteer and Asset Based Working** - Develop and promote a volunteer and asset based community development programme to support citizenship, behaviour change and to build on the Your Call successes across the Council.
3. **Housing Quality** - Improve housing quality through effective regulation of the private rented sector through selective licensing and regulation of Houses in Multiple Occupation. This will have a particular emphasis on collaboration between Health and Housing to reduce demand cost on the council and make our resources go further. Also the expansion of the selective licensing scheme in Darwen.
4. **Community Safety** – Ensure the public is protected from behaviours which impact on the quality of life within their neighbourhoods e.g. impact of environmental crime, illegal highs, anti- social behaviour, statutory nuisances, car crime, repeat offending. Objective to engage communities as assets to promote positive education, citizenship, positive behaviour and where necessary to enforce.
5. **Housing Needs and Homelessness** - Sustaining and developing Housing Needs services including development of better housing options for homeless people dependant on the private rented sector.
6. **Asylum Seeker Policies and Support Services** – The N&P Portfolio have now been given the lead role from what was previously under the Leader’s Portfolio. There are no direct resources attach to this function. It is however a critical service which aims to ensure that the numbers in BwD are manageable. That SERCO as the lead contractor for the Home Office are working within agreed parameters. Also ensuring that there is a co-ordination role between council departments, the Police and other stakeholders to enable a big picture view. E.g. Policy on unaccompanied asylum children, Syrian refugees etc.

### **Key Risks**

1. The role of neighbourhood services in assisting the achievement of early intervention and integrated delivery of ‘Transforming Lives’ as a key element of public sector service reform. The budget challenges facing the council may inadvertently result in reducing prevention spend.
2. Inability to develop and generate significant investment in volunteering and community capacity to help build resilient communities.
3. Risks to not being able to achieve effective Licensing of private rented properties, including regulation of HMOs, thus impacting on not being able to manage demand.
4. Increasing homelessness due to lack of investment in new housing provision.
5. Rising crime in light of a reduction in Police, Council and Partner budgets to maintain frontline preventative services.

### **Challenges**

1. The biggest challenge facing the Portfolio is that it’s operating budgets over recent years have been cut significantly to a level where there is more external grant funding, income and Public Health money than core revenue budgets.
2. Developing a prevention and demand management approach requires investment to help save costs against the larger Portfolios.

3. Volunteering needs to be done on scales to ensure it is sustainable. Generally volunteers will have a personal aim, potentially to gain experience with a view to a permanent job. Therefore turnover of volunteers can only be mitigated if there is a sizeable operation which recruits and trains volunteers regularly.
4. Selective Landlord licensing in Darwen will be the largest area to be introduced to the Borough and may take the council over the Government's threshold of 20% of total private rented stock being eligible for licensing.
5. Housing needs and homelessness monitoring figures showing a year on year increase in demand. There is a need for more affordable housing. Currently build rates are very low and this is a challenge at a national level as well as local to BwDBC.
6. Asylum and Refugee numbers rising and in turn presenting greater demand on our key services of Housing, Children's, Education and Health.