

Public Document Pack

Council Forum

Thursday, 4th October, 2018

6.00 pm

Council Chamber, Blackburn Town Hall

AGENDA

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain**
3. **Apologies for Absence**
4. **Minutes Of The Previous Meeting**
MINUTES Council Forum July 2018 3 - 8
5. **Declarations of Interest**
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FORM 9
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**
Motion 1 10 - 11
Motion 2
To consider two Motions as attached.
9. **Updates from other Committees**
 - 9.1 **Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report 2017/2018** 12 - 60
 - 9.2 **Standards Committee Report** 61 - 63
 - 9.3 **Updates from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees** 64 - 67

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as follows:

- a. Policy and Corporate Resources

b. PEOPLE

c. PLACE

10. Reports of the Executive Members with Portfolios:

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10.3 Health and Adult Social Care	73 - 75
10.4 Regeneration	76 - 77
10.5 Children, Young People and Education	78 - 80
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10.8 Neighbourhood and Prevention Services	86 - 87

11. To consider any questions received from Members under Procedure Rule 11

PART 2: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

There are no items to be considered under Part 2.

Date Published: Wednesday, 26 September 2018
Harry Catherall, Chief Executive

COUNCIL FORUM **Thursday 19th July 2018**

PRESENT – *The Mayor Councillor McFall, (in the Chair), Councillors; Afzal; Akhtar H; Akhtar P; Batan; Bateson; Brookfield; Casey; Connor; Daley, Davies; Fazal; Gee; Groves; Gunn; Hardman; Harling; Hussain I; Hussain M; Hussain S; Jan-Virmani; Kay; Khan M; Khan Z; Khonat; Liddle; Mahmood Q; Marrow; McGurk; Oates; Patel; Richards; Rigby C; Rigby J; Riley; Salton; Shorrocks; Sidat; Slater Jo; Slater Ju; Smith D; Smith J; Surve; Talbot; Taylor and Whittle.*

RESOLUTIONS

17 Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read the notice convening the meeting.

18 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Jackie Floyd, Faryad Hussain, Mahfooz Hussain, Neil Slater and Julie Slater.

19 Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on 17th May 2018

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on the 17th May 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

20 Civic Service Award

The Mayor presented Civic Service Awards to former Councillors David and Karimeh Foster, Eileen Entwistle MBE and Tony Humphrys.

The Leaders of both political groups and the Deputy Mayor paid tribute to the former Councillors awarded and thanks were returned from the former Councillors to the Council.

21 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were submitted from Councillors Mohammed Khan, Zamir Khan, Dave Smith and Andy Kay in respect of Agenda Item 9 – Motion re: Fire Rescue Authority.

22 Mayoral Communications

The Mayor updated Council Forum on recent activities and events, in particular attending the Queen's Garden Party in June.

Other notable events included a World War Commemoration Event at Colne, the unveiling of a new War Memorial in Darwen, the Consecration of the Bishop of Lancaster and the Fusion Awards at King Georges Hall.

23 Council Forum

Three questions had been submitted under Procedure Rule 10 as follows:

To the Leader of the Council from Asif Mahmud:

The former Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, announced a £50 million investment from the Government to develop local Integration plans.

Blackburn is one of the five towns earmarked for this money.

Please could the Council advise on the following:

- *When this investment is going to be made available to the Council?*
- *How it plans to spend this money, will any of this money be made available to community organisations who already work to promote integrated communities?*
- *Will the Council be carrying out a wide ranging consultation with the people of Blackburn to shape the integrated community strategy as proposed by the former Communities Secretary?*

Councillor Mohammed Khan provided a response to the Question and Supplementary Question arising from Mr Mahmud, advising that the position was not clear yet as Ministers had yet to decide on the allocation of money and the dates for the receipt of funding were also unclear, although it was expected the position would be clearer by the end of September. The Leader gave details of emerging themes and consultation to date and referred to recent examples of integration in the Borough and noted that integration was the responsibility of all.

To the Executive Member for Regeneration from Yvonne Hindle:

Residents in Pleasington are seriously concerned regarding the following: Speeding through the village. This is a particular concern during peak times i.e. morning and evening traffic.

Clearly, the road through Pleasington is being used by non-residents for the school run and access to the M65. Over the years the volume of traffic has increased considerably. I have witnessed vehicles speeding, both entering and exiting the village past my property, without any regard for the 30mph limit through the village.

Entering the village from Preston Old Road, there is a sharp right hand bend over the bridge. There is a narrow footpath on the right side of the road (no footpath on the left). This footpath is up to the Golf Club: beyond the Golf Club there is no footpath up to the Railway Station. The only adequate footpath is the section up to the Butlers Pub.

Throughout the village the road markings have deteriorated and are barely visible or non-existent. Signage throughout the village and approaching the village needs reviewing to alert drivers to the hazards of bends, gradients, narrow footpath, blind summit. The landlord of the Railway Pub has expressed concern re vehicles speeding over the railway bridge, endangering customers crossing to the Bowling Green.

There have been several accidents in the village over the years, but matters have been 'brought to a head' when on Saturday 9th June, in the afternoon, a high powered BMW car crossed, mounted the narrow pavement, lower down from my home, demolished the wall and emergency services were called. It is a miracle no pedestrians were walking on the pavement at that time or serious injury or fatalities would have occurred. The Route through the village is used by walkers, families walking to school, church, now runners from Witton Park. Groups of runners have expressed their concerns to me personally. There is a serious safety problem in the village of Pleasington and we have been disregarded when traffic calming measures are implemented. I would mention Tockholes, a similar village but, I believe has less traffic flow. I understand Shorrock Lane is to have traffic calming measures, 20 mph, speed bumps?

I have had a meeting at my home with 3 councillors in my ward and voiced the aforementioned points. I feel it is imperative that these should be formally addressed by the Council.

I would add that I have contacted Kay Mahoney at Capita who has assured me she will bring up my concerns at the next meeting.

I have contacted Clive Grunshaw, Police Commissioner regarding the possibility of the use of C.S.W. (Community speed Watch) as has been successfully implemented in the village of Pannal.

In summary, if the points raised are not addressed there will be serious injury or fatalities in the village of Pleasington.

To the Executive Member for Regeneration from Collette Hunt:

Could it be clarified by the appropriate Council Department as to why Pleasington Village has been ignored regarding traffic calming measures, notwithstanding the serious speeding problems and accidents already outlined and the fact that such measures have been put in Tockholes and several other areas within the Borough?

Councillor Phil Riley provided a response to the Questions and Supplementary Questions arising, advising of reductions in Road Safety funding, and prioritisation criteria for road schemes. Councillor Riley gave details of accident data for the sites and of the role of the Police and Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety in identifying areas where speed checks and enforcement were required, advising that the matters raised would be brought to their attention.

24 Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12

One Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12 as follows:

Lancashire Combined Fire and Rescue Authority remains committed to delivering the best possible service to Lancashire's communities, with the resources it has available. This Council notes that the Fire and Rescue Authority continues to work productively and effectively with a range of stakeholders and that the Fire and Rescue Authority also acknowledges the new statutory duty to collaborate with other emergency services, while recognising many initiatives were already in place or in development irrespective of this mandate. The Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council remains confident that current governance arrangements present the best way to deliver a fire and rescue service for Lancashire's communities, and notes that the Fire and Rescue Authority will provide the information required for the work proposed by the Police and Crime Commissioner, which it believes will evidence that collaborative opportunities are already being effectively progressed within existing structures. Consequently, this Council is opposed to any proposals that transfer any current responsibilities of the Fire and Rescue Authority in Lancashire to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council therefore asks the Chief Executive to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Home Secretary explaining this view, sending copies to Members of Parliament.

Moved by Cllr Phil Riley
Seconded by Cllr John Slater

Following debate, Council Forum moved to a Vote.

RESOLVED – That the Motion be carried.

25 Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Council Forum received a report which gave details of the first meetings held of the Policy and Corporate Resources, People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Chairs of each Committee also gave updates for their Committees.

The Leader referred to some conflicts of interest relating to certain Members and their roles and advised that this would be addressed.

The Chief Executive advised that the best way for the Committees to report going forwards would be looked at ahead of the next meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report and updates be noted and that a new reporting mechanism be in place for the next meeting.

26 Reports of the Executive Members with Portfolios

Council Forum received and considered reports and updates from the Leader and Executive Members with portfolios.

During the course of reports being moved, reference was made to the Council being named as Council of the Year by the Municipal Journal in its annual awards and thanks were passed to the Chief Executive and all his staff for their contribution to this achievement.

It was also noted that the meeting would have been Linda Clegg's last meeting if she was able to attend, and the thanks of all the Council were passed to Linda for her excellent contribution as Director of Children's Services. The new Director, Jayne Ivory, would join the Council week commencing 23rd July 2018.

Reference was made to the huge increase in volunteers who were acting as community litter pickers, and the Executive Member, Councillor Jim Smith

passed his thanks to all concerned.

RESOLVED – That the reports of the Leader and Executive Members be noted.

27 Questions Received from Members under Procedure Rule 11

No questions had been received from Members under Procedure Rule 11.

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: **4th October 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)

MOTION 1

In response to the campaign by the Cooperative Party regarding exploitation of individuals under conditions termed as “Modern Slavery” we ask the Council to supplement its current policy on modern slavery by means of the following motion:-

BwDBC resolves that it will....

1. Train its corporate procurement team to understand modern slavery through appropriate training. .
2. Require its contractors to comply fully with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, wherever it applies, with contract termination as a potential sanction for non-compliance.
3. Challenge any abnormally low-cost tenders to ensure as far as possible they do not rely upon the potential contractor practising modern slavery.
4. Highlight to its suppliers that contracted workers are free to join a trade union and are not to be treated unfairly for belonging to one.
5. Publicise its whistle-blowing system for staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.
6. Require its tendered contractors to adopt a whistle-blowing policy which enables their staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.
7. Review its contractual spending regularly to identify any potential issues with modern slavery.
8. Highlight for its suppliers any risks identified concerning modern slavery and refer them to the relevant agencies to be addressed.
9. Refer for investigation via the National Crime Agency’s national referral mechanism any of its contractors identified as a cause for concern regarding modern slavery.
10. Report publicly on the implementation of this policy annually.

Mover	Shaukat Hussain
Secunder	Parwaiz Akhtar

MOTION 2

This Council notes the results of the Brexit referendum as declared by the people of Blackburn with Darwen. The Blackburn constituency voted 56.3% to 43.7% to leave the EU and the Rossendale constituency voted 60.7% to 39.3% to leave. The Council also notes the public statements made by our two Members of Parliament:

Kate Hollern in her speech during the Article 50 debate

“As the MP for Blackburn, I was a strident remain campaigner. I absolutely respect the result of the referendum and voted to trigger article 50 tonight. So, while I will vote to honour the result of the referendum, I won’t offer the government a blank cheque”

Jake Berry’s statement “I was a reluctant remain voter but now describe myself as a ‘re-leaver’ and having seen what has happened since the referendum would now vote for Brexit”.

This motion requests the Chief Executive to write to both MPs reminding them of the decision of the people they represent and to continue to reflect their constituent’s democratic view in all they have to say on Brexit during these critical times.

Moved by Councillor John Pearson

Seconded by Councillor John Slater

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor Sidat

PORTFOLIO COORDINATING

DIRECTOR: Denise Park

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 2017/18

Attached to this report is the Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee for 2017/18, which was submitted to the meeting of that Committee on 24th July 2018. As outlined in the Constitution, the Annual Report and Minutes for the relevant year are submitted to Council, and are now submitted for the Council to note.

I'd like to thank the Committee and Officers from both Internal and External Audit for their contribution in 2017/18.

Salim Sidat, Chair

September 2018



TO: Audit & Governance Committee

FROM: Director HR, Legal & Governance
Director of Finance & Customer Services

DATE: 24 July 2018

PORTFOLIOS AFFECTED: All

WARDS AFFECTED: All

TITLE OF BRIEFING PAPER Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report

1. PURPOSE

The draft Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report 2017/18 is attached for consideration and approval (see Appendix A). This summarises the work that the Committee has undertaken during the year to demonstrate that it has fulfilled its agreed terms of reference.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- Consider and approve the Committee's Annual Report, including the statement on its effectiveness during 2017/18 and the draft effectiveness self-assessment evaluation; and
- Refer the report to Full Council for endorsement.

3. BACKGROUND

The CIPFA 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police' 2013 edition incorporates CIPFA's Position Statement on the role and function of view of an audit committee in local authorities. This notes that although no single model of committee is prescribed, all should report regularly on their work and at least annually report an assessment of their performance.

4. RATIONALE

The Audit & Governance Committee is a key component of the maintenance of an adequate and effective governance framework. Through its annual report the Committee can demonstrate its effectiveness in fulfilling its role to provide independent assurance regarding the adequacy of risk management, the overall governance and associated control environment, and also scrutiny of the Council's financial and non financial performance to the extent that it affects its exposure to risk and weakens the control environment.

5. KEY ISSUES

Having an effective Committee brings many benefits to the Council, such as:

- increasing public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting;
- providing additional assurance through a process of independent and objective scrutiny;
- raising awareness of the need for internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations; and,
- reinforcing the importance and independence of internal audit.

The Committee's activities during 2017/18 were designed to make a positive contribution to the continual improvement of control and governance arrangements across the Council, as well as performing the roles set out for the Committee in the Council's Constitution.

The Committee has had the opportunity to examine and challenge the arrangements for effective governance. The Annual Report indicates the breadth of the Committee's work in ensuring that every aspect of the Council's work should be compliant with standards and transparent to its stakeholders. The reports received by the Committee during 2017/18 indicate that there has been thorough coverage of the Committee's Terms of Reference. In this way, the Annual Report demonstrates the value of the Committee to the Council and public, ensuring that governance is on a sound footing.

Good practice guidance exists for the effective operation of audit committees across the public sector, including the most recent publication by CIPFA noted above. That guidance includes a Good Practice Self-Assessment which was considered by the Committee at its meeting on 9 January 2018. Appendix 2 of the attached report sets out the results of the self-assessment. The guidance also included a self-assessment tool for audit committees to use to evaluate their effectiveness. The results of this assessment are set out in Appendix 3 to the attached report for consideration.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications arising from this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications from this report.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The resource implications are within the report.

10. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

The decisions to be taken do not change policy and do not require any further consideration in respect of equality or health issues.

11. CONSULTATIONS

Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of HR, Legal & Governance, Director of Finance & Customer Services.

Contact Officer:	Colin Ferguson, Head of Audit & Assurance - Ext 5326
Date:	11 July 2018
Background Papers:	CIPFA Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2013 Edition). Audit Committee – Making it Most Effective (CIPFA Practical Guidance on Audit Committees – Action Plan), approved by Committee on 13 January 2015 and reviewed 9 January 2018.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council



Draft Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report 2017/18

1. Background to the Governance Framework
- 1.1. What drives governance policy?

- 1.1.1. The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes adequate arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.1.2. Effective corporate governance is a fundamental feature of any successful public sector organisation. Corporate governance initially became a major issue after several high profile failures in the private sector. As a result there were several reviews (for example the Cadbury and Hempel Committees) directed at improving governance in the private sector.
- 1.1.3. The trend for strengthening governance arrangements spread to the public sector and resulted in the joint Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) document *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government – a Framework*. The Framework, revised in 2016, was originally structured around the six core principles found in the Good Governance Standard for Public Services drawn up by an independent commission established by CIPFA, the Office for Public Management (OPM), and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- 1.1.4. In 2016 CIPFA/SOLACE published a revised Framework to ensure that local government continues to develop and shape its own approach to governance, taking account of the environment in which it now operates. The new Framework applied to annual governance statements prepared for the financial year 2016/17 onwards. It is based on the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector published by CIFA and the International Federation of Accountants in 2014 and contains seven key principles.
- 1.1.5. The International framework defines governance as follows:

“Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.”
- 1.1.6. It also states that:

“To deliver good governance in the public sector both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entities objectives while acting in the public interest at all times. Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and stakeholders.”
- 1.1.7. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council operates through a governance framework that brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and corporate policies and management processes.
- 1.1.8. The Council recognises the seven core principles of good governance as:
 - A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law;
 - B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement;
 - C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits;

- D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes;
 - E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it;
 - F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management; and
 - G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.
- 1.1.9. The Council's local Code of Corporate Governance was revised during 2016 to ensure that it complies with the latest requirements. The updated Code was approved by full Council in December 2016.

2. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Audit & Governance Committee

2.1. Why do we need an Audit Committee?

- 2.1.1. Whilst there is no statutory requirement to have an Audit Committee they are widely recognised as a core component of an effective governance framework and therefore reflect good practise. Regardless of a specific legislative or regulatory framework, Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires local authorities to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and appoint a Chief Financial Officer to have responsibility for those affairs. To be truly effective, the Chief Financial Officer requires an effective Audit Committee to provide support and challenge, as well as an adequate and effective Internal Audit. Both these elements are now enshrined in the 'Public Sector Internal Audit Standards' and the supporting 'Local Government Application Note' published by CIPFA. The Audit & Governance Committee has a key role in overseeing and assessing the internal control, risk management and corporate governance arrangements in place and advising the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements. This role is formalised in the Committee's terms of reference.
- 2.1.2. The Council's Audit & Governance Committee is properly constituted and is given sufficient authority and resources by the Council. The Committee has the right to obtain all the information it considers necessary and to consult directly with senior managers. In line with best practice from both the public and private sectors, the Audit & Governance Committee can report its observations and concerns directly to the Executive Board.
- 2.1.3. Good corporate governance requires independent and effective assurance about the adequacy of financial management and of management arrangements for achieving the organisation's objectives. These responsibilities require an independent and challenging approach. Through these mechanisms, Committee Members are able to use their skills and experiences to influence the Council's governance, internal control processes and risk management arrangements.
- 2.1.4. An effective Committee can bring many benefits to the Council including:
- increasing public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting;

- providing additional assurance through a process of independent and objective scrutiny;
- raising awareness of the need for internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations; and,
- Reinforcing the importance and independence of internal audit.

2.2. What does it do?

- 2.2.1. Audit Committees are a key component of corporate governance. They increase public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting. They also provide a high-level focus on assurance and the organisation's arrangements for governance, managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment.
- 2.2.2. Good practice is contained within CIPFA's document 'Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and the Police' (2013 Edition). The latest edition of the document updates the core functions of an Audit Committee in relation to governance, risk management, internal control and audit. The introduction of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, along with annual governance statements and associated guidance has also been considered in relation to their impact on an Audit Committee.
- 2.2.3. During the year the Audit & Governance Committee consisted of six cross party elected Members. The Committee's purpose, as proscribed in its terms of reference, are to:
- provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework, overall governance and the associated control environment and the extent to which these meet the objectives of the Local Code of Corporate Governance;
 - provide independent review of the Council's governance, risk management and control frameworks;
 - oversee the financial reporting and annual governance processes; and
 - oversee internal and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.
- 2.2.4. The Audit & Governance Committee provides assurance, on behalf of the Council, about the extent to which the objectives of the Local Code of Corporate Governance, as set out in its Constitution, are being met. This purpose is reflected in the Committee's Terms of Reference which are included at Appendix 1 of this report. These were updated during 2015/16 to bring them in line with the core functions set out in the latest guidance for Audit Committees issued by CIPFA. The revised terms of reference were approved by full Council in July 2016 and reaffirmed in May 2017.
- 2.2.5. The CIPFA guidance also includes a greater focus on the factors which support improvement. These include the knowledge and skills that Audit Committee members require and a focus on where the Audit Committee adds value. The Publication provides practical support to the Committee in evaluating the existing Committee arrangements and any planned improvements.
- 2.2.6. The guidance includes a self-assessment checklist of good practice to assist both Members and Officers who are involved in the operation of the Committee. This was completed by Audit & Assurance on behalf of the Committee and presented for consideration at its meeting on 13 January 2015. The Committee noted the key requirements of the CIPFA guidance and approved the action plan for making the Audit & Governance Committee

more effective. The Committee received an update on the good practice self-assessment in January 2018, along with the results of a self -assessment of the Committee's effectiveness. This was completed by Audit & Assurance on behalf of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, and reported to the Committee in January. The results are included at Appendix 2 and 3 of this report for consideration.

- 2.2.7. The Audit & Governance Committee met four times during the 2017/18 Municipal Year. Timings of the meetings throughout the year are designed to coincide with the governance timetable, with meetings in June to receive annual opinion and assurance reports, approve the Council's Annual Governance Statement and to receive the draft Statement of Accounts, and in September to receive the draft Treasury Management Annual Report and Mid-Year Strategy Review, approve the accounts and receive the external auditor's annual report. Attendance details are set out in Appendix 4. The Committee's outline work programme (see Appendices 1 and 4), and associated reports it receives, is designed to enable its Members to make a positive contribution to the continual improvement of control and governance processes and arrangements across the Council, as well as performing the roles as identified by the Constitution.
- 2.2.8. As well as the assurance provided to the Committee from the key reports received from the Council's External Auditor, the Committee also places reliance on the work carried out by Audit & Assurance in delivering the annual internal audit plan. Assurance is gained throughout the year from considering the quarterly progress reports received. These provide the Committee with an overview of the activity carried out by internal audit during the period, including counter fraud activity, and an overview of all audit reports finalised. Emphasis has been on limited or no assurance reports and senior officers have been invited to update the members on progress of implementing recommendations from these reports to provide further assurance to the Committee regarding the implementation of agreed actions.
- 2.2.9. The Committee also receives a full year overview of internal audit work when the Internal Audit Annual Opinion Report is presented, alongside the Annual Counter Fraud Report. The former report provides the Head of Audit opinion on the Council's overall position in relation to the adequacy and effectiveness of risk, governance and internal control systems, based on the work completed by the internal audit team, as required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.
- 2.2.10. The details of the Committee's work programme for 2017/18 and reports received, as set out in Appendix 4 of this report, demonstrate how the Committee has fulfilled its terms of reference during the year and its commitment to monitoring and helping improve the Council's risk, control and governance environments' in the year ahead.
- 2.2.11. In addition to these meetings members of the Committee have also been directed to counter fraud eLearning training modules which are available on the intranet and provided with a Councillors' workbook on bribery and fraud prevention by Audit & Assurance during the year.

2.3. How do officers support the Committee?

- 2.3.1. The Audit & Governance Committee is supported by:
- The Chief Executive, as Head of the Paid Service, with overall responsibility for the Council's management and executive arrangements;
 - The Director of HR, Legal & Governance, as the Monitoring Officer, who is required by law to ensure that the Council acts within its legal powers at all times; and,
 - The Director of Finance and Customer Services, as Section 151 Officer, who is responsible under the law for ensuring the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.
- 2.3.2. The Director of HR, Legal & Governance leads on constitutional, legal, and human resource issues. The Director of Finance and Customer Services takes the lead on financial, audit, risk management and internal control matters. The Head of Audit & Assurance also has a key role to play in supporting the Committee because of the importance of the Internal Audit Service to governance. These Officers are responsible for making the Committee aware of any relevant changes in regulations, guidance, and codes of practice.
- 2.3.3. The Committee is also supported by External Audit colleagues, who attend each meeting to update members on the progress and results of their work, as well as providing regular sector updates. These highlight key messages from national reports and studies and include questions for consideration by the Committee. Additionally, the Committee has invited officers to attend meetings to respond to concerns raised by Members or identified through various Committee reports, such as those from internal and external audit.
- 2.3.4. During the year the Committee has instituted a cycle of corporate risk reviews. Corporate risk owners or key contacts have provided briefings to the Committee on a selection of risk register entries. This has included details regarding the background to the risk identified, the risk assessment process and control arrangements in place to manage or mitigate the relevant risk should it occur. This review and challenge process has improved the Committee's oversight and understanding of the likelihood and potential impact of the corporate risks identified by the Council and on the achievement of related corporate priorities.

2.4. Effectiveness of the Audit & Governance Committee

- 2.4.1. The purpose of the Committee, as defined in its terms of reference, is set out in 2.2.3 above. Its terms of reference set out a range of activities that would provide appropriate assurance to the Council in terms of how it manages risk, and ensures adequate and effective control and governance arrangements exist and operate effectively to secure the efficiency and effective use of its resources.
- 2.4.2. Training opportunities have been made available during the year to members who wish to update their skills and knowledge to ensure that they are able to fulfil their role as members of the Committee.
- 2.4.3. The Committee has been active during the year in carrying out its duties in monitoring internal and external reports and challenging appropriate officers to ensure that it is satisfied with the effectiveness of controls and the

governance and risk management arrangements in place, in accordance with its role and functions set out in its terms of reference in Appendix 1.

- 2.4.4. Based on the evidence presented to the Audit & Governance Committee during the 2017/18 it is the Committee's considered view that the Council has, for the most part, sound financial controls, risk management and governance arrangements in place.
- 2.4.5. The Committee has continued to invite those senior officers and managers to account for services or functions where significant financial, internal control or governance weaknesses have been identified. The members continue to challenge any impairment in stewardship and control of public funds and assets, seeking assurance that prompt and proportionate management actions have been taken. This provides the Council with assurance that effective internal control arrangements were in place during the year and that appropriate action has been taken to address any concerns raised as a result of any of the inspection and assurance processes in place. This is evidenced by the details provided in Appendix 4 regarding the various reports received and considered by the Committee at its meetings during the year to support its work programme and how each of these enable the Committee to fulfil its terms of reference.
- 2.4.6. The External Auditor's 2017 Audit Findings Report for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council included a section on value for money. The External Auditor is required to carry out sufficient work to be satisfied on whether the Council has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources during the year ended March 2017 and to provide a conclusion on this. In doing this work the main considerations the Auditor focussed on were:
- The progress made by management to develop and implement the £15m savings programme; and
 - The work undertaken by management to update the Medium Term Financial Plan to take account of emerging pressure and changing assumptions.
- 2.4.7. Based on the work carried out the External Auditor concluded that the Council had proper arrangements, in all significant respects, to ensure it delivered value for money in its use of resources.

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**Statement of Purpose:**

Our Audit and Governance Committee is a key component of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The purpose of the Audit and Governance Committee is to:

- provide independent assurance to the Council of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment and the extent to which these meet the objectives of the Local Code of Corporate Governance;
- provide independent review of the Council's governance, risk management and control frameworks;
- oversee the financial reporting and annual governance processes; and
- oversee internal and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

Governance, Risk and Control:

The Audit and Governance Committee will:

1. Assess how fully the Council complies with the statutory responsibilities placed on it by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 or by amendments to the Regulations or by similar formal demands;
2. Review the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework and consider annual governance reports and assurances;
3. Review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control;
4. Consider the Council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements;
5. Consider the framework of assurance (including the Management Accountabilities Framework) and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the Council;
6. Monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the Council, including information governance arrangements;
7. Monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the Committee;
8. Consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions;
9. Review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Council from fraud and corruption;
10. Ensure that the Council maintains a robust counter fraud culture via the implementation of a counter-fraud strategy backed up by effective controls and procedures, which define the respective roles of management and Internal Audit and monitor the strategy, actions and counter fraud resources; and
11. Receive, from other Committees and other inspection agencies, details of actions and decisions taken which affect, or contribute to, the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

Internal Audit

The Audit and Governance Committee will:

1. Approve the internal audit charter every two years;
2. Approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources;
3. Approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements;
4. Make appropriate enquiries of both management and the Head of Audit & Assurance to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations;
5. Consider reports from the Head of Audit & Assurance on internal audit's performance during the year. These will include:
 - a) Updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work.
 - b) Regular reports on the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.
 - c) Reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note, considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the Annual Governance Statement.
6. Consider the Head of Audit & Assurance's annual report, including:
 - a) The statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note and the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme that supports the statement – these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit.
 - b) The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion and the implications of any significant matters identified – these will assist the Committee in reviewing the Annual Governance Statement.
 - c) An annual risk management report.
7. Consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.
8. Receive reports outlining the action taken where the Head of Audit & Assurance has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.
9. Contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.
10. Consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the Annual Governance Statement, where required to do so by the Accounts and Audit Regulations; and
11. Support the development of effective communication with the Head of Audit & Assurance.

External Audit

The Audit and Governance Committee will:

1. Consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance prior to publication of the annual accounts;
2. Consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor;
3. Comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it is effective and gives value for money;
4. Commission work from internal and external audit, or other consultants, where applicable; and
5. Advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.

Financial Reporting

The Audit and Governance Committee will:

1. Review the draft annual statement of accounts prior to approval. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council; and
2. Consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

Treasury Management

The Audit and Governance Committee will:

1. Ensure effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies;
2. Agree proposed changes to the treasury management strategy prior to approval;
3. Receive assurance on treasury management activity;
4. Consider reports on treasury management activity during the year; and
5. Consider the treasury management annual report;

Accountability Arrangements

The Audit and Governance Committee will:

1. Report to those charged with governance on the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions.
2. Report to full council on an annual basis outlining the Committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose.

Authority

The Committee is authorised by the Council to investigate any activity within its terms of reference. It is authorised to seek any information it requires from any employee, including those of partner organisations, and all employees are directed to co-operate with any request made by the Committee.

Frequency of Meetings

The Committee will normally meet four times each year to fulfil its requirements.

Outline Programme

In order to meet its principal responsibilities during the year the Committee will consider the following reports/activities:

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY:	TERMS OF REFERENCE NUMBER
Governance, Risk and Control	
Annual Statement (AGS)	1,2,3
AGS Progress Report	1,2
Risk Management Annual Report	3,5,6,7
Internal Audit Opinion Report	3,5
External Audit VFM Report	4
MAF Update	5
Risk Management Update	5,6,7
Corporate Health, Safety & Wellbeing Annual Report	3,5,6,7
IA Progress & Outcomes Report	8,10
Management Assurance Report	9
Reports from Other Committees or agencies	11
Internal Audit	
Annual Plan	1,2,4
IA Progress & Outcomes Report	3,4,5,7,8
Annual Opinion Report	6,9,10,11
External Audit	
Annual Audit Letter	1,5
Management Assurance Report	1
Annual Plan	2,5
Progress Report	2
Findings Report	2,5
Grant Certification Report	2
Value For Money Conclusion	3,5
Fees Letter	4,5
Arrangements for the Appointment of the External Auditor	
Financial Reporting	
Statement of Accounts	1
Management Assurance Report	1
External Audit Findings Report	2
Treasury Management	
Strategy Report	1,2
Progress Report	1,4

Annual Outturn Report	1,3,5
Accountability Arrangements	
Committee Annual Report	1,2
Committee Self-assessment	1

The programme itself will develop over time as new statutory responsibilities are introduced and the timetable may vary, for example, as the Council is required to close its accounts earlier each year.

Membership

The Committee will consist of 6 members appointed by Full Council. In addition the Executive Member for Resources will also attend each Committee meeting.

The Leader of the Council and all Executive Members are precluded from being voting members of the Committee.

A quorum shall be 3 Members.

New Committee members will be required to undertake appropriate induction training to enable them to adequately perform their duties as and when necessary.

Attendance

Committee members are expected to make every effort to attend all meetings, where this is not possible a substitute should be nominated.

To achieve these objectives the Committee will depend principally on the attendance of the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Finance & Customer Services, the Director of HR, Legal & Governance and the Head of Audit & Assurance or their nominated representatives. The Council's external auditors, external advisors and Directors may be requested to attend as and when appropriate.

Reporting

Minutes of Audit and Governance Committee will be formally noted by Full Council.

Further reports will be made in those cases where the Committee considers matters must be formally brought to the attention of Full Council.

CIPFA PRACTICAL GUIDANCE ON AUDIT COMMITTEES – GOOD PRACTICE SELF-ASSESSMENT

REF	GOOD PRACTICE QUESTIONS	YES	PARTIAL	NO	ACTION REQUIRED
<i>Audit Committee purpose and governance</i>					
1	Does the authority have a dedicated audit committee?	√			
2	Does the audit committee report directly to full council?	√			
3	Do the terms of reference clearly set out the purpose of the committee in accordance with CIPFA's Position Statement?	√			
4	Is the role and purpose of the audit committee understood and accepted across the authority?	√			
5	Does the audit committee provide support to the authority in meeting the requirements of good governance?	√			
6	Are the arrangements to hold the committee to account for its performance operating satisfactorily?	√			
<i>Functions of the committee</i>					
7	Do the committee's terms of reference explicitly address all the core areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ good governance ▪ assurance framework ▪ internal audit ▪ external audit ▪ financial reporting ▪ risk management ▪ value for money or best value ▪ counter-fraud and corruption 	√			
8	Is an annual evaluation undertaken to assess whether	√			

REF	GOOD PRACTICE QUESTIONS	YES	PARTIAL	NO	ACTION REQUIRED
	the committee is fulfilling its terms of reference and that adequate consideration has been given to all core areas?				
9	Has the audit committee considered the wider areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement and whether it would be appropriate for the committee to undertake them?	√			
10	Where coverage of core areas has been found to be limited, are plans in place to address this?	√			
11	Has the committee maintained its non-advisory role by not taking on any decision-making powers that are not in line with its core purpose?	√			
Membership and support					
12	<p>Has an effective audit committee structure and composition of the committee been selected?</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ separation from the executive; ▪ an appropriate mix of knowledge and skills among the membership; ▪ a size of committee that is not unwieldy; ▪ where independent non-elected members are used, that they have been appointed using an appropriate process. 	√			
13	Does the chair of the committee have appropriate knowledge and skills?	√			
14	Are arrangements in place to support the committee with briefings and training?	√			
15	Has the membership of the committee been assessed against the core knowledge and skills framework and found to be	√			

REF	GOOD PRACTICE QUESTIONS	YES	PARTIAL	NO	ACTION REQUIRED
	satisfactory?				
16	Does the committee have good working relations with key people and organisations, including external audit, internal audit and the chief financial officer?	√			
17	Is adequate secretariat and administrative support to the committee provided?	√			
Effectiveness of the committee					
18	Has the committee obtained feedback on its performance from those interacting with the committee or relying on its work?			√	
19	Has the committee evaluated whether and how it is adding value to the organisation?	√			
20	Does the committee have an action plan to improve any areas of weakness?	√			

CIPFA'S AUDIT COMMITTEES PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES (2013 EDITION)**Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Audit Committee****Assessment key**

5	Clear evidence is available from a number of sources that the committee is actively supporting improvements across all aspects of this area. The improvements made are clearly identifiable.
4	Clear evidence from some sources that the committee is actively and effectively supporting improvement across some aspects of this area.
3	The committee has had mixed experience in supporting improvement in this area. There is some evidence that demonstrates their impact but there are also significant gaps.
2	There is some evidence that the committee has supported improvements, but the impact of this support is limited.
1	No evidence can be found that the audit committee has supported improvements in this

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Audit Committee Effectiveness Assessment 2017/18

Areas where the audit committee can add value by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can add value and provide evidence of effectiveness	Self-evaluation, examples, areas of strength and weakness	Overall assessment: 5 – 1 See key above
Promoting the principles of good governance and their application to decision making.	<p>Providing robust review of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and the assurances underpinning it.</p> <p>Working with key members to improve their understanding of the AGS and their contribution to it.</p> <p>Supporting reviews/audits of governance arrangements.</p> <p>Participating in self-assessments of governance arrangements.</p> <p>Working with partner audit committees to review governance arrangements in partnerships.</p>	<p>The Audit & Governance Committee reviews the draft AGS prior to approval. It also reviews the Risk Management Annual Report and annual opinions from Internal Audit (IA) and External Audit which support the AGS.</p> <p>The Committee approves the IA annual audit plan, which classifies audit reviews by assurance area to ensure adequate coverage of risk, governance and control frameworks. It receives a summary of key findings and opinions from individual reviews supporting the overall opinion.</p> <p>Partnership arrangements are not covered by the current terms of reference. However the Committee does receive a report on the Council's Significant Partnerships Register.</p>	4

Areas where the audit committee can add value by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can add value and provide evidence of effectiveness	Self-evaluation, examples, areas of strength and weakness	Overall assessment: 5 – 1 See key above
		The Committee Chair is a member of the Primary Assurance Group, which reviews the AGS and related assurance reports.	
Contributing to the development of an effective control environment.	<p>Monitoring the implementation of recommendations from auditors.</p> <p>Encouraging ownership of the internal control framework by appropriate managers.</p> <p>Raising significant concerns over controls with appropriate senior managers.</p>	<p>Regular Internal Audit Progress Reports are presented to Committee includes percentage of recommendations implemented and commentary re outstanding 'must' level recommendations.</p> <p>Senior officers attend the Committee meetings to update on the progress of actions from key reports as and when appropriate, to provide explanations and updates on significant audit concerns.</p> <p>The Committee reviews the summary of MAF red priority areas of concern.</p> <p>The Committee is also authorised by the Council to investigate any activity within its terms of reference and to seek any information it requires from any employee, including those of partner organisations, and all employees are directed to co-operate with any request made by the Committee.</p>	5
Supporting the establishment of arrangements for the governance of risk and for effective arrangements to	<p>Reviewing risk management arrangements and their effectiveness, e.g. risk management benchmarking.</p> <p>Monitoring improvements.</p>	<p>The Committee receives the annual risk management report which includes key events and achievements for the previous year and key developments for the next 12 months.</p> <p>The corporate risk register summary identifies risk owners at Director/senior officer level and tracks changes to risk scores. Regular reports are presented to Committee on the corporate risk register and risk</p>	5

Areas where the audit committee can add value by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can add value and provide evidence of effectiveness	Self-evaluation, examples, areas of strength and weakness	Overall assessment: 5 – 1 See key above
manage risks.	Holding risk owners to account for major/strategic risks.	management support activity during the year. The Committee carries out a 'deep dive' review of one or more corporate risks with the relevant risk owner or key contact at each meeting.	
Advising on the adequacy of the assurance framework and considering whether assurance is deployed efficiently and effectively.	Specifying its assurance needs, identifying gaps or overlaps in assurance. Seeking to streamline assurance gathering and reporting. Reviewing the effectiveness of assurance providers, e.g. internal audit, risk management, external audit.	Regular reporting of planned and actual coverage by Internal and External Audit. Committee challenge opportunities for reliance on IA work by External Auditors and receives Internal and External Audit and Risk Management progress reports. The IA report includes audits in progress and in-year review of resources and achievement of plan. IA have reviewed and provided assurance on risk management arrangements in 2015/16.	4
Supporting the quality of the internal audit activity, particularly by underpinning its organisational independence.	Reviewing the audit charter and functional reporting arrangements. Assessing the effectiveness of internal audit arrangements and supporting improvements.	The Head of Audit & Assurance has right of access to and regular briefings for the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee. The Committee receives and approves the IA Charter and annual strategic statement, including reporting and monitoring arrangements, supporting the IA annual plan. The External Auditors Audit Findings Report includes commentary on Internal Audit as part of their assessment of financial control arrangements. The Committee reviews the Internal Audit Quality Assurance Improvement Plan. The annual Head of Audit Opinion Report includes an assessment of IA performance and quality assurance. Committee approved Peer review approach for external assessment of IA compliance with Public Service Internal Audit Standards and received the overall opinion and a	5

Areas where the audit committee can add value by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can add value and provide evidence of effectiveness	Self-evaluation, examples, areas of strength and weakness	Overall assessment: 5 – 1 See key above
		summary of the findings and themes from the Peer review action plan at its April meeting.	
<p>Aiding the achievement of the authority's goals and objectives through helping to ensure appropriate governance, risk, control and assurance arrangements.</p>	<p>Reviewing major projects and programmes to ensure that governance and assurance arrangements are in place. Reviewing the effectiveness of performance management arrangements.</p>	<p>Work on this area is included in Internal and External Audit plans on a risk assessment basis. IA reviews are classified under one of the three headings in the plan and the annual report. Plans include reviews of key capital and revenue projects. Additional ad hoc work is carried out during the year on request by Directors.</p> <p>Internal audit progress report includes a summary of MAF red priority areas of concern.</p> <p>Performance management is not specifically identified in the Committee Terms of Reference. There are other processes in place within the Council's governance structure which provide scrutiny and challenge for this area, as part of the Corporate Plan Scorecard monitoring arrangements, to hold Chief Officers and managers to account on a regular basis, such as Management Board and the PAM reporting process as well as Members through PDS, SPT and Executive Board reporting.</p> <p>Internal audit consider performance arrangements as part of any relevant audit and would report on them as part of our progress reporting arrangements.</p> <p>The IA plan also includes specific KPI audits.</p>	4

Areas where the audit committee can add value by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can add value and provide evidence of effectiveness	Self-evaluation, examples, areas of strength and weakness	Overall assessment: 5 – 1 See key above
Supporting the development of robust arrangements for ensuring value for money.	Ensuring that assurance on value for money arrangements is included in the assurances received by the audit committee. Considering how performance in value for money is evaluated as part of the AGS.	Standing Financial Instruction 3, Procurement and the Payment of Creditors, and Corporate Contract & Procurement Procedure Rules are in place as part of the control framework to ensure that value for money is considered in procurement activity. Regular Creditors audits consider on compliance with these requirements. The Committee receives the External Auditors Combined Audit Findings and Value for Money Report.	4
Helping the authority to implement the values of good governance, including effective arrangements for countering fraud and corruption risks.	Reviewing arrangements against the standards set out in CIPFA's <i>Managing the Risk of Fraud</i> (Red Book 2). Reviewing fraud risks and the effectiveness of the organisation's strategy to address those risks. Assessing the effectiveness of ethical governance arrangements for both staff and members.	A Counter Fraud Policy and Strategy is in place (which was reviewed and updated in 2015/16 in accordance with latest CIPFA guidance) supported by the Counter Fraud Policy Framework which includes a Fraud Response Plan, Whistleblowing Policy, Anti Money Laundering Policy and Members and Employees' Codes of Conduct. The Internal Audit progress reports include oversight of counter fraud activity and results. The Committee consider and approve the annual fraud risk assessment as part of the External Auditor's enquiries of those charged with governance and have approved the Counter Fraud Plan as part of Internal Audit annual plan 2017/18. The Committee receives the Counter Annual Report as part of the suite of annual reports which is considered prior to approval of the Annual Governance Statement:	5

Areas where the audit committee can add value by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can add value and provide evidence of effectiveness	Self-evaluation, examples, areas of strength and weakness	Overall assessment: 5 – 1 See key above
Promoting effective public reporting to the authority's stakeholders and local community and measures to improve transparency and accountability.	Improving how the authority discharges its responsibilities for public reporting; for example, better targeting at the audience, plain English. Reviewing whether decision making through partnership organisations remains transparent and publicly accessible and encouraging greater transparency.	<p>Audit & Governance Committee meetings are held in public with minimal Part 2 items. Agendas and reports are published on Council internet website.</p> <p>Council Committee agendas, reports and minutes are also available on the internet via the Council website along with Executive Members' and Officer decisions. Consideration of Partnership arrangements is not currently included in the Committee's terms of reference. However a corporate Partnership Governance Framework is in place, which includes a Governance Checklist and the Committee receives a report on the Council's Significant Partnerships Register.</p>	4

2017/18 Member Attendance and Committee Work Programme

Four meetings were held during the year. The following Member attendance was recorded:

Councillor/Date	13 June 2017	19 September 2017	9 January 2018	10 April 2018
Salim Sidat MBE (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ron Whittle	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vicky McGurk	✓	✓	✓	✓
David Foster	✓	✓	✓	A
Jim Casey	A	✓	✓	A
Keith Murray	A	✓	✓	✓

✓ = attended meeting A = sent apologies

Audit & Governance Committee Work Programme 2017/18					
PROGRAMME ACTIVITY:	TERMS OF REF. NUMBER	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	JANUARY	APRIL
Governance, Risk and Control					
Annual Statement (AGS)	1,2,3	✓			
AGS Progress Report	1,2			✓	
Risk Management Annual Report	3,5,6,7	✓			
Annual Counter Fraud Report	3,9,10	✓			
Annual Internal Audit Opinion Report	3,5	✓			
External Audit Findings and VFM Report	4		✓		
Annual Audit Letter	1,5			✓	
MAF Update	5	✓		✓	
Risk Management Update	5,6,7		✓	✓	✓
Corporate Health, Safety & Wellbeing Annual Report	3,5,6,7	✓			
IA Progress & Outcomes Report	8,10	✓	✓	✓	✓

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY:	TERMS OF REF. NUMBER	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	JANUARY	APRIL
Confirmation External Auditor Appointment	1			√	
Management Assurance Report – Response from Those Charged with Governance	9				√
Significant Partnerships Register	5	√			
Reports from Other Committees or agencies	11	As Required	As Required	As Required	As Required
Internal Audit					
Annual Plan	1,2,4				√
IA Progress & Outcomes Report	3,4,5,7,8	√	√	√	√
Annual Internal Audit Opinion Report	6,9,10,11	√			
External Audit					
Annual Audit Letter	1,5			√	
Management Assurance Report – Response to External Audit from Those Charged with Governance	1				√
Annual Plan	2,5				√
Progress Report	2	√		√	√
Findings Report	2,5		√		
Grant Certification Report	2				√
Value For Money Conclusion	3,5		√	√	
Fees Letter	4,5			√	
Confirmation of External Auditor Appointment				√	
Financial Reporting					
Statement of Accounts	1		√		
Management Assurance Report - Response to External Audit from Those Charged with Governance	1				√
External Audit Findings Report	2		√		
Treasury Management					
Strategy Report	1,2		√		
Progress Report	1,4	√	√	√	√

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY:	TERMS OF REF. NUMBER	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	JANUARY	APRIL
Annual Outturn Report	1,3,5		√		
Accountability Arrangements					
Committee Annual Report	1,2	√			
Committee Self-Assessment	2			√	

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 13th June 2017

PRESENT – *Councillors Sidat (in the Chair); Whittle, McGurk, and D Foster.*

APOLOGIES – *Councillors Casey and Murray.*

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Kay	–	Executive Member Resources
Neil Krajewski	–	District Auditor
Louise Mattinson	–	Director of Finance and IT
David Fairclough	–	Director of HR and Legal
Colin Ferguson	–	Head of Audit and Assurance
Lorraine Nicholls	–	Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager
John Addison	–	Democratic Services Manager

RESOLUTIONS

1 Minutes of the meeting held on 11th April 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th April 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 External Audit's Report Update

The Council's External Auditors provided the Committee with a verbal report on the current position of their work as of March 2017. The External Auditors reported that they had found no significant risks to bring to Members attention through their work.

RESOLVED:

That the report on External Audit's progress report be noted.

4 Treasury Management Report – March 2017 to May 2017

The Director for Finance and IT provided Members with a report on the Council's Treasury Management function that had taken place between March and May 2017.

The report summarised the interest rate for the quarter, borrowing and lending transactions undertaken and the Council's overall debt position. It

also reported on the position against the Prudential Indicators established by the Council.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the report.

5 Audit & Assurance – Progress & Outcomes to May 2016

The Audit & Assurance Manager submitted a report, which updated the Committee on progress and outcomes against the Audit & Assurance Plan 2016/17 in terms of outcomes achieved for the first quarter of the financial year.

The report focused on a number of key areas in Audit & Assurance, in particular:

- Capital Work
- Staffing/HR
- Demand Management
- Governance and Compliance
- Government Reform
- Budgets and Finance

Members were informed that the Highways audit had provided limited assurance, the review had considered the controls in place to ensure that the Council's highways network was maintained to a reasonable standard. It was noted that the final report provided a limited assurance opinion for both the control environment in place and compliance with the controls identified.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note all outcomes achieved by May 2017 against the Audit & Assurance Strategy and Plan, which was approved by Committee in April 2017.

6 Corporate Annual Report on Health, Safety & Wellbeing 2016//17

The Director for Legal & HR and the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager provided the Committee with the Health, Safety & Wellbeing annual report and the Employee Wellbeing Statement.

It was reported that the Corporate Annual Report - Health, Safety & Wellbeing – 2016/2017 provided Members with a summary of the Council's performance in managing health and safety over the year that ended 31 March 2017.

Members were reminded that the Council has legal duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 as well as other UK health and safety legislation to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees and other people who may be affected by Council business and activities. It was noted that the Council must do whatever was reasonably practicable to achieve this. This meant protecting workers and others from anything that may cause them harm and effectively controlling any risks to injury or health that could arise in the workplace.

The report covered key areas such as Performance for 2016/17, Key activities during the year and Priorities for the next 12 months.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the Corporate Annual Report - Health, Safety & Wellbeing – 2016/2017

7 Annual Risk Management Report 2016/17

The Director of Finance provided the Committee with an Annual Risk Management Report for 2016/2017. Members were asked to consider and review the annual Risk Management Report. The Committee was also requested to agree on the overall effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements in place during 2016/17.

Members were reminded that the Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Framework 2015/20 required the Audit and Governance Committee to approve an annual risk management report which includes consideration of the effectiveness of the risk management arrangements in place within the Council. The Committee's terms of reference also required it to review progress on risk management at least annually.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the annual risk management report; and agree with the conclusion on the overall effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements in place during 2016/17.

8 Annual Counter Fraud Report 2016/17

The Head of Audit & Assurance presented a report to Members which informed the Audit & Governance Committee of the results of the counter fraud activity that had been carried out during the year ended 31 March 2017 to minimise the risk of fraud, bribery and corruption occurring in the Council, and the outcome of investigations carried out into potential or suspected fraud or irregularities.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the Counter Fraud Annual Report (as set out in Appendix A) as part of its monitoring role.

9 Annual Internal Audit Opinion Report for 2016/17

The Head of Audit & Assurance presented a report on Internal Audit's overall opinion on the effectiveness of the control environment in the financial year 2016/17.

It was reported that the overall opinion, taken from Audit & Assurance's work in 2016/17, was that the Council's control environment was adequate in its effectiveness.

RESOLVED

That the following matters be noted:

- 1) The content of the Annual Internal Audit Opinion Report for 2016/17 (as set out in Appendix A);
- 2) The opinion of the Head of Audit, Assurance & Procurement, that adequate assurance, can be placed upon the Council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control; and
- 3) The internal audit work that supports this opinion has been delivered in accordance with the PSIAS and that there are no significant areas of non-conformance.

10 Annual Governance Statement for 2016/17

The Director of Finance provided the Committee with the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2016/17, which also included up to the date of this Committee. The report recognised that, there would always be risks that it must be managed effectively and that whilst due diligence would not always ensure that it gets things right first time, it continued to put in place assurance frameworks that were intended to ensure that its systems of governance are fit for purpose and have the flexibility to meet the challenges that the Change Agenda brings.

It was reported that the Resources Directorate had continued to promote the Council's strategic approach to governance and assurance. The developments in governance, continuing from those in 2016/17, included:

- Continuing review and amendments to the Council's Constitution, including the revision of the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance to take account of the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 framework.

- Completion of director assurance statements, which closely reflect the seven principles of good governance in support of the Annual Governance Statement.
- Ongoing work to implement the information governance strategy and related policies and procedures.
- Continuing embedding of information security awareness through the e-learning toolkit, and monitoring staff completion of training.
- The development and implementation of a Counter Fraud Risk Register.
- Strengthening of risk management arrangements through the implementation of a revised risk register template to improve the monitoring arrangements.
- Revision of the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme, which included a senior management structure review and amendments to the roles and responsibilities of chief officers.
- Ongoing scrutiny of the Workforce Review programme by the Workforce Programme Board.
- Completion of the Audit & Governance Committee self-assessment to evaluate its effectiveness.
- The introduction of a formalised, structured member training programme.
- The Audit & Governance Committee more routinely inviting senior officers to attend meetings and holding them to account for actions to address significant issues identified by Audit & Assurance.
- The review of significant partnerships and external bodies the Council is represented on to confirm the Council representation is appropriate and the governance arrangements in place are adequate.
- Detailed review and challenge of corporate risks by the Audit & Governance Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Governance Statement be approved.

11 Audit Committee Annual Report 2016/17

The Audit and Assurance Manager presented to the Committee the Audit Committee Annual Report 2016/17 for consideration and approval. Members were informed that the report summarised the work that the

Committee had undertaken during the previous municipal year, demonstrating that the Audit Committee had fulfilled its agreed terms of reference.

Members were reminded that The CIPFA 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police' 2013 edition incorporated CIPFA's Position Statement on the role and function of view of an Audit Committee in local authorities. It was noted that although no single model of Committee was prescribed, as a minimum all should report regularly on their work and provide an assessment of their performance on a yearly basis.

The Audit and Assurance Manager reported that the Audit Committee was a key component on the maintenance of an adequate and effective governance framework. It was noted that through an annual report the Committee can demonstrate its effectiveness in fulfilling its role to provide independent assurance regarding the adequacy of risk management, the overall governance and associated control environment, and also scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance, to the extent that it affects its exposure to risk and weakens the control environment.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Committee approve the Committee's Annual Report, including the statement on its effectiveness during 2016/17 and the draft effectiveness self-assessment evaluation; and
- 2) That the Audit Committee Annual Report be referred to the Full Council for endorsement.

12 Significant Partnerships Register 2016/17

The Policy & Partnership Manager provided the Committee with a report on the Significant Partnerships Register for 2016/17. It was noted that the register identified all the significant partnerships the local authority was involved in as per the Audit and Governance Committee's Terms of Reference.

Members were informed that the Significant Partnerships Register was completed by officers to comply with a governance framework which had been adopted based on the principles of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. The Register was an opportunity to ensure that partnerships across the local authority were well-governed and that appropriate oversight was in place.

It was reported that the purposes of this exercise a significant partnership was: 'an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve a shared objective.'

It was defined as a joint working arrangement where the partners:

- are otherwise independent bodies;
- agree to co-operate to achieve common goals and outcomes for the community;
- share accountability, risks, and resources;
- share relevant information; and
- agree processes and programmes to achieve the common goal.

RESOLVED

That the Audit and Governance Committee approve the significant partnerships included in the May 2017 register.

Signed
Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed
Date

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 19th September 2017

PRESENT – *Councillors Sidat (in the Chair); Casey, Whittle, McGurk, Murray, and D Foster.*

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Kay	–	Executive Member Resources
Karen Murray	–	District Auditor
Neil Krajewski	–	District Auditor
Louise Mattinson	–	Director of Finance and IT
Colin Ferguson	–	Head of Audit and Assurance
John Addison	–	Democratic Services Manager

RESOLUTIONS

13 Minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

At this point in the meeting the Chair requested that the External Auditors leave the room while the Director for Finance updated the Committee on the Appointment of External Auditors once the Councils current contract expired. It was noted that the Council had awarded its contract to Grant Thornton.

14 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15 External Audit: Findings Report 2016/17

The Council's External Auditors provided Members with a joint Findings Report for 2016/2017 and Value for Money report. The Findings Report summarised the outcomes from the 2016/17 audit, which was substantially complete. It also included messages arising from the auditing of the Council's financial statements and the results of the work External Audit had undertaken to assess Council arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources.

It was reported that in terms of value for money, based on External Audits work, and having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria published by the Audit Commission, it was noted that External Audit were satisfied that in all significant respects the Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2017.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That That the External Audit joint report on Value for Money for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and the Findings Report 2016/2017 be noted.
- 2) That the Director of Finance and the Audit Department be thanked for hard work and support during the external audit process.

16 Statement of Accounts 2016/17

The Deputy Chief Executive gave a presentation on the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 and submitted a report summarising the main features of the document.

The Statement of Accounts outlined the main features of the Council's financial performance for the year ending 31st March 2017 and provided information relative to the Council's financial position at that date.

It was noted that Accounts and Audit Regulations 2016 require that the accounts should be considered and approved by Members prior to publication by the 30th September following the year to which they relate. This was to enable the Audit and Governance Committee to review and approve the accounts, having considered the issues raised by the auditors in the Audit Findings Report.

Members were reminded that the 2016/17 Draft Statement of Accounts was certified by the Director of Finance on 23rd June 2017, and subsequently published on the Council's website.

The Committee was informed that the Council's Better Care Fund (BCF) which was a pooled budget arrangement with Blackburn with Darwen Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), it was noted that the Council should only account for its share of income and expenditure. However, the accounts included the full amount of BCF deposited in the pooled fund as income, and the transactions to transfer funds to the CCG as gross expenditure. As a result both income and gross expenditure have been overstated, although there is no impact on the outturn position of the Council.

The Committee agreed to the approval of the accounts once the agreed changes relating to the Better Care Fund have been processed.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Committee notes the outcome of the audit of the Council's financial statements and the Value for Money conclusion as

presented by Grant Thornton in their Audit Findings Report for 2016/17 (Minute number 15).

- 2) That the Committee approves the Statement of Accounts, including the annual governance statement for 2016/17.
- 3) That the Committee approves the letter of representation from the Director of Finance & I.T. to the external auditors.
- 4) That the Committee approves notes that the future change to the timescales for approval and publication in 2017/18.

17 Treasury Management Report – June to August 2017

The Deputy Chief Executive provided the Committee a report on the Treasury Management Quarterly report covering the period June 2017 to August 2017.

Members were reminded that the Council formally adopted CIPFA's revised Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services when they approved the 2017/18 Treasury Management Strategy at Finance Council in February 2017. The CIPFA Code, Investment Guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Audit & Assurance review of Treasury Management activities, all Members recommend an enhanced role for elected Members in scrutinising the Treasury Management function of the Council.

The report summarised the interest rate environment for three months, borrowing and lending transactions undertaken and the Council's overall debt position. It also reported on the position against the Prudential Indicators established by the Council.

RESOLVED

That the Committee to note the Treasury Management position over the quarter from June 2017 to August 2017.

18 Draft Treasury Management Annual report 2016/17 and Mid-Year Review 2017/18

The Deputy Chief Executive provided the Committee with the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2016-17 and Mid-Year Treasury Strategy Review for 2017/18.

Members were reminded that as the body responsible for scrutiny of the Treasury Management function, they are asked to consider key issues in the Treasury Management Outturn Report for 2016-17 and Mid-Year Strategy Review for 2017-18, ahead of consideration by full Council.

RESOLVED

That the Committee approve the draft Treasury Management Outturn for 2016-17 and Mid-Year Strategy Review for 2017-18 and that it be submitted to the Council for approval on 5th October 2017.

19 Audit & Assurance–Progress & Outcomes to 31 August 2017

The Head of Audit & Assurance submitted a report which updated the Committee on progress and outcomes against the Audit & Assurance Plan 2016/17 in terms of outcomes achieved to date for the financial year.

Members were asked to consider and challenge the outcomes achieved to 31 August 2017 against the Audit & Assurance Plan. The report focused on a number of key areas in Audit & Assurance Plan, in particular:

- Growth Strategy Programme:
- Private Care Homes Contract Payments:
- Cyber risk
- Budgetary Control
- Payroll Core System

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the outcomes achieved to 31 August 2017 against the Audit & Assurance Plan, which was approved by Committee in April 2017.

20 Risk Management – 2017/18 Quarter 1 Review

The Head of Audit & Assurance provided the Committee with a report that detailed risk management activity that had taken place over the first quarter (1 April 2017 to 30 June 2017).

Members were reminded that the Council recognised that risk management was not simply a compliance issue, but rather a way of viewing its operations with a significant impact on long-term viability. It was noted that risk management helped to demonstrate openness, integrity and accountability in all of the Council's activities.

It was highlighted to Members that currently the top corporate risk was:

- High profile serious/critical safeguarding incident/case

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the progress made on the Corporate Risk Register as at the end of Quarter 1 2017/18; and the risk management activity that has occurred during the period.

Signed
Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed
Date

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 9th January 2018

PRESENT – *Councillors Sidat (in the Chair); Casey, Whittle, McGurk, Murray, and D Foster.*

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Andy Kay	- Executive Member Resources
John Farrar	- District Auditor
Neil Krajewski	- District Auditor
Louise Mattinson	- Director of Finance and IT
Colin Ferguson	- Head of Audit and Assurance
Phil Llewellyn	- Governance and Democratic Manager
Robert Arrowsmith	- Head of Policy, Performance and Commissioning
Katherine White	- Head of Adult Social Care & Social Work

RESOLUTIONS

21 Minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

At this point in the meeting the Chair requested that the External Auditors leave the room while the Director of Finance &IT updated the Committee on the Appointment of External Auditors once the Council's current contract expired. It was noted that the Council had awarded its contract to Grant Thornton.

22 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest submitted (Councillor Ron Whittle stated he was a Council representative on the Pension Fund Committee, which did not require him to fill out an interest form).

23 External Audit – Annual Audit Letter

The Council's External Auditors provided a summary to Members of the Committee of the Annual Audit Letter, which summarised the key findings arising from the work carried out at the Council for the year ended 31st March 2017.

An unqualified opinion had been given on the Council's financial statements on 25th September 2017. In terms of Value for Money, Grant Thornton were satisfied that the Council had proper arrangements in place to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of

resources during the year ended 31st March 2017, which was reflected in its audit opinion on 25th September 2017.

The audit had been certified in accordance with the requirements of the Code on 27th September 2017, and in terms of the Certification of the Council's Housing Benefit subsidy claim, this would be reported to the Committee in the Annual Certification Letter.

RESOLVED- That the Annual Audit Letter be received and noted.

24 External Audit – Audit Committee Progress Report and Update Year ended 31st March 2018

The Council's External Auditors reported on progress up to 20th December 2017 and gave a Sector update.

Work had started on planning for the 2017/18 financial statements audit, with a detailed plan of the proposed approach to be issued by 28th February 2018. The Plan would be considered by the Committee at its April meeting.

In terms of Value for Money, an initial risk assessment to determine the approach would be carried out in January 2018, and a Value for Money Conclusion given by the deadline in July 2018.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

25 Treasury Management Report – September to November 2017

The Director of Finance & IT provided the Committee a report on the Treasury Management Quarterly report covering the period September 2017 to November 2017.

Members were reminded that the Council formally adopted CIPFA's revised Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services when they approved the 2017/18 Treasury Management Strategy at Finance Council in February 2017. The CIPFA Code, Investment Guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Audit & Assurance review of Treasury Management activities, all Members recommend an enhanced role for elected Members in scrutinising the Treasury Management function of the Council.

The report summarised the interest rate environment for three months, borrowing and lending transactions undertaken and the Council's overall debt position. It also reported on the position against the Prudential Indicators established by the Council.

RESOLVED -

That the the Treasury Management position over the quarter from September 2017 to November 2017 be noted.

26 Audit & Assurance–Progress & Outcomes to November 2017

The Head of Audit & Assurance submitted a report which updated the Committee on achievements and progress made by Audit & Assurance in the period from 1st September to 30th November 2017.

The report focused on a number of key areas in Audit & Assurance Plan, in particular:

- Risk and Corporate Governance
- Counter Fraud Activity
- Internal Audit work and performance
- Audit & Assurance Plan 2017/18 – In Year Review

Further to discussions at the last meeting, Robert Arrowsmith, Head of Policy, Performance and Commissioning and Katherine White, Head of Adult Social Care & Social Work attended the meeting to give further information on Private Care Homes Contract Payments, following an audit where a limited assurance opinion was provided and a management response was outstanding in respect of six recommendations, including two graded as ‘must’.

It was reported that there had been a marked improvement in the areas Identified in the audit, and details were given, although three actions were still outstanding.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, in particular, on whether the Mosaic software was fit for purpose and compatible with the Civica accounting software, and it was agreed that further details would be provided to the Committee after the meeting.

RESOLVED - That the Committee note the outcomes achieved to 30 November 2017 against the Audit & Assurance Plan, which was approved by Committee in April 2017.

27 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) – Progress of 2016/17 Actions and 2017/18 Approach/Timetable

The Head of Audit & Assurance provided the Committee with a report on the progress of the actions taken to address the significant governance issues identified in the 2016/17 AGS and the planned approach and timetable for producing the 2017/18 Statement.

RESOLVED – That the progress made on the agreed AGS actions from 2016/17 and approach/timetable for producing the AGS for 2017/18 be noted.

28 Risk Management – 2017/18 Quarter 2 Review

The Head of Audit and Assurance provided the Committee with a report which detailed the risk management activity that had taken place in the period from 1st July to 30th September 2017.

Members were reminded that the top corporate risk remained the same as in the previous quarter, Corporate Risk 14, a high profile serious/critical safeguarding incident occurring relating to an individual known to the Council.

RESOLVED – That the progress made on the Corporate Risk Register at the end of Quarter 2 2017/18 and risk management activity in the period be noted.

29 Audit & Governance Committee – Effectiveness Assessment

A report was submitted which gave the results of an assessment of compliance of the Audit & Governance Committee against recognised best practise as well as a review of the effectiveness of the Committee by the Chair of the Committee and a summary of Committee members' self-assessments. The results of the assessments were set out in appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the report. Appendix 1 contained details of the Committee's position in comparison to the CIPFA good practice checklist, which showed the Committee arrangements were largely compliant with the recommended guidance.

Appendix 2 contained details of the evaluation of Effectiveness of the Committee produced by the Head of Audit & Assurance in consultation with the Chair of the Committee – across the five areas of evaluation the score was 4 out of 5, with the remaining four areas scoring a 5.

The details included at Appendix 3 provided a summary of the responses received from the Councillors who had been members of the Committee during the Municipal Year. The overall results showed that there was a strong belief by all members that the Committee was operating effectively, with the majority of scores being either a 3 or a 4. However there were some areas where there was scope for further improvement for consideration by the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the following appendices be approved the following, as a means of confirming their effectiveness as an Audit & Governance Committee:

- the Audit & Governance Committee’s position when compared to the CIPFA good practice checklist (Appendix 1);
- the Evaluation of Effectiveness of the Audit & Governance Committee, produced by the Head of Audit & Assurance in consultation with the Chair of the Committee (Appendix 2); and,
- the summary results from the individual member self-assessments of the overall effectiveness of the Committee (Appendix 3).

30 Confirmation of the Appointment of the Councils’ External Auditor

Members received a report from the Director of Finance and IT which asked the Committee to note the appointment of Grant Thornton as the external auditor to the Council for the 2018/19 accounts and beyond following the end of the transitional arrangements at the conclusion of the 2017/18 audits; and the proposed arrangements for the appointment of an accredited accounting firm to carry out the work required under the auditors to new arrangements for the Housing Benefit (Subsidy) Assurance Process for Subsidy claims from 2018/19 onwards.

The Council’s external auditors were currently working under a contract originally let by the Audit Commission and the contract was novated to Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) following the closure of the Audit Commission. This included the work necessary to certify the Council’s Housing Benefits Subsidy claim.

The Council was required to have new arrangements in place to make a first appointment of its external auditors by 31 December 2017 for the audit year 2018/19 and to inform the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) of the procurement of its reporting accountant for subsidy claims from 2018 onwards by 1 March 2018.

RESOLVED – That the appointment of Grant Thornton as the Council’s external audit services provider from 2018/19 be noted.

Signed
Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed
Date

AUDIT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 10th April 2018

PRESENT – *Councillors Sidat (in the Chair); Whittle, McGurk, and Murray.*

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Andy Kay	-	Executive Member Resources
John Farrar	-	External Auditor
Neil Krajewski	-	External Auditor
Louise Mattinson	-	Director of Finance and IT
Colin Ferguson	-	Head of Audit and Assurance
Phil Llewellyn	-	Governance and Democratic Manager

31. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillors Jim Casey and David Foster.

32. Minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

33. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

34. External Audit – Audit Committee Progress Report and Update Year ended 31st March 2018

The Council's External Auditors reported on progress up to March 2018 and gave a Sector update.

Work had started on planning for the 2017/18 financial statements audit, with an interim audit commencing in February 2018.

The statutory deadline for the issue of the 2017/18 opinion had been brought forward by two months to 31st July 2018. The final accounts audit was due to begin in June 2018, with findings being reported by the earlier deadline of July 2018.

In terms of Value for Money, an initial risk assessment to determine the approach had been undertaken in December 2017 and a Value for Money Conclusion would be given by the deadline in July 2018.

RESOLVED- That the update be noted.

35. External Audit Plan Year Ending 31st March 2018

The External Audit Plan for the Year Ending March 2018 was submitted. The document provided an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of the Council for those charged with governance.

The report set out the significant risks identified, as well as reasonably possible risks, and in particular the focus on Value for Money arrangements.

Reference was made to the fact that Neil Krajewski was attending his last meeting before taking up a new position at Fenland District Council. Neil would be replaced by Thilina De Zoysa who would be in attendance at the next meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

36. External Audit – Grant Certification work for Year Ended 31st March 2018

Details of the Certification work undertaken by Grant Thornton were submitted to the Committee for the Year Ending 31st March 2018 in terms of the Housing Benefit subsidy claim.

As a result of the errors identified, the claim was qualified and the Council may be required to undertake further work or provide assurances on the errors identified.

Reference was made to a reduction in fee as a result of the reduction in the level of error in 2016/17 compared to the 2014/15 financial year, on which the indicative fee for 2016/17 had been based.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

37. Treasury Management Report – December 2017 to February 2018

The Director of Finance & IT provided the Committee a report on the Treasury Management Quarterly report covering the period December 2017 to February 2018.

Members were reminded that the Council formally adopted CIPFA's revised Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services when they approved the 2017/18 Treasury Management Strategy at Finance Council in February 2017 (and reviewed in October 2017). The CIPFA Code, Investment Guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the

Audit & Assurance review of Treasury Management activities, all Members recommend an enhanced role for elected Members in scrutinising the Treasury Management function of the Council.

The report summarised the interest rate environment for three months, borrowing and lending transactions undertaken and the Council's overall debt position. It also reported on the position against the Prudential Indicators established by the Council.

RESOLVED – That the:

- 1) Treasury Management position over the quarter from December 2017 to February 2018 be noted; and
- 2) That it be noted that as interest rates had started to move, it may be necessary to enter into longer term loans and as such, these may be at higher rates than those originally estimated for 2018/19.

38. Audit & Assurance–Progress & Outcomes to February 2018

The Head of Audit & Assurance submitted a report which updated the Committee on achievements and progress made by Audit & Assurance in the period from 1st December 2017 to 28th February 2018.

The report focused on a number of key areas in Audit & Assurance Plan, in particular Counter Fraud Activity and Internal Audit work and performance.

Members of the Committee discussed the report and the sought clarification on the National Fraud initiative in relation to the Council Tax Single Persons Discount and data matches, and were advised that this area would be looked at as a thematic review.

RESOLVED - That the Committee note the outcomes achieved to 28th February 2018 against the Audit & Assurance Plan, which was approved by Committee in April 2017.

39. Audit and Assurance Plan 2018/19

The Head of Audit & Assurance submitted a report which informed Members of the planned Audit & Assurance work for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED – That the Committee:

- Approve the 2018/19 Plan (as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report submitted);

- Notes that reports dealing with both progress against the Plan and outcomes achieved will be submitted to each meeting; and
- Notes that Plan changes will be reported during the year.

40. Risk Management – 2017/18 Quarter 3 Review

The Head of Audit and Assurance provided the Committee with a report which detailed the risk management activity that had taken place in the period from 1st October to 31st December 2017.

Members were reminded that the top corporate risk remained the same as in the previous quarter, Corporate Risk 14, a high profile serious/critical safeguarding incident occurring relating to an individual known to the Council.

RESOLVED – That the progress made on the Corporate Risk Register at the end of Quarter 3 2017/18 and risk management activity in the period be noted.

41. Response to the External Auditor’s request for information on how the Audit & Governance Committee gains assurance from management

The Committee was asked to consider a response to a letter from the Council’s external auditor asking how the Audit & Governance Committee gained assurance from management, over financial management and governance processes and arrangements.

A proposed response from the from the Committee was attached at Appendix 2.

RESOLVED – That the response attached at Appendix 2 of the report be approved.

Signed
Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed
Date

REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE.

Councillors Saima Afzal

PORTFOLIO COORDINATING

DIRECTOR: David Fairclough

Annual Declarations of Interest by Members.

The Committee keeps under review the annual return of the Declarations made by Members of the Council and Parish Councils. The Committee were happy to see that over ninety percent of forms had been returned and the outstanding Members would be reminded of the need to complete the declaration as a matter of urgency.

Complaints Update to the Standards Committee

The Committee received an update on complaints received regarding Members conduct under the Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members. An update was presented on the case reported after the January meeting. The report covered the period up to Friday 1st June 2018. The Committee would be kept up to date on complaints receive throughout the year, how these were being dealt with and outcomes.

Work Programme for the Committee.

The Committee considered a work programme for the year which would ensure that issues could be addressed and protocols and processes could be improved within the Council.

The Committee identified that it would wish to review the protocols in the Constitution under Part 5, Section 3 over the next two meetings. In so doing Members were keen to consider the drafting of a Member/Member protocol to compliment the Member/Officer protocol in the constitution. The Committee also discussed the 'vexatious' complainant references in the Members Complaints process and indicated that they would wish to review this as part of the years' work programme.

Local Government Ethical Standards Consultation

The Committee were updated on the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life reviewing Local Government Ethical Standards. As part of this review they had conducted consultation between 29th January 2018 and 18th May 2018.

The terms of reference for the review were to examine the structures, processes and practices in local government in England for:

- Maintaining codes of conduct for local Councillors;
- Investigating alleged breaches fairly and with due process;
- Enforcing codes and imposing sanctions for misconduct;
- Declaring interests and managing conflicts of interest; and
- Whistleblowing.

- Assess whether the existing structures, processes and practices are conducive to high standards of conduct in local government;
- Make any recommendations for how they can be improved; and
- Note any evidence of intimidation of Councillors, and make recommendations for any measures that could be put in place to prevent and address such intimidation.

The review would consider all levels of local government in England, including Town and Parish Councils, Principal Authorities, Combined Authorities (including Metro Mayors) and the Greater London Authority (including the Mayor of London).

A response was sent on behalf of the Chair and Monitoring Officer. The Standards Committee received a report which set out responses to the consultation questions. The Committee will be kept informed of the outcome of the consultation and any steps necessary to ensure that the Council implemented any recommendations required.

Member Induction and Training Programme 2018/19

The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer reviewing the Member Induction and Training Programme.

The Committee considered recommendations and suggestions that had been put forward to ensure that the programme met the needs of members whilst addressing the need to ensure that Members were trained to carry out statutory functions. Members also recognised the increased pressures on Members following the restructuring of the ward boundaries and the reduction in number of Members. The Committee agreed to a number of recommendations to ensure that these needs were met. The recommendations agreed by Members included

- Phasing out the `bitesize` training programme during 2018/19, replacing it with e-learning programmes, group briefings or video presentations going forward into the programme to be designed for 19/20.
- To move `civil contingencies update training` to a `bitesize` event for 2018/19.
- To advise the Monitoring Officer when promoting the 2018/19 `bitesize` events to ensure the notifications of the training are clear these events are optional for members to attend.
- To confirm that the following Courses will be Mandatory for 2018/19:
 - Child Sexual Exploitation
 - Corporate parenting
 - Information Governance & Cybersecurity
 - Equality Training
- To agree that attendance at the Mandatory Training is a requirement for all Councillors, except where a Councillor has attended the same course in the previous municipal year.
- To note that the specific Mandatory Training for Members sitting on the Council's Planning & Highways and Licensing Committees would continue as required in the Council's Constitution.

- To agree there would be four Strategic Member Development Sessions per annum
- To agree that all mandatory training and the four Strategic Member Development Sessions be included in the year planner approved by the Council at Annual Council each year.

The Committee also agreed that additional Mandatory Courses could be added to the programme during the year where circumstances require. Independent Members of Committees, Co-opted members, independent persons and Members of Parish Councils would also be invited by the Monitoring Officer to appropriate training events.

Councillor Saima Afzal

Chair of the Standards Committee.

REPORT OF THE POLICY AND CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.

Councillor Dave Harling

COORDINATING

DIRECTOR: Denise Park

Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee has started work on the programme based on suggestions put forward by Members of the Committee. This programme is takes into account the key areas of service delivery that were outlined by the Executive Members in June and will ensure that the Committee can add value to the work of the Executive Members.

The first main topic that the Committee are looking at is Digital Engagement and the Evolving Strategy. This issue had been highlighted by Members of the Committee as a major issue affecting the Borough.

Digital Engagement and the Evolving Strategy.

The Committee looked at the work that was being undertaken to deliver services digitally to meet the needs of service users. The strategy was part of a review of all Council services and would look at how we could deliver accessible services effectively and efficiently when people needed them in a digital way.

One of the key areas that the Committee were to look at was to ensure that the evolution of service delivery was accessible to all members of society and that issues were addressed to reduce social isolation and ensure total inclusion. The Committee were also informed of the issues relating to connecting systems used by different service providers and the steps to ensure that different organisations systems were compatible.

The Committee have established a task group to continue their work by looking at the key milestones in the delivery of the strategy and in particular how the strategy will seek to meet the needs of the hard to reach groups.

Progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Committee were updated on the progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and their work programmes.

Next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee considered the work programme for the municipal year 2018/19 and agreed that the Executive Member for Resources be invited to the next meeting to outline the issues relating to Sickness and Absenteeism. The Committee will look at how the Council was seeking to improve attendance through supporting employees

and highlighting how other comparator authorities are affected by the issue and the methods they use to tackle the issues.

The Committee will also be informed of the six month figures for attendance and how these compare with other employers. Further work of the Committee will include updates on the Council's debt collections and how the Council manages/disposes of assets.

Dave Harling Chair, Policy and Corporate Resources OSC.

September 2018

REPORT OF THE PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.

Councillor Sylvia Liddle

COORDINATING

DIRECTOR: Denise Park

Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee has started work on the programme based on suggestions put forward by members of the Committee. This programme takes into account the key areas of service delivery that were outlined by the Executive Members in June and will ensure that the Committee can add value to the work of the Executive Members.

The first main topic that the committee are looking at is Children and Young People's Mental Health. This issue had been highlighted by members of the Committee and also by the young people who sit on the Committee.

Young People and Mental Health

Members of the Committee met as a task group on 24th July and 28th August to look at the issues affecting the mental health of young people and children and had received information on the work that was ongoing in the borough and how this sought to tackle the issue and improve the outcomes for children and young people in the borough. The Committee were updated on the work ongoing and the research and proposals put forward by the University of Birmingham. The main findings of the report recommended early intervention and preventative measures which resulted in better outcomes for those with mental health issues.

The Committee looked at how they could influence the bodies who could implement the recommendations. The Committee will seek to address the issue with these bodies and the implementation of the findings which will lead to improved outcomes for service users.

Ofsted Action Plan Progress.

The Committee continued their work with the Executive Member for Children's Services to ensure that the recommendations relating to the Ofsted review of Children's Services were addressed and actions taken where necessary. The committee will be kept informed of progress on a regular basis.

Sylvia Liddle, Chair, People OSC.

September 2018

REPORT OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.

Councillor Naushad Surve

COORDINATING

DIRECTOR: Denise Park

Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee has started work on the programme based on suggestions put forward by members of the Committee. This programme takes into account the key areas of service delivery that were outlined by the Executive Members in June and will ensure that the Committee can add value to the work of the Executive Members.

The first main topic that the Committee are looking at is Homelessness. This issue had been highlighted by members of the Committee as a major issue affecting the borough.

Homelessness

The Committee had commenced its work on the issue with a task group. The group had looked at the Borough's resources to manage homelessness, the range of services and accommodation to combat homelessness. Members were informed that the task group also considered how local neighbouring authorities were dealing with the issue and how Blackburn with Darwen was a centre of good practice in dealing with homelessness. The group had drawn up a number of recommendations which were reported to the Committee for its views. The Committee approved these recommendations for forwarding to the Executive Member and to the Executive Board for consideration.

Next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee considered the work programme for the Committee for the municipal year 2018/19 and agreed to-

- Invite Director of Adults & Prevention to the next Committee to update the Committee on alternative provisions available for homeless people who felt threatened to return to their home town. Also to present a breakdown of the expenditure of the Priority Need Funding of £107k.
- Invite the Head of Planning to the next Committee to present the HMO policy with its terms and conditions.
- Invite the Executive Member of Resources to provide the Committee with information on wraparound services available for homeless people.

Naushad Surve, Chair, Place OSC.

September 2018

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 4th October 2018

Your Call

Recently, I wrote to all members to update on the clean-up element of Your Call. In the letter, I set out the help available to councillors to help them to continue to support residents who want to make the borough cleaner and greener.

I've been very impressed with the work going on in wards, with more and more red bags of litter collected by people being seen across the borough, much of it ably supported by ward councillors, who should be at the heart of the efforts. Over the years we've all built up a wealth of knowledge and expertise in organising and promoting local clean ups with the support of neighbourhood staff that is helping to clean up the borough.

There are 366 registered litter pickers in BwD who are supported through the Lancashire Volunteer Partnership portal. We have also encouraged a number of local groups and schools to continue their Your Call clean ups on a regular basis. There are also some excellent groups such as Keep Blackburn Tidy and Keep Darwen Tidy, both have a very active social media presence and have hundreds of followers. I hope their success and the number of red bags being collected will inspire others to take part or at the very least make people think twice about dropping litter in the first place.

It's great to see the community spirit in the borough and hundreds of people every day are doing amazing things that make a difference. This is very rightly attracting interest from other parts of the country.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their efforts and continued support.

Social integration

The Council has led the submission of a bid on behalf of the Borough to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for 29th August 2018. To support the proposal development stage, a series of consultation events with partners were held and included the set-up of a new shadow integration partnership board.

On 19th September 2018 proposals are to be presented to the Ministerial Sub Committee, with a decision later in the year. This will be an iterative feedback process and we want to ensure we have enough information and feedback to be able to organise further stakeholder briefings.

In addition to the national programme, there have been a number of local events over the summer which have helped bring people together. For example, Blackburn Open Walls returned for its third year with 12 artists creating street art masterpieces, Ewood Park hosted the first of its kind #OneRovers festival which celebrated fashion, music, fun and football, Darwen Market hosted Darwen's Got Talent, the 19th annual Blackburn with Darwen Football festival attracted more than 3,000 people, Heritage Open Days were held across the Borough during September and Baroness Massey of Darwen spoke at an event on her story "Darwen to the House of Lords and other journeys".

Sport England Local Delivery pilot

As members will be aware Blackburn with Darwen Council, on behalf of Pennine Lancashire, successfully bid for funding from Sports England to identify new ways of transforming sport and activity and make it easier for people to move from doing nothing to doing something. Working closely with Sport England the programme is progressing with the recruitment of a small core team to support the initial insight and engagement phase of the programme.

Programme activity over the next 3 months will include:

- A Pennine Local Delivery Pilot launch event to include physical activity providers
- Confirmation of the Pennine evaluation framework

- Securing links to wider Government funding initiative e.g. Pennine's Active Travel & BwD's Integration pilot to ensure they complement and add value to the Pennine Local Delivery pilot both strategically and operationally

This is an important programme which will help residents in BwD as well as Pennine Lancashire.

Local Government Association (LGA) – Corporate Peer Challenge

As reported at the last Council Forum, the LGA will be undertaking a Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council week commencing 3rd December. The Peer Challenge Team have the skills and expertise to conduct a thorough challenge of five key themes examining the Council's leadership, financial planning, governance, capacity, understanding of place. We have also asked the Team to challenge two additional areas for the Council – community engagement and digital transformation.

Meetings and discussion sessions are being arranged with a range of officers, members and other stakeholders to enable the Peer team to explore the issues relevant to the challenge.

I hope to provide verbal feedback of their initial findings at Policy Council on 6th December with a final report expected from the Peer team in early January.

Government Consultation on shale gas exploration

The Government have launched two consultations related to shale gas exploration. The consultation outlines proposals related to planning matters and suggest that permission for non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration become Permitted Developments, a system currently used for small house extensions, installation of garden sheds; and that shale gas production projects be added to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects where the decision is made directly by the relevant Secretary of State.

These proposals have the potential to remove or limit the role of the local authority planning process for shale gas extraction, and whilst at this stage there are no active projects of this type in the borough, I'm concerned that these proposals from the Government could set a precedent for driving future changes to planning decisions and limiting the role of local decision making. The Council will be responding to the consultation and outlining our concerns.

Health and Care integration

Following the successful launch of the Local Integrated Care Partnership, the East, North, West & Darwen Primary Care Neighbourhood Groups have been established and held their first set of monthly meetings.

The purpose of the Primary Care Neighbourhood Groups is to design and transform community health and well-being services to provide an increased range of high quality services to local people who live and work within the four neighbourhoods of Blackburn with Darwen. Representation on each of the neighbourhood groups includes a Primary Care Neighbourhood GP lead, a Children's Services and Adult Services Elected Member, a Practice Manager lead, a Practice Nurse lead, senior managers from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Blackburn with Darwen Clinical Commissioning Group and Lancashire Care Foundation Trust and members from the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.

To date, there has been good attendance and a wide range of representation around the table, a set of themes / priorities have also started to be identified for each neighbourhood.

Polling District review

Following the Boundary Review in 2017 which changed the number of wards to 17, the draft proposals for the polling districts/polling places have been prepared. The proposals were presented at the Members Strategic Development Session on 17th September and Members were invited to provide any pre-consultation feedback. The formal notice for the review has been published on 1st October 2018 together with the Returning Officer's representations for public consultation.

The consultation invites the public and interested groups to put forward by 9th November 2018, their comments on the proposals or suggests alternatives. The final proposals will be reported to Policy Council for approval on 6th December 2018 for implementation in May 2019. Any changes to the electoral register arising from the review will be made on the 1st February 2019 updated register.

LSP Annual summit

On Monday 8th October the Council will be hosting the first Local Strategic partnership Annual Summit. The change of format to an annual summit is part of our work as an organisation to streamline groups and partnerships to ensure they remain relevant and effective. It will be an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved with our partners but also to look forward to the future and focus our energies in making things even better for our residents.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES – 4th October 2018

COUNCILLOR ANDY KAY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICER: DENISE PARK**

Audit & Assurance

The Audit & Assurance Progress Report will be presented to the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 16th October. This will provide an update on the delivery of the 2018/19 Annual Audit plan, including details of the outcomes from internal audit reviews completed to the end of September and a commentary on the counter fraud work undertaken in the period.

Financial Services

The statement of accounts has been signed by external audit and has been published on the Council website. The team are now focusing on 2019/20 budgets and are working closely with Directors to prepare budget options.

Benefits

Proposals have been put forward to modify the existing Council Tax Support scheme (CTS).

A full consultation exercise is now underway during which, Council Tax Support recipients, Council Tax payers, residents and the voluntary sector are all being asked to comment on the proposals. The consultation will close on 22nd October. The results of the consultation exercise will be considered and published in November.

Revenues

Universal Credit (UC) continues to have a major impact across the Revenues and Benefits service. All changes of income and circumstances are issued by the DWP to the council on a daily basis, resulting in a significant number of adjustments and therefore additional bills being issued to customers.

At present there are approximately 1000 additional bills per month being issued to Council Tax payers than at the same time last year. These additional work volumes are being monitored as they impact on the ability to maintain service levels within the Council Tax section. As UC is rolled out more widespread, volumes will likely increase to an unmanageable degree without significant changes to CTS.

Digital & Business Change

The 2018/19 Digital capital projects are now in delivery with the first orders being placed for both the Device Modernisation and Core Infrastructure projects. We are working alongside services to establish computing device requirements for different roles throughout the Council.

We have continued to develop designs for the new Council website and are working with users of services to inform the work.

The Digital strategy and programme governance has been reviewed and we are working on an update to the governance model and the strategy document itself. Workshops will be taking place in October to develop plans and inform the strategy revision.

Work across the portfolio continues as we support digitisation projects across the Council as well as the day to day support of technology and systems.

Human Resources

HR have finalised the apprentice intake for 2018/2019. This year there have been 30 new apprentices across the Council. All inductions are underway, and managers are working closely with their teams to ensure that they integrate well.

Following the Council signing the Time to Change Employer Pledge, there has been an increase in requests and attendance on mental health and mindfulness training. HR working with other colleagues across the Council is also developing mental health champions and health and wellbeing champions. These champions are volunteers from departments who want to support knowledge and awareness of wellbeing issues. The team are also working on plans for Wellbeing Week which starts on 8th October 2018.

A new Salary Sacrifice Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contributions Scheme (AVC Wise) is now implemented and we have seen a number of employees take the opportunity to join. We will continue to outline the benefits of joining this scheme in the hope that the numbers increase.

We are working with the Trade Unions to consider the implications of implementing the new pay spine for Green Book employees in April 2019 following the 2 year pay agreement. We also need to engage with schools to recommend that they adopt the Council's approach.

Governance & Democracy

Following the Boundary Review in 2017 which changed the number of wards to 17, the draft proposals for the polling districts/polling places have been prepared by the Team as referenced in the Leaders report. Work also continues on this years Canvas.

The Local Government Ombudsman received 37 complaints for Blackburn with Darwen Council in the reported year 2017-18. This is a 20% decrease from the previous year. The LGO upheld only two of the cases that they investigated this year compared to the nine from last year.

Legal Services

The Legal Services team continues to support a range of operational activities ongoing across Departments. Workloads for various prosecutions remain at high levels as does our statutory legal work to support our ongoing commitments to support vulnerable adults and children from the Borough. The high level of social care activity in particular continues to place significant workload and resultant additional financial pressures on the portfolio. Work with the Health & Social Care and, Children, Young People and Education Directorates, nevertheless continues to ensure children and vulnerable adults remain safe.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE COUNCILLOR BRIAN TAYLOR

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING DIRECTORS:
DOMINIC HARRISON (HEALTH)
SAYYED OSMAN (ADULT SOCIAL CARE)
DATE: 4th October 2018**

HEALTH

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO) – BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN IS AN 'INSPIRATIONAL EXAMPLE'

Blackburn with Darwen's approach to creating resilient and supportive communities by supporting social movements for health has been singled out as an 'inspirational example' of good practice by the European Office of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and is included in a recently published Compendium, alongside case studies from other countries.

The WHO say "This Compendium provides inspirational examples of building resilience at individual, community and system levels. It describes the innovative, on-the-ground actions taken by 13 countries to create supportive environments for strengthening resilience and its link to health and well-being outcomes. The Compendium covers a wide range of topics such as the role of resilience-building in addressing human rights, health inequities, and environmental hazards and threats."

The Blackburn with Darwen case study written by two members of the Public Health Team shows how these approaches to improving health and wellbeing have been adopted locally in relation to Drugs and Alcohol Services and to preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences. The approaches involve all local public services in working differently with communities to support their own resilience and wellbeing and are seen by WHO as an international example of best practice in public health.

Health 2020: Priority Area 4: Creating Supportive Environments and resilient Communities'
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/health-2020-priority-area-four-creating-supportive-environments-and-resilient-communities.-a-compendium-of-inspirational-examples-2018> (BwD case study pages 92-98.)

ADULT SMOKING CONTINUES TO FALL

Locally, smoking remains one of the biggest causes of preventable death, disability and health inequalities. However, data released in July by Public Health England show that the rates of adults smoking in Blackburn with Darwen dropped from 27.1% in 2011 to 16.7% in 2017, putting the borough on a par with the North West average of 16.1%. The Council and local partners, including Blackburn with Darwen CCG, have worked together to deliver the local Tobacco Control Policy, including local initiatives around smokefree homes, cars and outdoor spaces, lobbying for plain tobacco packaging, and regularly backing national campaigns such as Stoptober and No Smoking Day.

TEENAGE PREGNANCIES CONTINUE TO FALL

Teenage pregnancy can mean poorer health outcomes and reduced life chances for both mother and baby. In 1998, the year the national Teenage Pregnancy Strategy was launched, the borough had 169 under-18 conceptions, well above the national average. Data released in August 2018 shows that the annual number of under-18 conceptions in Blackburn with Darwen fell to a new low in 2016 of just 59 and is now below the English average. This is very good news for young people in the Borough and reflects the success of both strategy and services provided for children and young people. It has been achieved by establishing a preventative approach to the issue across the Council, education system, voluntary and community sector, NHS and young people themselves.

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES PERFORMANCE

In summer 2018, Public Health England (PHE) published their second annual Local Authority Public Health Outcomes 'league table' which they refer to as a 'dashboard'. The dashboard compares each English upper-tier local authority to its 'similarly deprived comparator group' on 8 key themes that reflect the effectiveness of local authority Public Health services. The dashboard was established to give PHE some objective measure of how effectively the Public Health Grant is being used by local authorities. The analysis shows that when Blackburn with Darwen is compared with its similarly deprived peers, it ranks in the first or second quartile of performance (i.e. top 50% in our group) for 7 out of 8 themes and is in the third quartile for the remaining theme.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

RIVERSIDE HEIGHTS

As part of our strategy to prevent older people from entering long-term residential care, the department has a programme in place of developing housing with care, providing people with their own independent accommodation and front door, but with care available when needed.

Riverside Heights is our latest extra care provision offering 85 independent living apartments for people over 55. The scheme, which is now operational, is delivered through a partnership with Together Housing and Willowbrook Homecare. Tenants are already benefitting from specially designed flexible and responsive wrap around care arrangements. This means that as well as planned care and wellbeing support, there is a 24 hour onsite care response to emergency alarm calls and telecare equipment.

LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICE USER BECOMES A VOLUNTEER

The Learning Disability Service continues to make a positive impact on the lives of service users. One such example is of a 20 year old man who finished college earlier this year and at the time he and his family were concerned about next steps.

A referral was made into the Transforming Lives panel and as a result a Community Connector was allocated to support the young man into voluntary work at his local community centre. He is enjoying gaining greater independence and building friendships by volunteering once a week in the centre and getting involved in a Bootstrap gardening project.

To build up to this stage, telecare was put in place to address the young man's support needs as he would often leave the house in the early hours of the morning, and a sensor was provided to monitor seizures. To support Mum in her caring role, respite at St Aidan's was introduced and this enabled the young man to become more independent as he was spending time away from the family home. A direct payments budget enabled day time support from the My Step Up Farm Project and 4 hours Personal Assistant support per month.

DISCHARGE TO ASSESS PATHWAY CASE STUDY

Adult Social Care has introduced a number of new care pathways for discharging patients, enabling them to return home quickly and safely following their period of hospitalisation. An example of the success of these pathways can be seen in the following case study:

A female service user who had spent time within the acute Royal Blackburn Hospital was discharged through the new Continuing Health Care (CHC) 'Discharge To Assess' pathway, and this enabled her to continue her recovery at Acorn House care home. The place was funded by the Clinical Commissioning Group who have partnership agreements with a number of homes within the area. Ordinarily, the CHC checklist would have been undertaken on the ward which may have delayed discharge, however a joint screening process was carried out between the service user and her family, the Hospital Team Social Worker, and a Complex Case Manager within the East Lancashire Health Trust. All agreed that this pathway would promote recovery, support independence and avoid delay.

Support from the local authority continued at Acorn House to address recurrent health issues and to build the confidence of the service user and the whole family about how they would manage at home. The Reablement team, social workers and Integrated Neighbourhood Teams Community Connectors all worked with the family. Four reablement visits per day were provided and discharge home was achieved within 6 weeks of leaving hospital, with a lifeline pendant provided to give the family further reassurance and support.

10 YEARS OF THE REABLEMENT SERVICE

On 31st August the Reablement Team proudly celebrated it's 10 year anniversary. The team supports people to regain their independence after a period of illness, disability or loss of confidence. The team currently has 54 members of staff, of which 50% have been with the team from day 1!

Since 2008, 4,756 people have accessed the service, with 2,297 (48%) leaving independent of services whilst another 787 (17%) left with a reduced package of care.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

COUNCILLOR: PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: DENISE PARK
DATE: 4 OCTOBER 2018**

LANESIDE CPO

The Laneside CPO was made on 26th July and submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation on 2nd August 2018. The owner has objected to the Council's application for confirmation of the CPO and the planning inspectorate will determine whether the objection is to be dealt with by way of written representations or public local inquiry. If a public local inquiry is to be held, it is likely that it will take place early 2019.

ROE LEE

Persimmon Homes have now concluded further surveys and assessment of the Roe Lee site and have submitted a full planning application to build 151 new large family homes on the site. The Council's highways team has also started the highways access works to allow full access onto the site from Ramsgreave Drive.

CATHEDRAL QUARTER (PHASE 2)

Maple Grove have developed detailed plans for Phase 2 of the Cathedral Quarter Scheme. No.2 Cathedral Square will comprise a modern 6-storey office building with a gross floor area of 45,000 sqft, incorporating a food and beverage offer within the ground floor, to complete Cathedral Square. Pre-application planning meetings have taken place with key stakeholders, including English Heritage, to ensure that the second phase will enhance and build on the success of the established Cathedral Quarter developments. The detailed planning application was expected by the end of September, for consideration by the Planning & Highways Committee in due course.

FORMER BLACKBURN MARKETS SITE

The Council is seeking a developer to provide a high quality retail led mixed use scheme on the site of the former Blackburn Market. A tender pack and marketing particulars have been prepared and the site is now ready to be offered to market. All bids received will be closely scrutinised to ensure development is completed in time, to the required quality standard, and with the correct mix of uses to complement the surrounding area and retail offer.

MILKING LANE DEVELOPMENT SITE

Barnfield Blackburn Ltd (BBL), a joint venture between Barnfield and the Council, completed the purchase of the Milking Lane development site in July. A prior notification planning application has been submitted for approval to demolish the two derelict office blocks with demolition to be undertaken in November. BBL are engaging with businesses interested in the site with an outline planning application to be submitted by the end of October 2018.

BLACKBURN CINEMA & UNDERCROFT CARPARK

Barnfield Construction Ltd have taken formal possession of the development site and hoardings have been erected. The Council is developing an artwork

strategy which will be implemented across the cinema hoardings and the Blakey Moor terrace development. Construction of the cinema is scheduled for 66 weeks with practical completion programmed for December 2019. Reel Cinema will open in Easter 2020 following a fit out period. A separate procurement process is to be undertaken in Spring 2019 for the Jubilee square project with construction scheduled for Summer 2019.

WINTER MAINTENANCE AND POTHOLE UPDATE

In readiness for the Winter season 18/19 the salt barn is now at capacity at 3,000 tonnes. We have eight gritting routes in total, 4 primary and 4 secondary which will continue to be treated. Winter 17/18 has seen a dramatic increase in pothole repairs. We will continue to repair the defects recorded in line with our policy.

GROWTH DEAL TRANSPORT SCHEMES

The Council is moving forward on the Growth Deal 3 funded major transport schemes. On-ground activity to the Furthergate / Burnley Road Link Road has commenced with the site compound set-up and removal of invasive species of Cotoneaster paving the way for main construction works. Eric Wright Civil Engineering are the main contractor to deliver the new section of road between Red Lion Roundabout and Gorse Street, which will improve access between Blackburn Town Centre and M65 Junction 6 and open up sites for development and employment opportunities. The scheme is programmed to complete by Summer 2019.

A recent exhibition relating to the Growth Deal North Blackburn project was attended by 100+ residents and businesses, where plans to upgrade traffic signals at Brownhill Roundabout, Pleckgate Road and Whalley Old Road junctions were discussed in detail with Council Officers and Members. The Council is now progressing procurement, business case and detailed design with a view to works commencing in February 2019.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS

The first of the Council's Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points are now on site and available for public use. The project will see EV drivers benefit from more available charging installations and will contribute to the Council's wider objectives on local Air Quality. The Council has procured Swarco UK (branded as eVolt) to deliver thirteen EV Charging Points across the Borough. The sites installed in phase one include:

- Feilden Street Multi-storey Car Park, Blackburn - three 22kW AC sockets
- Market Rooftop Car Park, Darwen – two 22kW AC sockets

There is no membership fee, the charge tariff is currently set at 25p per kWh and parking will be free for EV drivers whilst charging in these locations until April 2019. Further roll out of EV charging sites will continue in 2018/19 in Darwen and Blackburn Town Centres.

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, with particular pressures in the North and North West. The North generally has seen rising numbers of children in care over recent years, with particular pressure around children and young people in older age groups with very complex social and behavioural issues. Over the past year, Blackburn with Darwen has moved towards the regional norm with a marked rise in the number of children in care placed in the most costly residential placements.

The number of Children in our Care is 356, a fall of 40 since the start of the new year, reflecting the impact of several recent initiatives, such as Family Group Conferencing and the Complex Case multi-agency Hub for high-risk domestic violence cases. The number of children subject to child protection plans remains high and steady at 236, and the total number of children and young people open to Children's Social Care remains high at 1,730. In addition, 595 children are being supported by Early Help services, 7 children have been adopted since April 2018 and 21 children are currently placed in adoptive placements.

SUMMER LUNCH SCHEME

A total of 17,705 lunches were distributed to children across the borough as part of the Summer Lunch Scheme. 150 lunches per day were distributed to children accessing Youth Zone, which meant that Youth Zone could offer free places for families who would not normally access or afford the activities. Any food left at the end of the day was distributed appropriately to charitable organisations supporting children and families.

50 volunteers were involved in the preparation and distribution of lunches each day at Kingdom Outreach Volunteers and a further 20 Children Centre volunteers supported the handing out of lunches.

Comments from children and parents were captured and will shape future plans. Feedback included, *"They were delicious and I didn't get hungry"*; *"Made things easier for my mum"*; *"It made me get out and about every day and allowed us quality time as a family"*.

APPLE TREES SUMMER FUN DAY

The Apple Trees 'Festival of Fun', jointly organised by the Children's Disability Service and the local parent/carer forum, Parents In Partnership (PIP), took place on 18th August. The event was supported by local charity, Secret Santa, who kindly donated prizes.

Families registered to the Disability Links Information Service, Parents in Partnership or who have a package of support from the Children's Disability Service were invited to join in the fun and find out more about short breaks and the support available from local service providers. The families enjoyed arts and crafts, tombola, bouncy castle and a penalty shoot out and the £101 raised was donated to the Secret Santa charity who continually support families accessing the Apple Trees service.

YOUTHFORIA

The Council hosted the regional 'Youthforia' youth forum on 9th September and welcomed 120 young people from across the North West. 23 local authority youth councils took part, and young people shared ideas, common campaign themes and positive practices of gaining votes in readiness for the 'Make Your Mark' national youth consultancy campaign, which has now commenced.

The young people engaged in debates and stood for election for various roles on the Steering Group. Aliyah Shah, Deputy Youth MP for Blackburn with Darwen, was voted in for a second year as the Lancashire Youthforia representative and will join the North West Youthforia Board representing the whole of Lancashire.

YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES SUMMER PROGRAMME

The Young People's Services summer programme for children and young people aged 8 to 19 years was once again a resounding success with 7500 attendances across four weeks. This year's programme included a new popular daily session in the West Area in Mill Hill this year. The weekend Fun Days were also well attended by families and served as an opportunity to promote services to parents.

Additionally, over 900 attendances were recorded at Kaleidoscope for children and young people with additional and complex needs taking part in the Inclusion Offer programme. Activities included trips out to the SPACE centre, Ribchester Park, water sports at Queens Park and Thornton Hall Farm, plus fun packed indoor sessions.

A number of children and young people attended the project for the first time across all three groups (5 -7 years, nurture group and additional needs) and have started to develop friendships and build positive relationships with staff.

PROVISIONAL GCSE RESULTS

Recently released national figures about the performance of children at the end of Primary school show that pupils in Blackburn with Darwen primary schools do better than the national average (or the average for Lancashire as a whole) in the main measure: being at expected levels or above in Reading, Writing and Maths, with a particularly marked rise in reading performance in the year – up 7%. Very early indications from reported GCSE results show the borough's secondary schools also performing in line with the national average in terms of overall attainment, and doing particularly well in those students achieving a strong pass or a standard pass in their English GCSE.

SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

The St Thomas' Centre Pupil Referral Unit was judged Outstanding in all areas at a recent Ofsted Inspection in July. Inspectors praised leaders and the management committee for moving the school forward and also commended teachers for working exceptionally well together to meet the individual needs of each pupil.

Griffin Park received a Requires Improvement judgement due to quality of teaching, learning & assessment and outcomes for pupils, with the report stating that the quality of teaching is improving, however not consistently enough across the school to help pupils make good progress in all year groups. Strengths identified were good leadership and management, progress in early years and 'overwhelmingly positive' feedback from parents and carers.

BLACKBURN IS HIRING

The region's largest careers fayre 'Blackburn is Hiring' took place at Blackburn Cathedral on 13th September. The event was organised by the council's New Directions team who were supported by Blackburn College, the Department for Work and Pensions, local businesses and wider council departments.

Open to all ages from age 15 upwards, 1900 Year 10 and Year 11 students attended from schools across the borough, an increase of over 400 from last year's event, plus several hundred 16-18 year olds. 102 local education and training providers and businesses offered interactive opportunities with representation from the public sector, manufacturing, education and retail. A range of workshops were offered with themes covering apprenticeships, job applications, interview techniques and diverse employment options at the Council.

NEWFIELD

Practical completion of the Newfield School Autism Specialist Facility on the former Crosshill School site has been achieved. The £5.6m new build will see pupils enjoying a sensory space, multi-use areas and a new hall and kitchen facilities linked through a corridor into the existing Newfield school. The school will be ready to welcome pupils after the October half term.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
DATE: 4 OCTOBER 2018**

GARDEN WASTE

As we near the end of the 2018 collection season, the garden waste subscription service has seen just over 14,514 bins being paid for, which is nearly identical to the whole of last year's subscriptions.

Plans for the 2019 service are due to commence late September onwards, to ensure that we provide the updated information in time for subscriptions being available from December 2018.

YOUR CALL CLEAN UP VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

We have had a good start to the year for community clean-up events with:-

- 74 events taking place in the first 5 months from April this year, with 1,250 volunteers attending events. This compares against 62 events, with 1,278 volunteers for the same period last year.
- *Lancashire Volunteer Portal (LVP)* – residents are signing up in increasing numbers to be volunteer litter pickers, recording their hours, locations and engaging with the Council. To date approximately 460 residents have signed up helping clean the borough whilst getting health and wellbeing benefits from undertaking the clean-up activity. This is a tremendous resource with a great deal of potential and Your Call has benefitted from being on board from its inception
- *Resident tackling local littering issues:* The mobilisation of the community via Facebook, with the Keep Blackburn Tidy and the Keep Darwen Tidy groups has seen a massive effort by residents to tackle litter and blight within their community, with the number of litterpicking bags generated by the group members running into the thousands in some 5 months. The council is supporting the work of the group members by providing litterpicking packs, which contain a litterpicker, hi-vis vest, gloves, first aid kit, as well as safety instructions. The efforts of the groups have received positive publicity, with local resident Wayne Dixon and his dog Koda, also joining the community effort to tackle litter in the borough, whilst he takes a few weeks off, between his charitable walk around the coast of Britain, litterpicking as he goes.

PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE PROSECUTIONS

The Public Protection Service aims to enforce legislation by informal means when possible, but sometimes has to resort to formal action.

A food business has been convicted of breaches of food safety legislation relating to a rodent infestation, and has been fined £600, ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £30, and ordered to pay costs of £1500.

In addition, six individuals have been convicted of offences relating to the supply of single cigarettes, or incorrectly labelled cigarettes; penalties totalled £1420, with a total of £2960 costs being ordered.

DOG FOULING AND LITTER ENFORCEMENT TEAM REVIEW

After being in operation since October 2017, the Dog Fouling and Litter Enforcement Team has issued

- 5782 fixed penalty notices for littering
- 36 fixed penalty notices for dog fouling
- 357 fixed penalty notices for smoke-free England offences

66% of these fixed penalty notices have been paid to date. 815 cases have been sent through to Legal services for prosecution; of these 75% have been found guilty, 15% have yet to be heard, and 10% have been withdrawn for public interest reasons. No cases have been lost. In general, fines of £220 are imposed on conviction, plus costs of around £85.

As planned, a review of the pilot is currently underway.

PARKING SERVICES

On the 27th June, Old Bank Lane Car Park located adjacent to the Royal Blackburn Hospital was awarded ParkMark status from British Parking and Police Crime Prevention, this award is for car park facilities dedicated to creating a safe and non-threatening parking environment. This prestigious award can be used on any future marketing or promotional opportunities.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE and CULTURE

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
DATE: 4 OCTOBER 2018

LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

Summer Activity Programme: In addition to the Mischief Makers Summer Reading Challenge (SRC), which has seen over 1,300 children participating, the library service has delivered holiday activities which include; scratch code clubs, Zoolab small animal handling sessions, Mad Scientist Slime Making sessions, performances of Little Red Riding Hood by Booster Cushion Theatre, craft and storytimes, Borrow Box demonstrations and, in keeping with the SRC theme, creative cartoon sessions with Beano artist Laura Howell. The holiday programme has been well received, offering something for children of all ages during the 6 week break.

Assisted Digital UK Visa Application service: Blackburn Library has joined over 100 libraries across the country in offering 1 to 1 support for referred applicants to navigate the GOV.UK website to find the visa application they need. The Assisted Digital programme is delivered on behalf of UK Visa and Immigration in collaboration with We Are Digital (WAD), a Digital and Financial inclusion training organisation and Libraries Connected, formally Society of Chief Librarians (SCL).

VENUES

Box Office Relocation – With the change of use of Blakeys to East z East, the main box office has been relocated to the front foyer of King George's Hall. This means that the front gates and doors are open again inviting people into the main entrance off Blakeys Moor. With increased visibility it is expected that more people will drop in to purchase / pick-up tickets to the great shows on offer, or simply pick up a What's On leaflet. Opening hours are 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and 10.00am to 3.00pm on Saturdays.

Shows and Events - The Comedy programmed already for 2018/19 has exceeded target; achieving 9 shows (2 nights of Sarah Millican, Russell Brand, Joe Lycett, Dara O'Briain, Jason Manford, Milton Jones, Joanna Lumley and Rhod Gilbert). Music is becoming increasingly strong too with sell-outs for James, Jools Holland and the Proclaimers with exciting shows including Jake Bugg still to come.

Darts returned to KGH after a long break with a semi-professional tournament on 22nd September. This Grand Slam event saw a number of competitions run throughout the day attracting semi-professional dart players, and followers, from all over the Northwest.

LEISURE

easyCoffee opened at Darwen Leisure Centre. The first franchised coffee provider in Darwen opened at Darwen Leisure Centre in August.

Feedback from customers has been universally positive and the branded, good value and consistent service that easyCoffee offers has brought members of the local community into the centre for a brew! This is a first for Darwen, the first easyCoffee franchise in a leisure facility nationally and a great offer for leisure customers and the wider community.

Weavers Wheel Launch- The popular Blackburn with Darwen Walking and Cycling Festival this year saw the launch of the borough's circular Weaver Wheel cycle route. The event was well attended with great feedback from everyone involved – partners included local 3rd sector groups, re:refresh team, British Cycling and supported by staff and volunteers. On the back of the launch a regular inclusive cycle session has now been set up at Witton Park which is proving very popular.

Events and Tournaments – The summer has been extremely busy with family events, sporting activities and tournaments taking place across the borough. The warm weather brought people out into the borough's beautiful parks and countryside. There were 23 Schools athletics events, cross country races and fun runs held on the athletics track and in the wider park as well as the weekly Parkrun. An estimated 13,600 people attended to watch or participate.

Blackburn with Darwen Football Festival took place over the August bank holiday weekend. Once again bringing together over 70 teams from the borough and much further afield including Wales and Scotland. It's a competitive and friendly tournament which show cases the borough's sporting facilities and promotes participation for girls and boys from under 7s through to under 18s bringing 6,000 people into Pleasington.

The first "Witton Free Family Fun Day" took place supported by Big Lottery. An amazingly 5,000 people turned up from across the borough enjoying stalls selling food from around the world, go-carting, bouncy castles, and riding in a vintage bus.

Arts and Heritage

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery - Structures in Ceramic Exhibition

The new exhibition at Blackburn Museum and art Gallery celebrates the history and craft of architectural ceramic production in Darwen, and look at how the technology has been used by designers and artists today. The exhibition showcases locally produced pieces from the mid 20th century to the present day, from 1930s test pieces by Shaws of Darwen, to CNC-produced models made by Darwen Terracotta and Faience, alongside architectural artworks designed by artists Grayson Perry and James Bloomfield.

Turton Tower Ghost Stories

Turton Tower has always been a place of paranormal happenings and tales from the volunteers and staff who work there. In June we trialled a new event, an evening guided Ghost Tour of the Tower. This first one was booked up with a day and it is now a monthly event all of which have sold out quickly.

Blackburn Open Walls

This summer was the biggest and best of our street art festivals yet with over 20 artists working on pieces both big and small. From the archeologist on the back of the museum to the trail of tiny characters hidden on walls across the town there is work of all scales and styles. We had artists come from as far as Portugal and Australia as well as showcasing many local artists. This was the 3rd year and attracted Arts Council Funding as well as national press coverage.

CAREERS SERVICE INSPECTION

The Council's National Careers Service (NCS) received glowing feedback from their Matrix Inspection in August. Matrix is the national quality standard for all Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services. The NCS team has held the standard for many years but this year teamed up with the Council's New Directions Service to achieve a whole council award.

The Inspector praised the vision, culture and delivery of the work and particularly noted partnership working as a key factor in its success: *"much energy goes into nurturing relevant partners and networks to support the ongoing needs of clients."*

The inspector spoke to customers and reported that *"feedback from NCS customers was entirely positive and cited outcomes such as increased confidence, self-belief and the ability to mix within a group."* Advisors were praised for their *"wealth of experience and expertise which is recognised by managers, clients and partners. Staff are considered to be highly knowledgeable and responsive to issues raised and go above and beyond expectations to deliver the service."*

ADULT LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY

The latest Adult Learning brochure (September-December) is now available and has been uploaded to the Council website and found [here](#). Courses run at a variety of venues with the aim of helping adults improve their work prospects and wellbeing.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID (MHFA)

The Adult Learning Service now has three tutors qualified to teach the Mental Health First Aid Course. Developed by MHFA England, this two day course qualifies learners as mental health first aiders. Learners get a deep understanding of what mental health is and the factors that can affect wellbeing. The course teaches practical skills to spot the signs of mental illness and gives learners the confidence to step in and support a person who needs assistance. It doesn't teach how to be a therapist but can teach how to listen, reassure and respond, even in a crisis and can even potentially stop a crisis from happening. The course will be delivered in the community and is suitable for anyone who wishes to develop a practical understanding of mental health. It is delivered over 3 days and on completion learners receive a Mental Health First Aider certificate.

DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

Blackburn with Darwen Council, alongside partners from across the region, has submitted two significant bids which if successful will support our work in protecting victims of domestic abuse. The first; to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, will support those from Blackburn with Darwen in refuge to be able to move into their own accommodation with additional outreach support, increasing our ability to support more local people.

The second submitted in partnership with the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner to the Home Office, will allow us to further support schools, provide specialist support in adolescent to parent abuse cases, and provide additional resources for cases where children social care are engaged. We expect to hear the outcome of both bids by the end of October 2018.

OLDER DRIVER ROAD SAFETY EVENT

Blackburn with Darwen Council hosted an older driver road safety event on the 1st October on behalf of Pennine & Lancashire Road Safety Partnerships. As part of their 'driving safer for longer' campaign the event covered health, prescribed medication, public transport developments, car safety checks, and safer driving amongst their themes.