

Council Forum

Thursday, 16th July, 2020

6.00 pm

Virtual Meeting

[Join Here](#)

AGENDA

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain**
3. **Minutes Of The Previous Meeting**
Annual Council Minutes June 2020 **3 - 12**
4. **Declarations of Interest**
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5. **Mayoral Communications**
6. **Council Forum**
To consider questions from members of the public received under Procedure Rule 12.
7. **Motions**
To consider Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.
8. **Council response to Covid-19 Pandemic**
Covid-19 Response **14 - 31**
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	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, 08 July 2020
Denise Park, Chief Executive

ANNUAL COUNCIL **Thursday, 4 June 2020**

PRESENT – *The Mayor Councillor Jim Shorrocks, Councillors Afzal, Akhtar, H, Akhtar P, Batan, Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Casey, Connor, Daley, Davies, Desai, Fazal, Floyd, Gee, Gunn, Hardman, Harling, Hussain I, Hussain M, Hussain S, Jan- Virmani, Kay, Khan M, Khan Z, Khonat, Liddle, Mahmood, Marrow, McFall, McGurk, Oates, Patel, Rawat, Rigby C, Rigby J, Riley, Salton, Sidat, Slater Jacq, Slater Jo, Slater Ju, Slater N, Smith D, Smith J, Talbot, Taylor and Whittle.*

RESOLUTIONS

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting and reported that no apologies had been received.

Following Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain a minute's silence was held for Councillor John Pearson who sadly passed away recently, for Aya Hachem who was tragically killed and for all those who have lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Borough, including Dave Cooper a member of staff in the Council who was an accomplished surveyor and polling station presiding officer known to many, who sadly died in April from the virus.

2 Constitution Update May 2020

Council was requested to approve an update to the Audit & Governance Committee's terms of reference and adopt the Supplementary Remote Meetings Procedures Rules and Protocol submitted with the main report.

The Constitution was last updated in July 2019.

The main changes/updates in the report related to the re-alignment of `Terms of Reference` of the Audit & Governance Committee with those suggested and included in the latest CIPFA Guidance. The changes proposed were highlighted in the report submitted.

Additionally, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic the Government had temporarily removed the legal requirement for local authorities to hold public meetings in person. Under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, Councils were now able to hold public meetings virtually by using video or telephone conferencing technology, including allowing remote access by members of the public. The Regulations applied to different types of Council meetings, including full Council meetings, Executive Board and committees. They also allowed Councils the flexibility to make other procedure rules relating to remote attendance regarding voting, member and public access to meeting documents and the remote access of the public and press to meetings by electronic means, such as telephone conference, video conference, and live webcasts and live interactive streaming.

RESOLVED -

That the Council:

1. Approve revisions to the Audit & Governance Committee's Terms of Reference as set out in the report; and
2. Approve the Supplementary Remote Meetings Procedures Rules and Protocol (Appendix 1 & Appendix 2) for all council meetings held remotely whilst the Regulations that permit remote meetings remain in force, until 7 May 2021.

3 The Election of Mayor 2020/2021

The Chief Executive asked for nominations for the Office of Mayor of the Borough for the ensuing Council year. Councillor Iftakhar Hussain was nominated for Office and declared elected as the Mayor of the Borough for the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.

4 The Election of Deputy Mayor 2020/2021

The Chief Executive asked for nominations for the Office of Deputy Mayor Of the Borough for the 2020/2021 Council year. Councillor Derek Hardman was nominated for Office and the Mayor declared him elected as Deputy Mayor of the Borough for the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.

5 Tribute to the newly elected Mayor

Councillors Shaukat Hussain and Mohammed Khan paid tribute to the newly elected Mayor. The Mayor responded and returned thanks for his election.

6 Vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor Councillor Jim Shorrocks

Councillors Phil Riley and Andy Kay paid tribute to the retiring Mayor, Consort and the Mayoress, for the dedicated work they had undertaken during their term of Office, making reference to the engagements they had attended and activities undertaken in support of the Mayor's chosen charities for the year.

Councillor Shorrocks responded to the tributes received and reflected on many key events over the Mayoral year and thanked all those people had supported him during 2019/20.

(The Mayor, Councillor Iftakhar Hussain, in the Chair.)

7 Minutes of the Finance Council Meeting held on 24th February 2020

RESOLVED - The Minutes of the Finance Council Meeting held on 24th February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

8 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

9 Establishment of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Blackburn with Darwen, Lancashire, South Cumbria and Blackpool

A report was submitted on the establishment of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Blackburn with Darwen, Lancashire, South Cumbria and Blackpool.

The establishment of the Joint Committee was a requirement of the National Health Service Act 2006 (amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012) where a relevant Health Authority consulted more than one local authority's health scrutiny function about substantial reconfiguration proposals.

The draft terms of reference for the proposed Joint Health Scrutiny Committee were considered by the Executive Board on 12 March 2020.

It was reported that the Council would need to respond to consultations on "substantial reconfiguration" proposals in relation to health services, after considering the impact on the wider council services and the residents of Blackburn with Darwen. For any contested proposals, the Council would need to be able to directly make referrals to the Secretary of State.

RESOLVED – That Annual Council:

- Note the report and the requirement to appoint a mandatory joint committee for responding to consultations relating to "substantial reconfiguration" proposals for health services affecting more than one local authority area; and
- Agree :
 - to the establishment of the joint committee and nominate 3 voting members to it from the Council's People Overview and Scrutiny Committee , as referred to in the report;
 - not to delegate to the joint committee and retain the power to allow the Council to make its own referrals to the Secretary of State, and request that the Terms of Reference be amended accordingly.

10 Council Appointments for 2020/2021

The Chief Executive referred to her report on the allocation of seats and appointments to Council positions for 2020/2021.

The first draft of the Council Appointments list for 2020/21 was circulated.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That Council notes the appointment of the Executive Board Members;
- 2) That Council notes the Shadow Portfolio Members;
- 3) That appointments be made to the positions detailed in Paragraph 2, subsection 3;
- 4) That Council note the provisions relating to political balance, referred to in Paragraph 3; and
- 5) That decisions on the remaining appointment of Members to Committees be delegated to the Group Leaders to agree the appointments.

11 **Mayoralty 2020/2021**

Members received a report which confirmed the arrangements for the Mayoralty in 2020/2021, namely that Councillor Iftakhar Hussain be appointed as Mayor and Councillor Derek Hardman be appointed as Deputy Mayor for 2020/2021.

RESOLVED –

The Annual Council:

1. Confirms the appointment of Councillor Iftakhar Hussain as Mayor of the Borough for 2020/21; and
2. Confirms that in accordance with the rotation arrangements agreed at Annual Council in May 2018 that it is the Conservative Group's turn to nominate the Deputy Mayor for 2020/21 and notes the appointment made earlier in the meeting of Councillor Derek Hardman.

12 **Appointments to Various Bodies, Groups and Panels 2020/21**

The Chief Executive submitted a report on the appointment to various Bodies, Groups and Panels for 2020/2021.

Due to the need to make early appointments to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority and the Lancashire Police and Crime Panel, the Leader moved that the status quo continue in terms of membership for those two bodies.

RESOLVED –

4.1 That in the first instance, (as is usual practice) each of the organisations listed on the outside bodies, and partnership bodies list is contacted to establish;

That their Terms Of Reference / Articles Of Association have not changed and still require Council Representation in the same capacity, for the same tenure, and what added value will be mutually brought by such engagement. Subject to which;

4.2 That following the process outlined in Section 3 above, nominations will be confirmed as the Council's representatives to serve until the end of the current Municipal Year; or if a longer period of office is shown, until that date; unless during the Municipal Year the Leader amends the appointments to take account of changed requirements;

4.3 That fifteen Members be appointed to serve on the panel of Members to deal with appeals; and

4.4 That as is usual practice, the decisions on representation be delegated to the Group Leaders to agree the appointments.

Signed at a meeting of the Council Forum
On Thursday 16th July 2020
(being the ensuing meeting on the Annual Council) by

MAYOR

COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS FOR 2020/2021

This is the pro-forma for appointments in 2020/2021

The Executive Members and Assistant Executive Members

EXECUTIVE BOARD		
Leader of the Council and Chair of Executive Board	Mohammed Khan	
The following appointments have been made by the Leader of the Council:		
Deputy Leaders of the Council	1: Phil Riley (senior) 2: leaving it vacant for time being	
Vice Chair of Executive Board	Phil Riley	
PORTFOLIOS	Executive Member	Assistant Executive Member
Adult Services & Prevention	Mustafa Desai	Maryam Batan Shaukat Hussain Jackie Floyd
Public Health & Wellbeing	Damian Talbot	Brian Taylor Zamir Khan
Children's, Young People & Education	Julie Gunn	Maureen Bateson Abdul Patel Patricia McFall
Environmental Services	Jim Smith	Jim Casey Yusuf Jan Virmani
Growth & Development	Phil Riley	Zainab Rawat Jane Oates
Digital & Customer Services	Quesir Mahmood	Salim Sidat
Finance & Governance	Vicky McGurk	Ron Whittle Mahfooz Hussain

The remainder of appointments are for completion by the Group Leaders.

Opposition Member on Executive Board

John Slater

4. Appoint Members of Committees

Committee	Labour	Conservative	Lib Dem	Ind
<p>Policy & Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny</p> <p>Membership</p> <p>Chair Dave Harling</p> <p>Vice-Chair: Kevin Connor</p>	<p>Dave Harling Sylvia Liddle Zainab Rawat Yusuf Jan Virmani Jackie Floyd Saima Afzal Shaukat Hussain Maureen Bateson</p>	<p>Kevin Connor Neil Slater Colin Rigby</p>		
<p>Place - Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Membership</p> <p>Chair Suleman Khonat</p> <p>Vice-Chair James Shorrock</p>	<p>Suleman Khonat Jame Shorrock Zamir Khan Maryam Batan Patricia McFall Salim Sidat Brian Taylor</p>	<p>Paul Marrow Julie Slater Derek Hardman</p>		Andy Kay
<p>People Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Membership</p> <p>Chair Sylvia Liddle</p> <p>Vice-Chair Ron Whittle</p>	<p>Sylvia Liddle Ron Whittle Parwaiz Akhtar Jane Oates Dave Smith Saima Afzal Mahfooz Hussain</p>	<p>Jacque Slater Lilian Salton Denise Gee</p>	Roy Davies	
<p>Call In Committee</p> <p>Membership</p> <p>Chair</p>				

Committee	Labour	Conservative	Lib Dem	Ind
Planning & Highways Committee Membership Chair Dave Smith Vice-Chair Hussain Akhtar	Dave Smith Hussain Akhtar Yusuf Jan Virmani Jane Oates Suleman Khonat Zamir Khan Jim Casey Dave Harling Phil Riley	Paul Marrow Jacquie Slater Derek Hardman	Paul Browne	
Licensing Committee Membership Chair Parwaiz Akhtar Vice-Chair Stephanie Brookfield	Parwaiz Akhtar Stephanie Brookfield Maryam Batan Brian Taylor Mahfooz Hussain Jim Casey Zamir Khan	Denise Gee Lilian Salton John Slater		Tasleem Fazal
Audit and Governance Committee Membership Chair: Ron Whittle Vice Chair: Mahfooz Hussain	Ron Whittle Mahfooz Hussain Maureen Bateson Abdul Patel	Neil Slater		Andy Kay
Standards Committee Membership Chair Saima Afzal Vice-Chair Kevin Connor	Saima Afzal Sylvia Liddle Jim Casey Ron Whittle Zainab Rawat Suleman Khonat	Kevin Connor Neil Slater	Roy Davies	
Health & Wellbeing Board Membership Chair: Mohammed Khan	Mohammed Khan Julie Gunn Mustafa Desai	Julie Slater		

APPOINTMENT TO GROUPS AND PANELS

Committee	Labour	Opposition
Appeals Panel Membership 15		
Chief Executive's Employment Committee Membership 4	Mohammed Khan Phil Riley 2 nd Deputy Leader position vacant	John Slater
Chief Officer's Employment Committee Membership 4	Mohammed Khan Phil Riley 2 nd Deputy Leader vacant for time being.	John Slater

The Membership of the Chief Executive and Chief Officer Employment Committees is the Leader of the Council, the two Deputy Leaders and the Leader of the Opposition.

The appointments within Political Groups

LABOUR GROUP	Councillors
Leader	Mohammed Khan
Deputy Leaders	Phil Riley(Senior) 2 nd Position vacant for time being
CONSERVATIVE GROUP	Councillors
Leader	John Slater
Deputy Leaders	Denise Gee and Derek Hardman

Shadow Cabinet	Shadow Executive Member	Shadow Assistant Executive Member
Adult Services & Prevention	Jacquie Slater	John Slater
Public Health & Wellbeing	Julie Slater	Kevin Connor
Children's, Young People & Education	Lilian Salton	Denise Gee
Environmental Services	Jean Rigby	Colin Rigby

Growth & Development	Paul Marrow	Derek Hardman
Digital & Customer Services	Neil Slater	Jacque Slater
Finance & Governance	Colin Rigby	Jean Rigby
Opposition Committee Spokespersons		
Planning & Highways	Paul Marrow	
Licensing	Denise Gee	

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: **16th July 2020**

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)



REPORT OF:	LEADER
TO:	COUNCIL FORUM
ON:	16TH JULY 2020

COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update elected Members on the Council's initial emergency response to Covid-19 and the preparations for the next phase and transition to longer-term recovery.

The Council provides a wide range of services to our residents and businesses. This is a highlight report outlining how some of our key services and functions have adapted to the pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- a) Council note the content of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

Elected Members will be aware that the coronavirus outbreak began overseas in December 2019 and has had a significant impact across the world.

The first transmission of Covid-19 within the UK was confirmed in February 2020 and on 3rd March 2020 the UK government published its action plan to respond to the pandemic with a phased approach – Contain, Delay, Mitigate.

At this stage, the Council activated its Corporate Business Continuity Plan and emergency planning protocols and, through the Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF), the Council and partners have responded to the outbreak at pace, working extremely hard to put in place all of the new measures and guidance expected of us by the Government.

Guidance has usually been issued towards the end of the day, often as part of the Government's daily press briefings. This has frequently meant that the Council has needed to respond quickly to introduce measures, changes and closures to some services with urgency and with little time to plan ahead.

The outbreak and subsequent national lockdown has, and continues to be, a frightening and isolating time for many of our residents, council employees and elected Members. Businesses and employers are facing an uncertain and unprecedented future. As civic

leaders, the Council has played a crucial role in delivering essential services whilst continuing our support for communities, faith, voluntary and private sector organisations.

4. CRITICAL RESPONSE ACTIVITY

Early guidance from the Government was to advise that everyone practices social distancing to reduce transmission, regular hand washing and self-isolation.

On 16th March, the Prime Minister said everyone in the UK should avoid “non-essential” travel and contact with others to curb coronavirus. This included working from home if possible and avoiding crowded places such as pubs, clubs and theatres.

In direct response the Council initiated business continuity plans and advised employees that if they were able to work from home to do so with immediate effect. 70% of our employees live in the Borough and it is likely that this early rapid action has helped to reduce the overall transmission levels as we have had approximately 1500 employees working from home.

We closed our leisure centres on 11th March, and on 17th March, we took the difficult decision to close our branch libraries, museums, King George’s Hall and Darwen Library Theatre. Over the following few days other services and buildings began to close in order to contain the spread of the virus locally and in line with national guidance. A number of festivals and events were also either cancelled or postponed. We introduced social distancing measures in our Town Hall with taped areas and footfall into those public buildings, which remained open, began to fall.

Our interface with partners moved remote including daily teleconferences in the LRF.

On 20th March schools were closed to most pupils. The Prime Minister ordered all pubs, cafes, restaurants, bars and gyms to close and the furlough scheme was introduced. This was closely followed by a nationwide lockdown announced on 23rd March with vulnerable people asked to shield and the police granted powers to enforce social distancing measures.

The Council was already preparing for these measures. Throughout this early period, we worked closely with schools providing advice and guidance and made preparations for children of key workers and vulnerable children to continue to attend school settings where they needed to do so. We also began to identify locations for the new community hubs, linking with the existing Lancashire Volunteer Partnership to co-ordinate support.

We have had a fantastic response from our employees who were no longer able to report to their normal place of work but wanted to help, and were temporarily redeployed to deliver other crucial council services.

Access to adequate supplies of PPE was a significant issue locally, which was also reflected across the Country and, alongside the LRF we continued to press the Government for adequate equipment to support our care workers and other front line staff.

On 25th March, the Coronavirus Act was passed granting the government and authorities unprecedented powers including prohibiting events and gatherings and strengthened

powers to the police to issue fines for those people leaving home without reasonable excuses.

By the end of March the Council, along with other public sector organisations across Lancashire moved to a command and control model of the LRF in order to manage the major incident period of the civil emergency in line with arrangements under the Civil Contingencies Act.

Throughout the period, Government has continued to liaise with each part of the country through the established system of LRF partnerships. The scale, duration and impact of the pandemic has meant exceptional measures have had to be introduced and the Council needed to operate in partnership within the LRF. Senior officers from different organisations have been leading work streams and making decisions for all parts of Lancashire with the overriding objective to protect and save life. The Council has been represented on each of the LRF cells and our senior managers have influenced and contributed to the response by the LRF partnership.

Over the following weeks and months further instructions and guidance was issued by the Government to which the Council responded promptly. Outlined below is an overview of some of the arrangements we have introduced to protect our employees and residents and support our businesses.

Appended to this report is our local tracker capturing, in figures, the actions taken by the Council to support the national response to the pandemic.

BwD Help Hub

With unprecedented speed and excellent multi-disciplinary and cross-departmental working, a brand new service was set up on 26th March the Council launched the BwD Help Hub, operating 7 days per week, providing a range of support to residents, including providing information and advice and delivering food and essential supplies to people in need, including those who were shielding and vulnerable people who were isolating and had no other means of support. Staff working at the Help Hub also made regular weekly telephone calls to help keep people's spirits up during periods of isolation.

The Council has worked closely with local organisations from the voluntary, community and faith sectors and public health partners to run this new essential service. Food parcels contain enough food and drink for one week and are packed and dispatched from the food warehouse and distribution centre set up at Frontier Park with support from businesses partners in the borough.

At 30th June 2020 the Help Hub has received 6489 calls, supported 3437 vulnerable people, and the food warehouse has provided 30,493 food parcels for delivery. Our environment health team supported volunteers supplying food to vulnerable residents, ensuring that the risk of food-borne illness is minimised. By 11th May, we were delivering up to 2780 parcels per week. Alongside our own staff, over 40 volunteers were making weekly reassurance calls to vulnerable people.

The food operation ceased on 30th June and phase 2 of the hub focuses on offering support to promote resilience post crisis. As well as helping people to access food and drink, with our local partners we are offering advice on finances; mental health support; wellbeing and loneliness; learning and employment; using technology and getting online.

The hub will provide access to a range of internal and public sector agencies alongside the Voluntary Community and Faith sector. This multi-agency co-ordination has been crucial to the phase 1 crisis effort and will ensure sustainability of the offer in phase 2.

Vulnerable groups

On 26th March, the Government wrote to Councils asking them to urgently accommodate all rough sleepers and focus on the provision of adequate facilities to enable people to adhere to the guidance on hygiene or isolation, including for those who are at risk of sleeping rough.

The council quickly responded to this request and has been leading a Pennine Lancashire approach as part of the LRF Protect and Care response. This extended offer has been built on the back of our existing offer with the Salvation Army, expanded to include additional properties let using the government's Covid emergency fund. These properties were made available, alongside the sublet of a hotel in Pendle used to support the hospitals across Pennine Lancashire. The hospital was required to discharge people within two hours, putting those who have no fixed address, at risk of homelessness or having to use poor quality, temporary accommodation.

In addition, working with colleagues in health, social care, housing and probation, wrap around support has been provided to all rough sleepers and those in temporary accommodation. Lockdown has helped to engage and maintain engagement with people previously refusing support with positive results.

As part of the council's planning for a return to normal business, all persons accommodated have been offered tenancies with the council, securing lets with social and good quality private landlord's where their support will continue.

On 31st March, the government introduced easements to statutory obligations under Care Act legislation. However, the Council has not needed to make use of these easements as the Adult Social Care Neighbourhood teams have continued to undertake assessments and reviews, arranging packages of care and support for our most vulnerable residents.

Our teams have followed all government and corporate advice in respect of social distancing and PPE. There has been a marked shift towards digital working, however given the relational nature of social care, face-to-face assessments and interventions have at times been necessary. Adult Social Care Neighbourhood teams remain co-located with health colleagues although attendance within office bases remains minimal. Partnership working remains central to providing effective and joined up care, and our integrated neighbourhood teams continue to meet virtually each week.

In terms of occupational therapy and the Disabled Facilities Grant, shielding and social distancing restrictions have made adaptations to individual's properties difficult to achieve. As social distancing measures ease, building work will resume.

National Hospital Discharge Guidance was issued at the outset of the pandemic. All requirements have been met and implemented, and we continue to work with system partners to ensure that discharges from hospital are safe. The additional requirements

included the provision of an extended 7-day offer across hospital discharge and intermediate tier pathways in readiness for the increased demand due to the pandemic. In addition, our Home First, Reablement and Hospital Teams combined rotas and working patterns as a means to increase resilience and flexibility across a 7-day, 8am – 8pm service offer.

Planned Day Services and Short Breaks were amongst the services temporarily halted at the outset of the pandemic. Day support for families and carers who are keyworkers continued, as did emergency respite to prevent carer breakdown at home. Shared Lives matching continued where it was possible to conduct meetings virtually.

Plans are underway to resume Day Services and Short Breaks in line with all relevant Government and Public Health guidance. This will require a degree of transformation to ensure our services are safe and effective.

Across the Integrated Care System, a number of work streams were established in order to support all providers of care to continue to deliver services to our most vulnerable residents. As a part of the system approach, the Council put in place a care home support plan, supporting care homes and other providers, which includes:

- Infection Prevention Control PPE.
- Supply Testing (and Tracing)
- Auxiliary Workforce Support
- Data gathering and Intelligence
- Clinical Support and Training
- Modelling and identification of alternative accommodation
- Communication and Provider/Market Engagement and Support

This has included daily calls to providers tracking and responding to Covid issues, sourcing and providing supplies of PPE, providing advice and guidance and financial support.

Our commissioned services have maintained their services throughout. For our substance service users, significant work has been undertaken to risk assess and allow more regular pick-ups from pharmacies where appropriate. The service has also introduced deliver for needle exchange and increased the availability of naloxone kits to support the prevention of drug related deaths. Our sexual health provision has introduced telephone consultations for initial assessments and better triage.

Education and Early Years

On 18th March, the Prime Minister announced that all schools in the country would shut from the afternoon of Friday 20th March, for all pupils other than children of key workers and vulnerable children. The Government identified our own employees as key workers. It was also announced that no formal exams would take place this academic year.

Throughout this pandemic, we have worked closely with our schools using guidance from the Government and our own local knowledge and intelligence.

From the moment Lockdown was announced for schools, the Council produced a safeguarding and attendance document for all schools, which has been updated throughout lockdown and in line with government guidance.

A protective factor for our most vulnerable young people is school. We requested all schools and settings hold a vulnerable child register, for weekly discussion with the safeguarding team in school. If a child on their vulnerable register was not attending school and parents have requested they stay at home, this must be discussed with the child's social worker or in some instances, their virtual headteacher. Our SEND team was also on hand to for discussion on SEND pupils.

The Council also requested additional safeguarding procedures for those children not attending school including daily calls with young carers (both family and child if possible) and twice weekly or weekly calls with other children on registers. Any changes to the frequency of calls were risk assessed with social care. As usual, our professional teams continued to provide support to schools and children throughout.

The Council has been proactive in planning for extended opening of schools. From 22nd April, our School Improvement Strategy Group met weekly with the focus on extension of the wider opening of schools. Alongside the council's professional teams, the Group includes secondary headteachers, post-16 leads, teaching schools, health colleagues, mental health trailblazer colleagues, education leads within the LA and wider children's services support staff.

The Education team have engaged fully with lead headteachers of our school improvement groups, trust leaders, dioceses and unions. There is a twice-weekly headteachers bulletin.

On 15th June, we advised our schools and settings to prepare for the extended opening to identified year groups from Monday 22nd June, including safety precautions, identifying numbers of children due to attend and undertaking school risk assessments. In line with government guidance, we advised to begin with Early Years, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. If capacity allows, we hoped to see the return of these year groups no later than the end of week beginning 29th June.

We also advised secondary schools and sixth form colleges to begin to welcome back young people from 22nd June for some face to face learning, with around a quarter of the year group at any point. Recognising that each setting is different and that leaderships are best placed to adopt an approach to meet pupil needs. We advised our special schools to begin a cautious phased extension to more children and young people based on government guidance and a review of risk assessments of each learning from 22nd June.

The Council developed a risk assessment, agreed by the unions and diocese, for all maintained schools to adopt, this was shared with a number of stand-alone academies and trusts within the Borough. Our Health and Safety Team also supported schools in preparation for the wider extension of opening and our HR team have provided advice and guidance to schools to enable them to support vulnerable staff. Both teams have been available to answer questions from schools and have also prepared a FAQ publication.

Our complex needs special school, Early Years settings and maintained schools have all received free PPE equipment from the Council for use in line with government guidance. This has included hand sanitisers, gloves, aprons, masks and goggles. To support our

stand-alone academy and trust we were also able to procure PPE equipment on their behalf.

The Government introduced regulations to allow School Admission Appeals to be held remotely via video/audio conferencing, or by written representations to ensure that pupils have a confirmed place for September. These new regulations will remain in place until 31st January 2021.

Physical activity and cultural enrichment

Following closure of leisure centres and facilities, we put a freeze on all memberships, with no fee payments taken whilst facilities remain closed. Annual memberships were extended where necessary. Our instructors have developed and filmed on line class content for people to continue to exercise at home and shared helpful fitness tips to stay in contact with customers over the last few months.

Our re:refresh website was completely redesigned to provide appropriate health and wellbeing information and signposting to support the public and our own employees. Helpful hints and tips to staying safe, working safe and keeping active during the national lockdown are included as well as guidance as the lifting of restrictions has occurred.

To help people managing their long-term conditions, our healthy lifestyle teams, health trainers and specialist exercise instructors have continued to support vulnerable groups and those who are self-isolating or shielding. These video calls, window conversations and home exercise packs, have been hugely valued by participants. Feedback and thanks received has indicated that this has really helped maintain mental and physical health during challenging times.

Based on Government guidance and advice we closed our branch libraries and Blackburn and Darwen libraries on 24th March but have continued to ensure our residents are able to access cultural resources and activities.

We maintained our online e-resources and home delivery service which have been extremely well used by residents. On 15th June, we extended the library offer and launched our Call and Collect library service at Blackburn Central Library. All returned stock is kept in 72-hour quarantine in line with official guidance. We re-opened Blackburn Library on 6th July and will re-open Darewn Library from 13th July.

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery closed in line with government guidance on social distancing but we continue to engage online using #MuseumsFromHome posting pictures of our collection and social and virtual tours of Turton Tower over social media. We also created a YouTube page for the museum, adding short films of the gallery and collections, and made education learning sessions available to children. We have also launched a Get Crafty at Home section with activities for children. We plan to reopen the museum from 15th July. A booking system will be in place with hourly entrances for visitors.

Like all theatres and venues, King George's Hall and Darwen Library Theatre have closed during lockdown. Working closely with agents and promoters some shows are rescheduled into 2021 as the industry awaits guidance to support its re-opening.

Faith activities and places of worship

Throughout this pandemic the council has been working with faith partners to establish common principles for places of worship. The Government guidance in March was very clear, that large gatherings including gatherings with friends and family should be avoided. Based on this advice and on consultation with Public Health we wrote to the Borough's Mosques with strong recommendations that both daily and Friday congregational prayers and other significant gatherings should be suspended.

Based on Government guidance and instruction on 31st March we changed arrangements for funerals and burials at our crematoria and cemeteries, limiting the number of attendees, putting measures in place to facilitate social distancing and additional cleaning between services. This action was undertaken in consultation with the LRF and local faith groups, with the council regularly reviewing the limits on attendee numbers at both cremations and burials. Numbers attending funerals have increased from the initial limit of 10, including officiates, at both burial and cremation services. Due to improved management of social distancing, we can now allow upto 30 mourners plus officiates at burials and 14 and officiate at cremations.

Additionally, the council introduced webcasting of cremation services and relaxed its rules and regulations in the cemeteries to allow for video recording of burials by mourners, in order to allow those who were unable to attend the funerals to feel part of the service for relatives and loved ones.

Our approach to ensuring religious needs of residents are met has been recognised as good practice by the Local Government Association (LGA) who have published a case study on our partnership work to find solutions associated with Muslim burial rites.

Places of worship reopened on 13th June for private prayer and from 4th July government guidance provides for gatherings of more than 30 people for acts of worship in churches, mosques etc.

Registrar service

Following government guidance, we closed both Blackburn and Darwen Register Offices to the public, with weddings cancelled and all deaths/still birth registrations completed by telephone and birth registrations postponed. Given the likelihood of staff absences due to Covid and the anticipated number of excess deaths, we trained a number of our employees with the skills to undertake Registrar duties on a temporary basis to provide additional capacity.

Our registrar services are aiming to re-open by the end of July. We also hope to resume weddings at the end of July in the Northgate Suite of King George's Hall as this is the most suitable venue in terms of social distancing and hygiene measures. Outside venues such as hotels will be visited by registrars and Environmental Health to make sure they comply with the new guidelines before any further weddings can go ahead as we continue our re-start.

Refuse collection and recycling centres

We have maintained our refuse and recycling collections throughout the pandemic, putting measures in place to support our staff, in conjunction with Government advice and the support of the Trades Unions. We also issued guidance to residents on how they can help themselves and the council with keeping bins clean, double bagging rubbish for those self-isolating and managing food and general waste. During the lockdown period, the 12 weeks have seen an increase of 11% in the total amount of waste generated by householders in their burgundy bins, with a 6% increase in recycling.

On 25th March, we temporarily closed our household waste recycling centres. However, following further guidance and clarification from the Government, we have been able to reopen these since 18th May with new social distancing arrangements in place. Unlike many other waste disposal authorities, we have been able to accept all waste types, plus vans and trailers. Our residents are now able to book appointments to attend the recycling centres to dispose of waste. The appointment system has proved very popular, with a number of compliments received about how the new system is easy to use, makes the sites safer for both the staff and the residents and requesting that the council continue to use the booking system into the future. The booking system allowed for up to six vehicles to use each site every 30 minutes. This has enabled up to 132 bookings to be made at each site, 6 days a week. We are making further improvements to increase overall capacity with timeslots changing to 20 minutes soon.

Following the successful reopening of the sites, the council is presently reviewing access arrangements to allow more booking slots to become available. We also agreed a trial with our contractor to open up the sites on the previous closure days, Darwen on Tuesday's and Blackburn on Wednesday's. This is for an initial period, to allow access for permit users, who needed to use the sites with their vans and trailers, plus the disposal of builder's waste, with the number of users limited to 66 per day, per site.

Support to our businesses

As the national lockdown was introduced, customer facing businesses were ordered to shut down with other organisations needed to introduce social distancing measures or support employees to work from home if able to.

The council responded quickly to support businesses offering advice and guidance as it was released from the Government.

Working with the Blackburn Town Centre BID and Blackburn with Darwen Hive Business Network the Council has introduced fortnightly Ask the Experts online Q&A sessions with businesses invited to submit questions focused on supporting businesses during this crises. We have helped people to access financial support, navigate issues relating to employees, customers, social distancing, and the safe reopening of businesses

Our Public Protection professionals have been responsible for enforcing business closure regulations and have been monitoring compliance and intervening where businesses refused to close. In general, our business community have responded positively to the government restrictions, although a small number of prohibition notices have been served

to certain businesses who have disregarded advice. No prosecutions have been necessary to date.

For those businesses able to remain open, we have provided advice and guidance to implement covid-secure measures to protect staff and customers. This will continue as restrictions begin to lift.

On 1st April 2020, the Government released funds to all Councils to provide a range of direct financial support to local businesses impacted by the crises. Within the first few days of the announcement, we were busy identifying businesses in the Borough who could qualify for government funds; by 12th April we had processed more than 1100 grants and paid out £13,345,000. At 28th June we had made payments totalling £39,245,000 to 3,578 businesses.

On 29th May, the government issued guidance on the Discretionary Grant Fund. A local scheme has been developed and agreed in line with national guidance with the additional local flexibility to provide financial support to small manufacturing and production businesses that can evidence Covid-19 economic impacts. The first application window closed on 14 June and over 400 applications are currently being assessed and checked. At 3rd July, the Council have made discretionary grant awards to 40 businesses totalling £268,000, and will continue to make further awards over the coming weeks.

High Streets and markets

On 23rd March, we took the tough but necessary decision to close both Blackburn and Darwen markets to the public in order to protect traders, customers, staff and the wider public. The national lockdown saw all non-essential shops across the Borough close on 26th March.

Despite the uncertainty our market traders faced, they responded positively with mainly food traders in both Blackburn and Darwen adapting their businesses to support customers with home deliveries. Our market traders were extremely busy delivering orders across the borough and neighbouring areas with a large demand clearly unmet by the supermarkets. The Council's markets team worked throughout both keeping the market open, clean and safe for the traders as well as helping with deliveries too, getting essential food items out to customers.

Following the government's announcements in May that non-essential retail could open from 15th June, the Council's Town Centre and Markets team alongside the Mall and the BID in Blackburn and our Public Protection and Highways teams have supported businesses with a number of interventions to ensure that our high streets opened safely and Covid-19 secure. This has included one-way systems in our Markets and the Mall, restrictions on numbers, enhanced security, portable public toilets and highways adaptations to support the legislation and guidelines on social distancing.

All partners including our teams are experiencing a very high and intensive demand on resources to enable this and in addition are preparing for the second phase of reopening hospitality businesses announced from 4th July.

Digital development and remote support

Covid-19 has accelerated and enhanced the way we use digital to deliver council services and enable our employees to work flexibly. Technology is moving at pace in our organisation like never before.

On 16th March, in line with Government guidance, we advised our employees to work from home if able to do so. This led to 70% of our workforce becoming remote workers. Prior to covid-19 we had an average of 100 remote workers each day, increasing to approximately 1500 employees when restrictions were introduced. The digital team quickly had to build more digital solutions. We replaced our firewall, put in a new VPN system and accelerated completion of Office 365 email and Teams.

We have enabled over 10,000 virtual meetings to take place within the Council, provided kit and software where needed, and provided digital support through Tech Bootcamps alongside hints and tips in short videos.

We have distributed 693 devices and hubs to our most vulnerable children across the borough and we are now trialling the Kaizala App to communicate with our care leavers.

We accelerated the use of digital forms, crucial for our help-hub, which enabled residents to request help with food, supplies, medication and general support. The form was accessible 24/7 with a contact centre staffed by redeployed workers from around the council. We have developed this further into a case management system linked to our food distribution warehouse. The system has dealt with thousands of requests.

We also launched the Gov.Notify, a text messaging service for our citizens, which is free for up to 25,000 messages per service.

As the waste and recycling centres reopened, we needed an online booking system through our new digital platform for residents. It was difficult and complex and whilst there was some early technical hurdles to overcome, two days before sites opened our system was live. Handling thousands of requests, the new system has enabled minimal queuing, proper social distancing and safer highways around the recycling centres.

We have also increased our use of data and intelligence by creating live dashboards for our senior teams. This has supplied officers with the latest management information throughout on key indicators around Covid-19 cases and deaths, staffing, Help Hub requests and more.

Initially all formal Council meetings were cancelled, including Council Forum in late March and Executive Board in April. Legislation was introduced, up to May 2021, to enable local authorities to make decisions remotely and hold virtual meetings. In response, the council adapted its decision making arrangements, embracing technology and held its first formal virtual meeting of Annual Council on 4th June via Microsoft Teams Live, including introducing the new Mayor. Council meetings will continue to be held remotely until there is a further change in the government guidance.

Protecting our staff

On 17th March, many of our office based employees began to work from home. Business Continuity Plans were put in place, and our senior leadership team put measures in place to ensure all those working from home were supported, had the necessary equipment and that positive health and mental wellbeing could be maintained.

Those staff whose normal work places closed, have been redeployed where possible into alternative roles on a temporary basis and provided with the necessary support and training needed.

Where people have needed to attend workplaces we have enhanced our cleaning routines and ensured that additional hand sanitisation and wipes are available along with social distancing measures and screens for front-facing employees in public buildings.

Based on Government guidance two-metre social distancing measures have been in place and for some buildings, revised fire evacuation and first aid procedures have been implemented. This will continue to be monitored and adapted in line with Government Guidance.

Colleagues from Health & Safety and Property & Facilities Management have been undertaking site based risk assessments of buildings, to prepare for any re-openings subject to Government guidance, including the provision of protective screens for any public facing counters.

Early in the crisis, we identified that PPE being in short supply was a significant issue and we commenced procurement of stocks from a diverse range of suppliers to protect our own staff across all Council functions and for our providers in Adult Social Care. Given the significant global demand, this became increasingly challenging. Government guidance changing added to this challenge. We worked with the LRF and used our collective buying power to purchase essential items and have them shipped from China. This, combined with supplies from MHCLG, has meant that we have been able to keep our staff provided with appropriate PPE, provided schools with supplies to support their re-opening and responded to urgent requests from our providers and those of the LRF across the region.

Managing the receipt, storage and delivery of this stock has been a collaborative effort across multiple Council teams, including a number of staff working in evenings and weekends to meet requirements. We now have a stock that will ensure we can continue to meet demand internally and externally for the upcoming months and are assessing the best way to manage this.

For many of our services it has been business as usual, but in a new way. Our corporate resources teams have adapted and responded in this new environment, supporting those critical front-facing services. Our highways have been maintained throughout this pandemic, whilst ensuring safe working practices.

Financial challenges

Our Finance Team have worked extremely hard, and at pace, to process and administer the range of financial support packages in place for our businesses and residents. We

have re-billed business rates to reflect the additional Business Rate reliefs the government has announced. We have also applied the provisions of the government's Hardship Fund by reducing the Council Tax bill by £150 for all individuals of working age who are in receipt of Council Tax Support. We have prioritised the processing of supplier invoices and moved to daily supplier payment runs to ensure we get cash out as quickly as possible to all our suppliers, particularly those in the care sector.

The council was quick to introduce a system to respond to financial pressures faced by providers in terms of increased cost of care provision, increased costs of PPE, agency and staff cover. No reductions in block contract arrangements (or new contracts for 2020/2021 have been made) to ensure that provision could be re-directed to support emerging areas of need. Additional commissions have been sourced to support hospital discharge. Payment schedules have increased in terms of frequency to aid cash flow and facilitate payment in advance or immediate payment for some services, and weekly meetings put in place to consider provider requests for financial assistance, enabling a quick turnaround and prompt payment.

We are facing significant financial pressures due to the increased costs due to covid-19 and loss of income. An outline of additional financial pressures as at 19th June 2020 is summarised below:

- £1.430 million on PPE
- £0.870 million spent on setting up the food hub and associated costs to distribute food to shielded and vulnerable groups.
- £0.168 million to support the homeless and secure beds for rough sleepers.
- £10.514 million loss of sales, fees, charges and commercial income.

We also expect a loss of income on council tax and business rates and additional cost pressures for those residents who become eligible for council tax support. As outlined in Executive Board papers for 9th July 2020, forecast additional expenditure in 2020/21 due to Covid-19 is £9.802 million and loss of income is forecast at £18.691 million. To date we have received Covid-19 Government grant of £9.297 million, resulting in a financial gap of approximately £19.394 million for 2020/21.

These costs and loss of income will continue to escalate as we come to terms with the longer term impact of Covid-19 on our council services, how we support our businesses and residents, and also the wider economic downturn the country is facing.

In April and May, the Leader of the Council wrote to both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, highlighting concern that the funding made available will leave the council in very serious financial difficulties.

Elected Members will be aware of the significant financial pressures that the council has been under, prior to Covid-19, as part of the Government's austerity programme, with a 36% reduction in funding income over the past 10 years. Working with the Local Government Association and councils colleagues across the country, we will continue to press the Government to ensure that Local Government, particularly areas such as Blackburn with Darwen, receive the crucial funding needed and that the Government honour their commitment to stand behind local councils providing resources for all of our covid-related expenditure.

The Secretary of State for MHCLG announced a further funding package for local government on 2nd July which looks to address costs and some loss of income from fees and charges. We await the full detail of this package to be able to assess the impact on the Council's overall financial position for 2020/21 and beyond. A Spending Review for future years is also expected later in the year.

Keeping people informed

Effective communications has been a priority from day one and continues to play a key role. We have kept our employees, communities, businesses, media and other partners up-to-date with key government guidance, advice and information about changes to our services and the support available.

Over the past 100 days our residents have accessed the Council's online news platform, the Shuttle, 141,164 times - a 93% increase in readership compared to the same period last year. This highlights a real shift to accessing online digital news and how residents chose to seek important updates from the Council.

The most read news stories for the latest period included Coronavirus updates, VE Day 2020 stay at home street party advice, changes to funerals, burials and cemeteries, help hub information and education updates. Our Director of Public Health's weekly coronavirus column has been one of the most read news items.

Over a million people also accessed the Council website during this period, a 41% increase in web access for the equivalent periods. The top pages that our residents have been accessing include household waste recycling centres information, Do it Online, jobs, waste and recycling and Council Tax. Other popular pages include Accounts, Coronavirus: support for business, the garden waste brown bin collection scheme, bin collections, bulky item collections and planning.

Engagement on our digital platforms has seen a significant spike – with the council's corporate social media pages being a go-to channel for our residents looking for trusted updates. In the period since the Government implemented its action plan, the Facebook and Twitter accounts have been viewed more than 5 million times with 20% audience growth.

As well as sharing important public health updates, including a well-received corporate campaign to support people's mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic, the pages have become a place to celebrate the work of the council with popular posts including the rainbow sign-writing at the entrance to the hospital and the football pitch-sized message of support at Pleasington.

Residents actively thanked staff in their thousands – providing a morale boost as well as highlighting the full range of services the Council has continued to offer during lockdown. The success of the social posts is now being built on further with a new 'Worker Bees' campaign showing how workers have stepped up.

Being able to respond instantly has also been a huge benefit to having the well-established social channels with issues including the closure of key council buildings,

schools, the household waste recycling centres and leisure facilities, being able to be communicated quickly and explained in detail.

We were also able to instantly respond to residents' comments, questions and queries – often outside of normal office hours - providing them with the very latest information and a personal response to what could be highly emotive topics – including the closure of cemeteries.

We have continued to use video to record interviews and messages, including the video explaining the decision to delay the wider opening of schools and the appointment of the new Mayor.

Our local response to the national lockdown has received positive feedback from our residents who have called on our support. Comments have included:

- “its made a real difference having someone to talk to”,
- “the regular support me and my mum have had since lockdown has been great”
- “Blackburn with Darwen Council have gone above and beyond to help people throughout this pandemic and you should all be very proud”,
- “this year has been tougher than most, but your response to the challenges we’re facing has been exceptional”,
- “it has been amazing how you guys have all pulled together and supported people like us in such horrific times. It has been quite humbling. Great that a police officer delivered my parcel!”
- “I can’t thank you enough for the food parcels at this awful time in all our lives. You have all put yourselves on the line for so many people”.

5. TRANSITION AND THE NEW NORMAL

Our response to the initial emergency actions has been at pace and we expect to continue our adaptable and flexible approach to service delivery as further guidance develops and restrictions begin to relax or reinstate and Local Government will continue to play a crucial part in this pandemic for a long time. This national crisis has highlighted the central role that Councils have in local leadership across the public sector.

As lockdown restrictions are eased across the country, a key element in keeping the outbreak suppressed at national and local level is the identification of cases of infection through testing, and tracing their contacts, who are then advised to self-isolate for 14 days. We have developed a Local Outbreak Control Plan, which outlines our control arrangements. The Council has been allocated £1.36 million to implement this plan.

Our new Elected-member led Local Outbreak Engagement Board will have political oversight of the local delivery of the plan and response and be responsible for communicating and engaging with residents and communities. Health, community, voluntary and faith colleagues are also part of the new Board.

£500 million funding for Councils was announced on 2nd July, complemented with additional resource for loss of income. Further details are awaited. LGA analysis last month, suggests that councils across the country are facing a funding gap of £7.4 billion.

We continue to play a central role in the LRF, which is now led by Local Government as we move away from critical response, and our Chief Executive is chair of the Transition and Recovery cell for Lancashire.

On 30th June, our Prime Minister announced a “New Deal for Britain” setting out the first steps to rebuild the country and fuel economic recovery. With £5 billion for infrastructure spending, the Prime Minister has promised that the Government will “build back better, build back greener, build back faster”. A policy paper to reform the planning system is expected this month.

As part of this economic recovery, we have already seen funding directed to Mayoral Combined Authorities and announcements this week by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government make it clear that devolution and powers will go to those areas that have a directly Elected Mayor. A Devolution White Paper is due in the Autumn and we expect this to set out a way forward for areas such as Lancashire, including options for new unitary authorities. A separate report is presented to Council Forum on this matter.

For Blackburn with Darwen we will continue the focus on our own transition and economic recovery as we prioritise the short, medium and long-term needs of our residents and businesses. This includes developing the Darwen Town Investment Plan, which will need to address covid-19 issues and opportunities in line with the new Town Deals guidance published by the Government. We expect the Darwen Town Deal Board to submit their plan by January 2021.

We have continued our work with Lancashire authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership and prepared a joint submission that sets out key priorities and actions to progress with Government, as part of an emerging strategic economic recovery plan for Lancashire. We are expecting more detail soon on the national economic recovery strategy and the local economic recovery plans that will underpin this approach.

We have already started our own four phased transition planning – rise & fall; containment; exit; recovery to take us to 2022, keeping our business plans flexible to respond to changing and new guidance, new government announcements and policies and responding to our local needs.

We will further refine our performance reporting and bring a detailed report to Policy Council in December when we will be able to further understand the impact of our decisions as we respond to Covid-19.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We will continue to monitor government advice and guidance and tailor any policy requirements as necessary.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There have been, and will continue to be significant financial implications in our emergency response to Covid-19. Reports to Executive Board on 9th July 2020 provide further information. We will continue to work with lobbying groups to press the Government for additional resource and financial support.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council must ensure that it fully complies with the various Coronavirus legislation and Government guidance introduced from time to time, in respect of all its services, powers and duties. The Council must also continuously monitor the changes in legislation and guidance, to ensure the provision of its statutory and other responsibilities.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Please refer to section 7. Financial implications, in this report.

10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Given the pace of response to the crises, an EIA has not been undertaken. As we move forward through transition we will undertake EIAs as necessary.

11. CONSULTATIONS

No consultations have taken place.

Chief Officer/Member

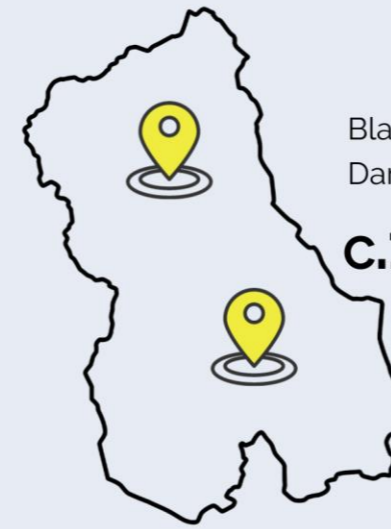
Background papers:

Contact Officer: Denise Park, Chief Executive

Date: 07.07.2020

Covid 19 LOCAL RESPONSE TRACKER

This tracker attempts to provide an update to residents of the actions taken by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council in support of the national response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Where possible this tracker incorporates the latest data available at time of publication, however given the fluid nature of events some data may now differ from the source information. All information correct as of June 30th 2020.

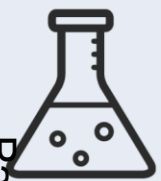


Blackburn with Darwen population
c.149,000



BLACKBURN
with
DARWEN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Page 31



Number of lab confirmed cases

422 (pillar 1)



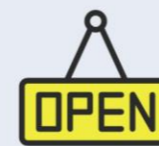
Number of Covid related deaths

199



Residential settings with confirmed cases

23



Schools that have remained open

75



Volunteers supporting council services

1,680



Claimant count

7,790



Vulnerable people supported by the help hub

3,437



Food parcels / essentials delivered

30,493



Business and residents calls to the help hub

6,489



Library home deliveries

471



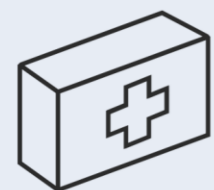
Emergency funding received by the local authority

£9.3m



Public building closures

21



Units of PPE delivered

627,814



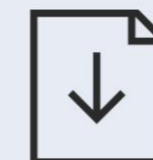
Value of business grants issued by the local authority

c.£39m



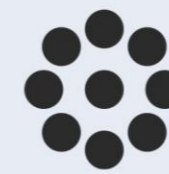
Homes that received advice about the help hub

58,000



Online customer transactions and forms completed

20,994



Public meetings held virtually

4



Compliments received

40



REPORT OF:	LEADER
TO:	COUNCIL FORUM
ON:	16TH JULY 2020

LANCASHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the current position on devolution, combined authorities and the progress to form a Lancashire Combined Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- a) Council reconfirm their support for a Lancashire Combined Authority with a directly Elected Mayor.

3. BACKGROUND

Lancashire Leaders submitted a request to the Government in June 2016 to form a Lancashire Combined Authority. However, due to a number of factors, including the EU referendum, the combined authority wasn't finalised.

A combined authority is a legal entity, created by Parliament. It enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries. They can take advantage of powers, resources and funding delegated to them by the Government as part of a devolution deal. Partner authorities can also delegate powers to the combined authority. All councils within the geography of a combined authority must agree to be part of it. It cannot be imposed.

A combined authority does not provide every day council services such as libraries, children's services, schools, social care, household waste collection, parks, open spaces. The combined authority could be responsible for matters such as strategic and spatial planning, further/adult education, skills, strategic transport planning, and attracting significant funding into the area to support economic growth.

Constituent local authorities are usually represented on the Combined Authority by their Leader. Governance and decision making arrangements are agreed by the constituent authorities before a combined authority is established.

There are now 10 Combined Authorities across the country, eight of which have directly Elected Mayors, with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority our nearest neighbours, both with directly Elected Mayors. Of the existing Combined Authorities, there is only one within a two-tier area (Cambridge and Peterborough).

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the existing Combined Authorities have negotiated and agreed with government a number of significant devolution deals. For example, GMCA and Liverpool City Region CA have agreed £900 million investment funds, consolidated transport budgets, responsibility for bus franchising, and CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) powers. GMCA and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA have also attracted significant grant funding for housing. GMCA already has funding arrangements for integrated health and social care and a number of other combined authorities are progressing this approach.

The Government have said that new funding, as part of our post-pandemic economic recovery, will be directed to areas with Combined Authorities, or business led Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) for those areas with no Combined Authorities. For Lancashire, funding would go to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

4. RATIONALE

Over recent months, Lancashire Leaders have had positive discussions in relation to a Combined Authority. At their meeting on 10th June, Leaders agreed to explore a Combined Authority for Lancashire with an Elected Mayor, acknowledging that delivery of Local Government functions may need to be reviewed and simplified in the Combined Authority area as has been indicated by MHCLG.

A decision to establish a Lancashire Combined Authority would need consent of all of the local authorities covered by the area – in this case 15 councils.

Lancashire Leaders have agreed, in principle, to work with the Local Government Association, or other independent body, to undertake an options appraisal. If a business case is developed, a local consultation would be undertaken before submission and any final decision to join a Lancashire Combined Authority would be made by full Council.

Lancashire is comparable in size to other Combined Authorities and, if afforded a similar level of devolution, might attract almost £500 million investment fund over 30 years, £160 million housing investment. We could also attract direct funding for local colleges to provide skills that adults need to retrain and access jobs in a post-pandemic economy as well as responsibilities for devolved business support budgets, apprenticeship grants and the ability to shape Further Education.

The Government are keen to work with areas to develop Combined Authorities, ideally with elected Mayors, particularly as we re-start the economy. A number of other areas are already progressing proposals and engaging with ministers and civil servants. If Lancashire is to benefit from similar levels of devolution and powers that other areas have achieved, it must move at pace to engage with the Government.

Simon Clarke, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government told LGA delegates in July that the Government will give the most generous deals, in terms of devolved powers and funding to those areas that have a Mayoral Combined Authority. He added that the Government feel this gives the strongest local democratic accountability.

The Government are due to publish their Devolution White Paper in Autumn and have said that this will set out further details on both combined authorities and local government re-organisation. 63% of the North's population is covered by Mayoral Combined Authorities, and they expect to see more unitary councils and more directly Elected Mayors coming forward.

The Minister has said that 300-400,000 population may be guidance in terms of the minimum for new unitary authorities. They are keen to optimise structures so that they are of sufficient size, but close enough to communities and be their local voice.

Based on the current local government arrangements, a Lancashire Combined Authority would have 15 Council Leaders and an Elected Mayor involved in decision making. This is much higher than the existing Combined Authorities which range in membership from 3 councils to 10 councils. Many decisions would also need unanimous agreement.

Feedback from civil servants suggests that this is too many and that the Government would be keen to see simplified local governance in areas such as Lancashire for the Combined Authority to be most effective. With 15 local authorities Lancashire has the largest number of councils in its area than anywhere else in the country.

Elected Members will be aware that the Leader of the Council and Opposition Leader jointly wrote a letter to the Secretary of State in October 2019, requesting an invitation to develop a business case for a new Pennine Lancashire unitary authority. The letter indicated that the area could cover the existing council areas of Blackburn with Darwen, Rossendale, Hyndburn, Burnley and Pendle. This area has a population of over 480,000 residents comprising 32% of the geographical county of Lancashire's whole population. It would not be a merger of any councils. Pennine Lancashire would be a brand new unitary authority and the electorate would determine who represents them and their areas on the new Council, in line with the current election arrangements.

A new Pennine Lancashire unitary authority would be responsible for all council services such as children's services, schools, adult social care, libraries, museums, household waste recycling centres, bin collection, leisure facilities, roads, parks, environmental health.

The Council Leader remains committed to work with Leader colleagues across Lancashire to achieve the best opportunities and outcomes for all residents and businesses.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications at this stage.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At this stage, any financial implications will be managed within existing budgets. However, it's expected that a Combined Authority with a directly Elected Mayor will attract a significant devolution deal from the Government bringing additional funding into Lancashire.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Any resource implications will be managed within existing budgets.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed at this stage.

10. CONSULTATIONS

An open, public consultation exercise would take place as the Lancashire Combined Authority business case progressed and before any final submission to the Government.

Chief Officer/Member

Background papers:	None
Contact Officer:	Denise Park, Chief Executive
Date:	8th July 2020

REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE.

Councillors Saima Afzal

PORTFOLIO COORDINATING

DIRECTOR: David Fairclough

This report updates the Council Forum on the work of the Standards Committee.

1 Personal Safety for Elected Members

On 4th July 2019, the Local Government Association (LGA) published its Guide to handling intimidation for Councillors. The Guide is available to download in full via the link below.

www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-intimidation

The guide covers topics such as how to handle abuse, both face-to-face, letters or online, and the legal and practical remedies, including the nature of the criminal offences involved and the LGA have confirmed this will be continuously updated with the latest advice and information available.

The Monitoring Officer circulated the link to the Guide, to all Councillors in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council on the date of publication. The Standards Committee then reviewed the Guide alongside our current local general advice to members. At their meetings in October 2019 and January 2020 the Standards Committee discussed the Guide and has produced a shortened local Guide to supplement the national guide.

At their meeting in March the Standards Committee also agreed to recommend, the adoption of the Social Media Guidance contained within the LGA Guide to handling intimidation for Councillors.

Recommendation 1

The Standards Committee recommend that the Full Council adopt the local Guide (Appendix A) to supplement that produced by the LGA (including the Social Media Guidance), with both Guides to be available on the Council's website for easy access.

2 Guidance for Councillors on Personal References.

The Committee has considered provision of advice for Councillors for handling reference requests reviewing that provided previously in 2016. It was felt appropriate to update this advice. The Committee therefore reviewed and updated guidance following advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Recommendation 2

The Standards Committee now recommend the updated Guidance (Appendix B) for adoption by the Full Council.

3 Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members

At their meeting in March the Committee received a detailed report on the outcome of a complaint considered under the above arrangements. Exceptionally in this case the Monitoring Officer publicly published his decision, which was contained in a comprehensive written decision notice to the complainants, in respect of Councillors, Kay, Sidat, McFall, and Groves who had all apologised as regards their actions.

In this very openly public case it became apparent that there was an expectation from a number of interested parties including the media reporting this matter that the `Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for members`, included an option for suspension, pending investigation and/or later dismissal from office. Albeit the `Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for members` does not and, cannot make such a provision.

These options are not provided for in legislation and the powers available to the Council in the event of an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, are only those as set out in the current `Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for members`.

The Standards Committee therefore from the experience of this case propose that under the introduction to these `Arrangements` that the following be added to make the position explicit at the outset for complainants, subject members, other Councillors and any other interested parties:

Paragraph

- 1.5 *There are no powers in legislation and therefore under this complaints process for the suspension or dismissal of an elected councillor. In the event of a councillor being found in breach of the Code of Conduct only the sanctions as set out in Paragraph 13 below apply.*

Recommendation 3

That the Council Forum adopt the additional paragraph in the `Arrangements` as set out above.

**Councillor Saima Afzal
Chair of Standards Committee**

July 2020

Appendix A

Guidance for Members – Handling Reference Requests

Councillors are on occasion asked to provide character or other references on behalf of a ward resident or acquaintance. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for a reference to be supplied as a community service but it is important that procedures are in place to protect the interests of both the Councillor and the Council, particularly in relation to the Code of Conduct. Councillors are not obliged to supply a reference, which can be provided only at their discretion and for someone who is known to them. The Standards Committee has agreed the guidance below to be followed in the event that a Councillor is requested to provide a reference for a ward resident or acquaintance. To assist Councillors, guidance is also provided for countersigning UK Passport Application Forms based on current information provided by HM Passport Office.

1. Matters where the Council is involved – This can include court matters where the Council is a party or has some involvement in relation to its functions, duties, powers and responsibilities. For example, matters relating social care, public protection, and environment matters. In such matters, Councillors should not provide references (or make any representations) on behalf of ward residents or acquaintances as this could be regarded as a conflict of interest in view of their position as Councillors, and could breach potentially the Code of Conduct. If approached, Councillors should politely decline and if necessary seek advice from the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officers. The Council has also provided specific advice and guidance in the Constitution for Councillor Involvement in relation to family member and social care matters.

2. Personal Character references/representations where there is no Council involvement – This can include providing personal character references for a ward resident or acquaintance in court matters (civil and criminal), or employment matters. Councillors are under no obligation to provide personal character references. However, Councillors are regarded as persons of good standing and they are often approached by ward residents or acquaintance to provide personal character references. If Councillors choose to provide a personal character reference for a ward resident or an acquaintance, they must adhere to the following safeguards which clarifies the status of the reference, and protects the interests of both Councillors and the Council itself:
 - Personal character references should only be provided for someone who is known to the Councillor.
 - Councillors should use their own note paper, and not Council letterhead.
 - All personal character references may be signed by Councillors using the title “Councillor” but must include the following text in the main body of the letter: *“This is a personal reference reflecting my views, knowledge and belief. It is not a reference of (or on behalf of) Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.*
 - Councillors should carefully consider each request and address reference letters to a specific addressee, and avoid addressing the reference *“To whom it may concern”*.
 - Councillors should ensure that references are factually accurate and honest.
 - Any responsibility, liability or any other consequence arising from providing a personal reference would rest entirely with the Councillor concerned, and not with the Council.
 - Councillors should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officers, and consult their group leader before providing a reference on a high profile matter, or a matter which may be publically reported.

3. Countersigning UK Passport Application Forms

Based on the current information provided by HM Passport Office (Dec 2019) Councillors, are listed as persons of good standing in the community, and are therefore often requested to countersign passport applications for ward residents or acquaintances.

Councillors are not obliged to countersign passport applications for anybody. However, should they choose to do so at their discretion, they should check and comply any with the requirements issued by HM Passport Office. The current requirements (Dec 2019) for countersigning UK passport application forms are that the Councillor can only countersign if they have personally known the individual for at least 2 years, live in the UK and hold a current British or Irish passport. When countersigning the application, the Councillor will need to enter their current British passport number.

When signing the application form, Councillors are reminded to check that the name on the form matches that of the individual that has presented the form, and that the photograph (which is also to be signed) is a current likeness of the individual. As a general reminder, a Councillor must not sign an application form for any person who is related by birth or by marriage, involved in a relationship with the applicant or residing at the same address. Under no circumstances should Councillors sign a blank or partially completed application form.

Countersignatories may be contacted by HM Passport Office for more information.

Councillor should always also check the HM Passport website for the latest advice for countersignatories.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-passport-office>

Personal Safety for Elected Members

Introduction

Our personal safety is something many of us take for granted, and it is only when a major incident occurs that we stop and think about our own vulnerability. The recent murder of MP Jo Cox will have caused even the most confident amongst us to take a step back to reflect on the way that we manage any risks associated with our role.

There have been very few major incidents involving violence toward local or national politicians, although when attacks do take place they are widely reported. There are no statistics to prove that public figures are at more risk than anybody else who is involved in carrying out a front-facing role.

Whilst most of the aggression councillors experience will usually sit at the 'low to modest' spectrum of unacceptable behaviour, severe abuse can tip into the legal definition of violence even if no physical interaction is involved.

We should all take time out of our busy schedules to reflect on the systems and processes we should have in place to help keep us safe, and to reduce any risks we may be exposed to in our councillor role.

Below is some information that has been compiled from LGIU and LGA guidelines. For more information, visit the government website: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/

General principles of personal safety

There are four broad principles to consider linked to personal safety:

1. Organic risk assessment
2. Gut feel
3. Early choices
4. Routine

1. Organic risk assessment

Organic risk assessment is more focused on assessing risk in the here and now, based on the signals we are picking up from our environment.

It is generally believed that a person who is new into a role is much better at identifying and assessing risk than somebody else who has been carrying out the same activity for a period of time who can sometimes become complacent.

2. Recognise and use your gut feel

No risk assessment can replace using our own senses to determine what feels safe, versus what feels wrong. This is often referred to as 'gut feel'.

Unfortunately, as adults we often silence our gut feeling in an attempt to intellectualise it. In personal safety terms, gut feel is one of the most important tools we have.

Remove yourself immediately from the situation if you feel unsafe, analyse later but your immediate safety is the priority.

3. Early choices

Early choices are conscious decisions we make about our personal safety that can help to protect us if we have a problem.

De-briefing people who have been involved in events where their personal safety has been compromised, and it is estimate that most, if not all, have expressed regrets about early choices they could have made – and didn't.

4. Routine

Routine is often described as the enemy of personal safety because it makes our behaviour predictable and reliable. Whilst reliability is often a prized characteristic, in safety terms it can make us vulnerable, particularly when an habitual activity is known to others.

Whilst it isn't always possible or practical to vary patterns a huge amount, when you are able to do so, change your routine so that you vary the time and places you do things.

Handling intimidation

Introduction

This document is not designed to alarm, but to suggest some steps you can undertake to protect yourself as a person in a public position, and how to respond should an incident occur.

The most important determining factor in deciding how to respond to intimidation is the impact it is having on you. Regardless of what others may think, if it is having an effect on you, then that is sufficient for you to take action.

Key points:

- Councillors are encouraged to keep a record of any intimidatory communication or behaviour
- Contact with unknown or anonymous individuals should be undertaken with care

General advice

Below are a suggested set of actions that you could undertake if you consider you are being subjected to intimidation:

- Make sure that your immediate safety is not at risk. Make sure you are safe.
- If possible, record or diarise the encounter or communication. In the case of an email or letter, you can copy or save it. A telephone call or face-to-face discussion and social media incident should be written in a diary as soon as possible after the event, recorded, screen-shot or saved. You can also take photos of damage or even a computer screen. Even if this is the first or only incident, others may also have been subjected to intimidation. A collective record is important if future action is

going to be taken. It is also important that incidents relating to the same individual or individuals should be recorded as such evidence could be critical should the matter gives rise to a criminal prosecution.

- Raise the incident with a view to discussing it or obtaining support from a nominated council officer and/or political group nominated person. This will also help you establish if others have been subjected to the same or similar intimidation.
- If a serious potential crime has occurred, it is advisable to formally report it to the council and/or to the police, particularly in the context of a serious threat to life or anticipated violence.
- If you are concerned about your personal safety, raise this with the council and the police so that there is a record of the impact the incident is having and review your own security and personal safety. This could include your personal or work activities and those of your family.
- Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, councils have a duty to safeguard their staff against potentially violent persons and BwDC maintain a Caution list with names of such parties. This will enable you to ascertain if the individual or individuals who have intimidated them are on the Caution List, if not; ensure that that their name is added using the appropriate processes.
- Every situation will be different, and it will need a personal judgement about whether it is worthwhile to pursue the incident, ignore it or politely acknowledge.
- If the letters or emails continue further steps may need to be considered such as advising the individual that such abuse will result in a referral to the police and the stopping of further correspondence.

Shield Principles

In addressing public intimidation, the LGA has developed the following SHIELD principles:

Safeguard – where possible, protect yourself online and in person. For example, set out in any online biography or page that abusive, threatening or intimidatory communication or actions will be reported, utilise security features, take personal safety precautions and have a point of contact in the local police for any incidents.

Help – in any situation ensure you are safe before you take further action and get help if needed. If the threat is not immediate, you can contact officers at the council who have been given the responsibility to support you or someone with that role from your political group.

Inform – you can inform the individual or group that you consider their communication or action as intimidating, threatening or abusive. There is a growing movement of ‘digital citizenship’, which encourages the labelling of poor online conduct as a way of challenging such behaviour.

Evidence – if you consider that a communication or action is intimidatory, threatening or abusive, gather evidence. For example, photos, recordings, screen-shots, letters, emails, details of witnesses, etc.

Let people know – report the incident to your social media platform/officers/party contact/lead member/the police, depending on the nature and severity of the incident(s). Be prepared that the police

and courts will look to determine if the incident is intimidation based on the theoretical opinion of the average person.

Decide – determine whether you want to continue receiving communications from the individual or group and block or mute if on social media where appropriate. Decide if you want to pursue any action to inhibit the ability of the individual or group to approach you.

Specific safety tips

A number of safety tips have been compiled from a variety of sources including guidance from councillors, which have been shared during training sessions. They relate to the different activities councillors are involved in as part of their role and come from the Police and from personal safety agencies. Most of the approaches are simply common sense. The full list can be found at the end of this document.

You must always check the Caution list located on the Intranet [here](#) prior to any visit or meeting with someone not known to you.

Incident reporting

If you are involved in an incident, or have concerns around an individual's behaviour, it is important to report this to the Democratic Services team.

An incident report must be completed as soon as possible after an event, whilst memories are fresh and so that issues can be investigated and appropriate action taken. This should be forwarded to the Health and Wellbeing team.

If the incident involves acts of a potential criminal nature the Police Authority have created a helpful guide to understanding what constitutes criminal acts and how you can report this. You can access this information by clicking the link below:

https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Joint-Guidance-for-Candidates-in-Elections.pdf

- This link provides information about common cyber attacks seen against those in politics, and suggests preventative measures <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-individuals-in-politics>.
Key Contact Information: Report an incident - report.ncsc.gov.uk or incidents@ncsc.gov.uk ;
Enquiries: enquiries@ncsc.gov.uk



Social Media companies have also provided guidance on online security and how to report incident. This guidance can be accessed using the links below

- Online Security Information for Candidates (Appendix 1)
Key Contact Information: Twitter: [@govuk@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/govuk); Facebook: [ukpol@fb.com](https://www.facebook.com/ukpol@fb.com);
Google and YouTube: [ukpublicpolicy@google.com](https://www.google.com/search?q=ukpublicpolicy@google.com)

Other sources of help

One of your key sources of help should be the council's safety procedures. These will include policies around Lone Working, and general support associated with safety in the councillor role.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is particularly well known for the quality of their advice. Their website is: <http://www.suzylamplugh.org>.

We also offer the following me-learning courses:

- Angry customers
- Assert yourself
- Challenging behaviour
- Dealing with Sensitive Issues
- Emotional abuse
- Handling complaints
- Handling difficult situations
- Managing challenging behaviour effectively
- Managing conflict
- Satisfying challenging customers
- Under pressure

These courses can be located on the Blackburn with Darwen Learning site [here](#) .

To view these courses go to the course library, select online courses and a list of all online courses will appear. The above courses can be searched for by using the search bar on the right hand side of the page.

And finally

Please remember, we live in a world where by far the majority of people are friendly and gentle, and where many kind acts go unnoticed and unreported.

Personal safety is about taking sensible steps to minimise risk, so that we are confident and comfortable in our councillor role.



Appendix 1

Online Security Information for Candidates

General Election 2019

Most social media companies provide advice about online security. This includes how to secure your account and how to report online abuse, intimidation and threats. Social media companies are taking steps to secure their platforms and users against misuse during the 2019 General Election.

Guidance and resources from platforms can be found here on the Internet

Association Website here:

<https://uk.internetassociation.org/blog/resource-for-parliamentary-candidates/>

Please also see specific guidance for candidates and their staff from Twitter, Facebook, Google and YouTube below.

Twitter

Safety is our priority; and more than 50% of Tweets we take action on for abuse are now proactively surfaced using technology. As we seek to further reduce the burden on victims, we also want to continue to partner with key stakeholders and ensure all candidates are provided with key information on our rules, reporting and safety tools. Below is some important information from Twitter regarding the General Election.

Username swaps: We can facilitate the swapping of your username for the election; and the freeze of your current username. This service is designed for MPs who are running for re-election. Please email govuk@twitter.com with your current username and desired username, and we will process as soon as possible.

Resources: Our short guides to campaigning and staying safe on Twitter are available on the Internet Association website.

Reporting:

Reporting in-app or via our website is the most efficient way of reporting potential violations of our rules - you can find further information here. The Partner Support Portal is an exclusive page in the Twitter Help Centre that provides elevated support to partner organisations. We have contacted the main political parties to ensure all key organisations not already on boarded are given the opportunity to join. Separately, we can be contacted by candidates via govuk@twitter.com with any questions; we would, however, advise users to report on Twitter directly first and then send through the case number. This will help expedite the process.

Webinars:

We will be holding webinars throughout November for candidates and campaigners covering Twitter best practice; security; safety; and Q&A. They will be held on 22nd November (12-1pm), 25th November (10-11am) and 28th November (1-2pm). If you are interested in attending, please email govuk@twitter.com, indicating which session you would like to attend.



Facebook

As a candidate standing in the upcoming general election, we wanted to share with you information on how to have a safe experience on the platform during the campaign, and how to report threatening or harassing content to us. To that end, please find below information on how to report via the platform, and via the dedicated reporting channel which is available to you as a candidate. This channel is for use by candidates and their staff to flag content of particular concern. We also want to highlight the Facebook Safety Guide for Page Admins, which provides guidance on protecting your own Page and the tools available to do so.

Reporting and removing content:

Every piece of content on Facebook and Instagram has a report button, and in addition to removing content that violates our community standards (what is and isn't allowed on Facebook) we refer cases to law enforcement when we become aware of an imminent threat. Our Community Operations teams are available 24/7, and we now have 35,000 people worldwide working on safety and security. We are also investing more in automated techniques for content removal to help us remove as much of this content as quickly and proactively as possible. To report via the platform, please use the report button, ensuring that you follow the process to the point of submitting a report after you have provided feedback.

Contacting Facebook and Instagram: As well as the report function available on every piece of content on Facebook and Instagram, we want to ensure you can raise any concerns around content to the Facebook Politics and Government Outreach team directly via this email address - ukpol@fb.com . Should you have any concerns relating to abuse or content on the platform and its impact on your role as a candidate. Please do not hesitate to get in touch via this channel. Included below is a template email which you can use when reporting content via this email address, to ensure it is able to be investigated as quickly as possible by our teams. This channel is for use by candidates and their staff only at present.

Managing your account and Page:

To help ensure that negative content does not appear on your Page in the first place we have developed a range of tools that allow public figures to moderate and filter the content that people put on their Pages. People who help manage Facebook Pages can hide or delete individual comments. They can also proactively moderate comments and posts by visitors by turning on the profanity filter, or blocking specific words or lists of words that they do not want to appear on their Page. Page admins can also remove or ban people from their Pages using the straightforward tools available to them as administrators. Details of how to apply these measures is included in the Safety Guide for Page Admins. We also have a publicly available website, www.facebook.com/gpa which provides insight and advice on best practice across a range of areas, including protecting account safety and security.

For issues including account verification, support on ads and general support on non-urgent issues, you have access to our dedicated support team. Please go to www.facebook.com/gpa/help and use the form to contact our support team directly.



Template for reporting via inbox:

Name:

Please give your full name

Title:

Please give your title: (e.g. x candidate for x constituency) what are you reporting? (Delete as appropriate)

- This user is harassing me
- I believe this user is harassing someone else
- I believe this user is a danger to me or someone else
- I believe this user is violating your Community Standards
- I believe this content has potential for real world harm

Please provide a brief description of the issue and why you believe it violates our community standards (outlined here):

Violation Link on Facebook or Instagram:

Please provide full URL links for our team to review (link to the actual page for a page review, link to the exact photo for a photo review). Please only provide links to Facebook content (We cannot act based on links or screenshots of content from other online providers) Screenshots for comments/posts/photos: Specific piece of content you are concerned about if you cannot find the link. If this is about ongoing user harassment, can you tell us when this harassment started? i.e. one week ago/one month ago

In the case of a long video, please provide exact time of abuse:

For example, graphic violence at 5.35mins, other context or links to external content:

Provide a reason or full context for the flagged content like a police reference, case number, and activity on other platforms or elsewhere on the Internet, media reports. Please let us know if this content has been reported before: Yes/No

How to provide URLs to us:

In order for us to accurately investigate your report, we need to understand the specific piece of content you believe to be in violation of our Community Standards. This can only be done if you provide the URL to the specific content at issue. URLs of posts, photos, videos or comments can be generated by clicking on the time or date on which content has been posted and then copying the link in the web bar at the top of the page. For example, sometimes pages may contain violating content, but it may be a particular post rather than the entire page that contains violating content. Therefore, in order for our team to investigate you can provide us with a URL to the specific post by following these instructions.

Google

Online security takes many forms: information security - protection against threats from those who want to access data maliciously or disrupt the flow of information – and personal security, against those who would use online platforms to target or abuse specific individuals. Whilst we know technology alone can't solve the issue, we invest in creating and maintaining the infrastructure to keep our users' accounts and websites secure, and to protect them from content that violates our guidelines. If you have a Google account, YouTube channel, or host a website, we would be delighted to offer you and your team in-person training on how the different features and measures we have developed work, for example:

How to protect your email against phishing attempts



By using our Advanced Protection Programme, this system uses a physical security key, to offer the most sophisticated protection yet against those who would try to access your data illegally. We would be happy to offer you your first key to enable you and your office to take advantage of this higher level of security.

How to protect your constituency website from DDoS attacks – digital attacks which can be used to take your website offline - by installing our Project Shield tool, which has been designed to address this kind of malicious attack and can be installed in approximately ten minutes.

How to access the enhanced moderation controls on YouTube, which help you manage comments on your channel. YouTube account holders can delete inappropriate comments and block a user so they can't view videos or leave more comments. Comments can also be turned off for any video by the uploader or managed by requiring pre-approval before they are posted publicly. We can also talk in detail about how to flag content that violates our Community Guidelines on YouTube, and the action that our teams take to ensure that our platform does not contain abusive content. We know that the abuse of people in public life is a concern to many in Parliament, and we have been actively working with partners including the Metropolitan Police and the Parliamentary Security Department to identify and respond to this issue. If a briefing on these issues would be of interest, or you would like a physical security key, please do get in touch on ukpublicpolicy@google.com

YouTube

At YouTube, we have Community Guidelines that set the rules of what is not allowed on the platform. We remove content that violates these guidelines, whether in videos or comments. Hate speech, predatory behaviour, graphic violence, malicious attacks and content that promotes harmful or dangerous behaviour isn't allowed on YouTube.

Among others, we have policies that cover:

Hate Speech: We remove content promoting violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on any of the following attributes: age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, nationality, race, immigration status, religion, sex/gender, sexual orientation, victims of a major violent event and their kin, and veteran status.

Harassment and Cyberbullying: Content or behaviour intended to maliciously harass, threaten or bully others is not allowed on YouTube.

Harmful or Dangerous Content: Content that aims to encourage dangerous or illegal activities that risk serious physical harm or death is not allowed on YouTube.

Please report content that violates our policies. Instructions for reporting violations of our Community Guidelines are available [here](#). If you need to report more than one piece of content or wish to submit a more detailed report for review, use the reporting tool. This can be used to highlight a user's comments, videos and provide additional information about any concerns. The in-product reporting tool can be used for targeted abuse.

Once content has been reported, YouTube's Trust & Safety team reviews it. Reviewers evaluate flagged videos against all our YouTube Community Guidelines and policies. If a video is found to violate our policies, it will be removed from YouTube. If a strike is particularly egregious or a whole channel is found in violation of YouTube's Community Guidelines, we may remove the channel and its videos immediately. Comments can be turned off for any video by the uploader or managed by requiring pre-approval before



they are posted publicly .Full details on the comment moderation features can be found here. You can also contact our team directly at ukpublicpolicy@google.com

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 16th July 2020

People: A good quality of life for all of our residents

Sport England Update

There has been a loud, positive and consistent message throughout the last 12 weeks: that being physically active is really important for individuals and can help in the fight against coronavirus. With gyms, swimming pools and all other leisure facilities closed, our beautiful parks and surrounding countryside saw more people walking and cycling. I hope that Blackburn with Darwen's £385,000 Emergency Active Travel fund allocation will create a lasting legacy to continue to encourage walking and cycling for our residents.

With many local sports clubs and organisations, having to close completely during the coronavirus pandemic Sport England recognised the very real and immediate challenge they faced launching the £35m Community Emergency Fund. I am very pleased to report that clubs across our borough secured £144,128 to help ensure they are there when restrictions ease and people return to structured sport and physical activity. An additional £13,000 has been allocated for organisations and voluntary groups who support those who struggle to be active. Working through the Local Delivery Pilot's ActiveBwD network immediate resource can be used to reduce physical activity inequalities.

Health and Wellbeing Update

On the 9th June, the Health and Wellbeing Board held its first meeting since the introduction of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams and enabled supportive and constructive dialogue with community partners.

The agenda was dominated by discussion of the Borough's response to the COVID-19 pandemic locally and plans for managing the next phase of the pandemic. Other items included an update on plans for a Pan-Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board, approval of the 2020 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and notification of deferment of the requirement to publish a new Pharmacy Needs Assessment by 12 months, from March 2021 to March 2022.

Health and Care Integration Update

These unprecedented times have forced us all to work in very different ways to ensure essential health, care and community services are available to all residents, especially those that are shielding within Blackburn with Darwen. Due to the brilliant Integrated Care partnerships that exist between Primary Care, Adult Social Care, Community Health and Voluntary Sector Services, we have been able to continue to make great progress whilst dealing with significant challenges.

By having access to virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams we are proud to have been able to recruit new staff in Adult Social Care, continue the weekly Integrated Neighbourhood Team Meetings (INTs), implement a successful project supporting homeless people and support the invaluable Care Home programme to ensure vulnerable people receive the best health, care and community support available.

Place: Community pride in a vibrant place to live and visit

Our Community, Our Future social integration programme

As we felt the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic locally ahead of the national lockdown, the Our Community, Our Future team cancelled many events and activities, and became a key part of the Council's crisis response. The team worked on the BwD Help Hub across a variety of vital roles: co-ordination and set-up, partner liaison, triage of requests, supporting vulnerable residents, and communications.

At the time of writing this report, we were awaiting confirmation of funding from MHCLG for Year 3 of our social integration programme. Prior to March, the programme manager had already begun to make plans for Year 3

projects that would build on the success of Year 2.

These plans were shared with the Our Community, Our Future Board, and as soon as funding is received, work will get underway.

Community Volunteers Awards

During the pandemic, we have seen an overwhelming response from local people and groups. It is incredibly comforting to know that we have the support of a wealth of wonderful volunteers who give their time and efforts freely to help others in need.

Blackburn with Darwen is blessed with many community groups and voluntary organisations that have helped vulnerable people by providing hot meals and food supplies, arranging shopping deliveries, offering transport to medical appointments, delivering medicines and making wellbeing calls.

The dedication of our borough's volunteers has not gone unnoticed and, on behalf of the Council, I thank them all.

The Community Volunteer Awards that we organise jointly with Blackburn with Darwen CVS unfortunately had to be postponed from June. This annual event to celebrate our amazing volunteers will go ahead, although a date and format has yet to be arranged.

Council: Delivered by a strong and resilient Council

Message of thanks to all Council staff, volunteers, residents and businesses

The coronavirus pandemic has changed all of our lives in a way that was unimaginable just a few months ago. It has also had a massive impact on all staff across the Council who have risen to the challenge and who continue to amaze me by their hard work and dedication. I want to thank every employee on behalf of residents and members for stepping up and responding to this crisis.

During these past weeks, we have shared on teamtalk numerous messages of gratitude received from residents that have helped lift our spirits in these difficult times. They show how much people appreciate what Council staff are doing across the borough to help them through the coronavirus pandemic.

We have had a tremendous response from our residents and volunteers, and have seen our communities come together. Our businesses have provided crucial support and resources contributing to our efforts to keep residents safe.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
DATE: 16 JULY 2020**

WASTE AND RECYCLING

During the lockdown period, the Environment team have maintained refuse and recycling services across the borough, despite the general waste tonnage in the burgundy bin increasing by up to 16%. The recycling from households increased by 5% during this time. Despite the increases, the collection crews serviced all properties on schedule.

The household waste recycling centres (HWRCs), after receiving Government advice and discussion with the Lancashire Resilience Forum, were opened up on 18th May, along with the other sites across Lancashire. The service was opened with social distancing in mind, which saw a number of bays at the sites reduced, the temporary opening on closure days to receive permit users at the sites, plus also the introduction of a booking system for users, which has proven very popular with residents, given the high number of compliments received. With effect from 2 July, we have increased the number of booking opportunities at the HWRCs by 50%, by moving the slot times from 30 minutes to 20 minutes. When comparing the service reopening to other waste disposal authorities, we have also been able to accept all waste types, which others have not been able to do.

Despite the Covid restrictions, the blue bins for paper and cardboard have started to be delivered across the borough and it is anticipated that all the bins will all be delivered for the end of July, to enable collections to commence from August. A new calendar is due to be issued to residents, before collections commence.

With the Covid restrictions being reduced, we have encountered a significant increase from late May in littering and flytipping, despite the Council having provided continued emptying of litterbins plus waste and recycling services throughout Covid period.

PARKS ANDS OPEN SPACES

The sites have remained open to pedestrian access for the whole of the Covid period, with vehicle access becoming readily available from May. The sites have suffered from excessive littering, despite again the litterbins being emptied on a regular basis.

Play areas have remained closed since March but will re-open from 4th July in line with Government guidance.

CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA

Burials and cremations have been managed in accordance with Government legislation and also the Lancashire Resilience Forum advice. This has seen the Council review regularly the numbers able to attend the services and increase the numbers in accordance with guidance and legislation.

Additionally, the Council has introduced webcasting of cremations for those unable to attend the service, plus also allow the filming of burials for sharing with families and friends.

PARKING SERVICES

Enforcement during Covid

In terms of parking enforcement since the commencement of the Covid lockdown we have taken our advice on what we should and shouldn't be doing from the paper 'Local Authority Parking and Traffic Management Operational Advice during Covid 19'. We have therefore since the 23rd March, only issued Penalty Charge Notices to vehicles which are parked on double yellow lines, blips on kerbs, or what we consider in a dangerous manner to either other motorists or the public. All other parking restrictions have been lifted

Benefits of Parking Enforcement during the lockdown

Parking management is an important public service, which provides benefits to motorists and the wider community. Those benefits include maintaining road safety and ensuring access to goods and services. This is extremely important, particularly for certain key workers, as local authorities aim to keep providing essential services at this challenging time.

Old Bank Lane

In line with the East Lancashire Hospital Trust, we lifted the barriers on Old Bank Lane car park on the 24th March 2020 to allow free parking for any workers or anyone visiting the hospital during the lockdown.

Whilst the car park has been closed it has been used as a testing facility for key workers who may have symptoms of Covid, this was set up and opened on the 29th April and has capacity to do 200 swabs a day.

It is planned that this site will become a public testing centre from the 6th July, primarily for people who live and work in Blackburn and Darwen and will have the capacity to provide up to 1000 tests per day.

PUBLIC PROTECTION & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

PP&EH have been involved in some key areas of work connected with the Council's response to the Covid – 19 pandemic. This has included:

- Enforcement of the requirement for certain types of premises to close down. The vast majority of businesses that needed to close did so; but in line with Government guidance a graduated approach to enforcing these provisions has been taken with only a very small number of Prohibition Notices having to be issued to premises open when they ought not to be.
- Dealing with complaints and requests for advice and guidance about social distancing within businesses
- Food officers have been providing hygiene advice to volunteers providing food to the vulnerable during the lockdown
- Food safety checks have continued using novel methods of working
- There has been an increase in the number of investigations into greater numbers of complaints about illegal burning and noise complaints
- Trading Standards officers have disseminated scams leaflets to vulnerable people in the food support packages issued by the Food Hub. They have also been checking whether sanitiser and PPE sold to consumers in the Borough are legitimate.
- Preparations are being made for local contact tracing
- Working with the taxi trade to identify safer ways of working

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTORS: DOMINIC HARRISON &
MARTIN EDEN
DATE: July 2020

PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents

Leisure, Health and Wellbeing

Closing the front doors has not meant that services have closed. Teams have worked creatively with customers to ensure residents and staff have access to the health and wellbeing services that they continue to value.

Healthy Lifestyles & Wellbeing Service – With the pausing of 100+ weekly activity sessions the immediate response from the Wellbeing Service and re:fresh teams was to shift to a new way of working and to offer support and guidance in new ways. A new comprehensive website and You Tube channel were created specifically targeting people who are inactive, and with health conditions. Digital solutions have enabled 1-1 telephone assessments, live on-line classes and on-going support to help keep people safe, healthy and well. The clinical team have successfully supported those shielding or self-isolating to stay active with digital recordings of heart rate and blood pressure sent through a secure App. Low tech ‘window appointments’, complying with social distancing have maintained contact for those not wanting to ‘go digital’.

Venues – With doors to theatres closed, artists quickly moved to online platforms for their performances. The KGH team created ‘Lockdown Live’ - a 20 minute Sunday evening online showcase sharing what performers were doing during lockdown; local stories and performances by local students, and bands mixed with national and international names who have had to postpone their gigs at KGH. These free sessions have received thousands of views and are helping to maintain relationships with artists and audiences.

Libraries – The service has seen uptake for digital e-reader content increase by over 70% since March. Investment into additional titles and available downloads has been made to meet demand. For those in isolation or living alone the Home Delivery service has remained an invaluable connection. Over 470 doorstep book deliveries have been made. For younger library users the online story-times have been really popular as have the wellbeing sessions and online reading group.

The new Call and Collect Service provides a new way to access books and helps all ages to keep reading.

We reopened in Blackburn on Monday 6th July, with positive feedback. Thanks to all of the staff for their work in preparing for this and in ensuring a smooth reopening, albeit with some restrictions to services. Darwen reopened and welcomed people back in on Monday 13th July.

Arts Services - Local organisations and artists have been successful in gaining emergency funding from the Arts Council to support them in continuing work throughout the lockdown period. The Bureau Centre for the Arts, Festival of Light and Prism Gallery & Studios have all received funding in this period. This has allowed them to carry on delivering programmes of work such as a virtual Place of Welcome, zoom drumming and circus skills classes and for the 10 artists based in Prism studios to create new works in response to the lockdown period. This work will be shown in the gallery in the Autumn

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery - has secured funding for the Kick down the Barriers programme of work; working with local artists, photographers and writers will create a new archive and collection recording the borough through lockdown. The project includes a photographer who has captured key workers and families on their doorsteps in Ewood, a written record of Eid and Ramadan and street paintings of Audley Range. This work will form part of an exhibition opening in September and then be part of the permanent collections of the Museum.

The Museum reopens on 15th July with a new booking system in place. This will give visitors a couple of weeks to see the exhibition which opened just before lockdown and has been featured through blogs throughout the past 3 months gaining huge followings.

Creative Connections is Blackburn with Darwen's local cultural education partnership and brings together schools, youth providers and cultural organisations; it has been chosen to distribute **Lets create – creative boxes** to children and young people in our borough. The group have chosen to focus these giveaways which will include art materials and mental health and digital resources to support those moving from primary to secondary school this summer.

Leisure Services – staff continue to be deployed across the council to support a broad range of departments and services as part of the local Covid-19 response.

As announcements are awaited for a re-opening date management and staff are preparing leisure centres in line with covid-secure guidance. Engagement with customers via direct email messaging and social media has increased focusing on providing information on how services are likely to operate when doors open and key behaviours customers will need to adopt.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE

COUNCILLOR MUSTAFA DESAI

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING DIRECTOR:
SAYYED OSMAN (ADULT SOCIAL CARE & PREVENTION)**

DATE: July 2020

People: A good quality of life for all our residents

SAFE RESUMPTION OF DAY SUPPORT AND SHORT BREAKS

Planned Day Services and Short Breaks at St Aidans and within Shared Lives, were amongst the services temporarily halted at the outset of the pandemic.

Although, day support for families and carers who are keyworkers continued, as did emergency day support and respite to prevent carer breakdown at home. In addition, Shared Lives matching continued where it was possible to conduct meetings virtually.

Plans are now underway to resume much of the pre Covid transformation work for Specialist Day Services, Shared Lives and Short Breaks, with particular attention being attributed to the relevant Government and Public Health guidance. This will require a degree of additional conversion to ensure all services are safe and effective.

During Covid, a decision was made to handover Stansfeld Centre to Primary Care in support of their planning of safe, clinical health practices following Government guidelines to reduce the spread of infection to patients of BwD. This has provided an opportunity to commence the necessary adaptations to Hopwood Court to ensure that the estate is fit for purpose for those service users with the greatest need. This work remains ongoing with a likely open date of September.

A new Framework and Guidance Document is in preparation for the resumption of such services, which will ensure that a consistent approach is taken across the borough. Consultation with all partners, service users, their families/Cares and Shared Lives Carers is currently taking place to ascertain their views about the introduction of safe services and subsequent analysis will take place to ensure that we offer a variety of safe support offers within peoples own homes, around the community and within the safe opening of estates.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE NEIGHBOURHOODS TEAMS

The Adult Social Care Neighbourhood teams have continued to fulfil our statutory responsibilities, despite significant restrictions on movement and face-to-face contact. Assessment, review and commissioned packages of care have been achieved following government and corporate advice in respect of social distancing and PPE. Teams have embraced digital techniques of maintaining communication and relationships with our residents, partners and each other to deliver support.

The Neighbourhood teams remain co-located with health colleagues and partnership working continues to champion joined up care; our integrated neighbourhood teams have continued to meet virtually to ensure service delivery. Our occupational therapy and the Disabled Facilities Grant offer will recommence as shielding and social distancing restrictions ease allowing building work to get underway.

Team members have demonstrated flexibility and resilience and supported each other to adapt to remote working. Departmental wellbeing initiatives have been promoted and teams have remained connected via department quizzes, raising monies for local charities and partaking in virtual team coffee mornings. There continues to be a sense of camaraderie and responsibility to deliver care and support despite significant changes to working practice.

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING

We have worked closely with the Regulated Care, Domiciliary Care and supported living sector to support them throughout COVID19. This includes payment of additional funding to promote Infection Prevention and Control (IPC).

There has been close, almost daily liaison to provide information, guidance and support. This includes additional training, support from quality assurance team and IPC nurses.

Throughout we have ensured that PPE is available and have supported the distribution of stock from the Government's emergency supply and from supplies we have purchased through the Local Resilience Forum.

The council has worked closely with Pennine Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group and the NHS Acute Trust to ensure that we have a well co-ordinated testing process. Whilst having sufficient testing kits and capacity was an initial challenge things have improved.

We have also worked closely with Lancashire County Council to use consistent tracking information to ensure that we have up to date situation reports for the Care sector.

There continues to be a focus on ensuring the Care sector remains supported and viable.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Whilst we have seen an emphasis on the over 70's and Shielding categories the council has also focused on other vulnerable groups from a social care perspective. These include homeless single adults, mental health, learning disability and autism groups.

The council has used a similar approach to the regulated care sector to ensure that all vulnerable groups are given the best support possible

In particular the Government has required councils to rehouse homeless people temporarily in hotels and to focus on resettling these people into more permanent accommodation. Whilst some of these Government schemes have now ended we continue to see a high demand from single homeless people.

As we come out of lockdown mental health and emotional wellbeing is an area of work that is in high demand. Many people have not coped with the long lockdown period and are feeling anxious about the easing of lockdown, whilst others have started to display symptoms suggesting underlying mental and emotional health issues.

The council works closely with Lancashire MIND and other voluntary groups to provide ongoing support to our communities. There has been a tremendous effort through the Help HUB and as we move towards easing lockdown, the HUB will concentrate more on wellbeing rather than food.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

16th July 2020

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING

CHIEF OFFICER: PAUL FLEMING

People: A good quality of life for all our residents

Digital Customer Portal (DCP)

The DCP has supported the Council's Help Hub through three iterations of changes and improvements now since its launch in late March and is now the case management system for Neighbourhoods as the Help Hub moves into a new phase, building on its success. This has been a hugely successful collaborative piece of work across several departments with over 3500 Help Hub forms completed on the DCP.

The HWRC booking system, launched in May, also utilises the functionality of the DCP and has already gone through two iterations of changes, most recently moving from 30 minute to 20 minute booking slots for residents. The booking system, demonstrates how the DCP is playing its part in providing safer services for staff and residents and we've had over 11500 forms completed online.

The system has also provided COVID-19 digital application forms for Business Grants and assessments for Discretionary Grants. There have been more than 5000 forms completed by business online.

In total over 21,000 requests have been logged through the DCP, with 70% of these being done by residents online. The remaining 30% were predominantly telephone enquiries to the Council's Customer Services dedicated Help Hub number. 12,000 new accounts have been created on the new digital platform, which provides a good foundation for promoting the platform later in the year, once it has been further developed. The Project Board will be prioritising the next transformational piece of work, which will incorporate designing services with user and resident research. Agile delivery of work will continue which allows the project to be fluid and react to change as required.

Customer Services

Darwen and Blackburn Town Halls are scheduled to reopen on the 13th July. All appropriate safety measures have been taken to ensure the safety of both staff and members of the public. Whilst we will be providing a significant number of services from the facilities, we are still asking customers to use online and telephone options where possible. Following advice from the Council's Health and Safety Team we will not be providing access to the Town Hall's public access PC's or telephones.

Due to the social distancing guidance, the number of customers accessing Blackburn Town Hall at any one time will also be restricted, as a consequence, it will be necessary to queue customers outside of the building.

Registrars

The new telephone process for registering deaths has worked well through the pandemic. Whilst there has been an increase in the numbers of deaths registered, fortunately this has not been as significant as originally forecast and as such the service has been able to cope, particularly given the additional resources redeployed from other areas of the council. In readiness for the expected increase, 8 staff were trained and worked within the Registrars Team over the period, thereby ensuring a 7 day-a-week service.

It is anticipated that the registration of births, and the ability to hold wedding ceremonies will be recommenced on 20th July. To reduce the footfall within Blackburn Town Hall these services will be delivered in the short term out of the Northgate suite. This facility has significantly more space and is therefore more able to accommodate the larger family groups that tend to accompany birth registrations.

Advice Services

It is expected that the number of customers seeking access to the Advice Service will increase significantly as the furloughing scheme is reduced and job losses increase. We are currently in discussions with Shelter to ensure the safe opening of the service, however no date has yet been agreed.

Digital integration of Health & Social Care

Work has restarted around digital support for discharge from hospital to Social Care and around digitally integrating NHS and Social Care records. Work was paused in March due to COVID-19. The go live for integrated records is now estimated for September 2020 and the deadline for the digital discharge project is March 2021.

Council: Delivered by a strong resilient Council

Support for remote working and communications

Digital systems were upgraded in the first phase of COVID-19 to support the majority of the workforce to work from home and remotely. This ensured that critical services to residents could continue to operate safely. Up to 70% of the workforce have worked remotely at any one time through the pandemic.

The migration to Microsoft Office 365 email was completed during the first phase of COVID-19, with Councillors and Chief Officers moving across to the new system. This has enabled improved resilience as well as easier smart phone access to key communications systems.

The Digital Team have rolled out the Microsoft Teams product to all areas of the Council. This has enabled around 10,000 virtual meetings to take place remotely during the crisis. The Digital Team have also supported Democratic Services and Councillors to enable virtual Council meetings to take place using Microsoft Teams Live events. We have replaced Android tablets for councillors with laptop computers as well as replacing some smartphones to improve efficiency and experience of systems.

The team have continued to blog about their work [here](#), working openly in accordance with our commitment to the Local Digital Declaration, which the Council signed up to in February 2019.

Business Intelligence

The Digital Team have continued to work across the organisation to improve Business Intelligence by building data dashboards for COVID-19, which have enabled senior officers to track data such as cases, death rates, Help Hub demand, school attendance and key workforce data on a 24/7 basis.

Improving Digital Infrastructure and Technical Services

The Director of Digital & Business Change has commissioned reviews to help the council to improve technology service provision and to develop a future-proofed technology infrastructure vision. This will see increasing numbers of systems moving to Cloud technology over time. The outcomes will be improved organisational resilience and agility as well as increased ability to support Council services to deliver high quality services to residents.

Resilience & Emergency Planning Service

The Council has been in response to Covid-19 crisis since March 2020 and is working with its Lancashire and regional partners to effect a good effective response for its Community and employees.

Whilst BwD has been in this response mode we have also responded to floods, fires etc, We have committed to completely reviewing the Corporate Business Continuity plan to ensure its validity in case of a second wave of Covid-19

We will be working with schools in the new academic year in resilience planning.

Complaints

The Team have been working on Complaints, MP enquiries and the planning of the new Canvass Reform during the lockdown period. We have seen a 20% increase in MP enquiries for this period compared to the same period last year.

We have received 120 enquiries for Quarter 1 2020 (1st April 2020 – 30th June 2020) compared to the 95 enquiries received for the same period last year.

Given the nature of the enquiries, this is as result of the uncertainty around new Government legislations being introduced on a frequent basis during this difficult period. The team have worked hard with Managers across all services to ensure that responses have been provided within timescales wherever possible.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE 16th July 2020

COUNCILLOR VICKY McGURK

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: LOUISE MATTINSON

People: A good quality of life for all our residents

Council Tax

The last 3 months has seen the Council Tax team proactively assisting customers with the deferral of instalments and promoting reductions where applicable. The month of June has seen the recommencement of recovery action with several thousand reminders being issued to those customers in arrears. At all interactions with customers, the team has looked to identify financial difficulty and promote the council's advice service.

Benefits

It is not surprising that there has been a significant increase in the number of Council Tax Support claims, and changes to circumstances for existing claims. Whilst the number of claims has stabilised in June, we are expecting additional work coming into the team once furloughing reduces. This coincides with the Department of Work and Pensions expectations who are planning for further increases in Universal Credit from August to December.

Business Rates

The Government Grants for certain businesses in the borough has been a significant piece of work for the team. In total, 3609 grants have been paid, totalling £39,600,000.

All businesses entitled to the expanded retail relief have also received their new bill for the financial year 2020/21.

In line with the Council Tax team, Business Rates have also recommenced recovery action and issued several hundred reminder notices.

Council: Delivered by a strong and resilient council

Financial Services

External audit have now commenced their annual review of our accounts with the intention of concluding the audit by 30th September. The publication date for final, audited, accounts has been moved to 30 November 2020 for all local authority bodies as a result of the COVID 19 crisis.

The team is supporting the Growth portfolio in the payment of the COVID 19 discretionary business grants, this scheme is designed to support small and micro businesses with fixed property costs that are not eligible for the other business support grants made available by the Government.

Audit & Assurance

The draft 2020/21 annual internal audit plan will be presented to the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 29 July for approval. The plan sets out the work that the Audit & Assurance Team will carry out during 2020/21 to support the Section 151 Officer's statutory obligations to maintain an adequate and effective internal audit of the Council's accounting records and systems of internal control, governance and risk management. A progress report summarising the internal audit outcomes achieved to the end of May will also be presented.

In addition, the Committee will receive the 2019/20 Annual Internal Audit Opinion, Risk Management and Counter Fraud Reports for consideration. The detail within these reports helps to inform the draft 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement, which the Committee will also receive, to enable it to be satisfied that the Statement properly reflects the governance and control arrangements in place within the Council during 2019/20. It will then be presented to the Leader

and the Chief Executive for signature and included in the Council's 2019/20 Statement of Accounts.

Contracts & Procurement

The Contracts and Procurement Team have now completed their work on securing supplies for the Food Hub, managing stock levels to ensure there has been enough supply to meet demand through to the end of the project.

Working with colleagues in other departments, the Team have worked hard in managing the logistical and distribution arrangements for the Council's supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ensuring Council services, care providers and local schools have the PPE that they need.

The Team have also been progressing a number of other procurements, including new audio visual equipment for the Council Chamber, plumbing supplies for Disabled Facilities Grant works, weather stations for the Highways department and also for the resurfacing of carriageways and supply of recycling bins.

HR, Legal & Governance

As set out elsewhere on this agenda the HR, Legal & Governance Team have been supporting the response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This has included important activity in support of Health and Wellbeing of Employees and others, ensuring the Council's legal obligations in support of Statutory Services continue to be met and facilitating effective and continued local democracy.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY
DATE: 16 JULY 2020**

This report provides a brief update on progress with key development priorities in this reporting period.

Place Priority 4: Connected Communities

Growth Deal Transport Schemes

The Council is now into the final year of delivery of Government's "Local Growth Fund 3" transport infrastructure programme. The South East Blackburn package commenced pre-start works in February with ecological surveys, site clearance and set-up, tree felling and hedge removal all undertaken. Progress on diversion and protection of statutory utilities has also been made since February on sections of Haslingden Road.

The scheme has been disrupted by COVID-19 which has effected civil engineering and construction schemes across the Country. Highways construction works have now recommenced with the widening of Haslingden Road and the creation of a new link road between Roman Road and Guide progressing simultaneously. The project will address congestion, improve air quality and pedestrian facilities, and enable further development of employment and housing opportunities in the South East Blackburn area.

Additional Local Transport Plan infrastructure funding

The first tranche of the Department for Transport's £225M COVID-19 Emergency Active Travel Fund has been confirmed, with Blackburn with Darwen receiving the full £77,000 allocation. The project aims to build on the public's desire to get out in the Borough to walk and cycle in order to make sustainable transport journeys as part of healthier lifestyles.

The Witton Park to Blackburn Town Centre "Stride and Ride Corridor" scheme will provide a permanent safe walking and cycling route from Witton Park to Blackburn Town Centre through a mix of permanent cycle lanes, thermoplastic distancing signage, and the use of bolt-down lane separation.

The Council will work with schools along the corridor and Blackburn College to promote the scheme which gives a great opportunity to encourage safer walking and cycling, reduce traffic and increase road safety. The project is supported by the current DfT Access Fund "Connecting East Lancashire" project.

Place Priority 5: Safe and Clean Environment

Highways Capital Improvements

The Highways capital improvement road treatment and resurfacing programme is currently out to tender and we hope to have delivered all sites

by September 2020. We are still finalising our intended programme for delivery of more schemes from the additional Pothole Action Fund and once approved, we plan to have the repairs completed by the end of March 2021.

Flooding

Unfortunately several areas of Blackburn were affected with flooding following very heavy rain on the evening of Tuesday 16th June, leading to 30 residents and businesses suffering from internal flooding. We continue to assist our residents to recover and have commenced investigations working collaboratively with partners from United Utilities and the Environment Agency.

Place Priority 6: Strong, Growing Economy to Enable Social Mobility

Growth Programme

An updated Growth Programme for 2020/21, taking into consideration the impacts of the COVID-19 and focusing on economic recovery, informed by Government's approach which will be set out in the coming weeks, will be taken to a future Executive Board for approval in the Autumn.

Darwen Town Deal Update

The second Darwen Town Deal Board Meeting was held (virtually) on 26 June. The Board, chaired by Wayne Wild, were updated on progress and considered and approved the appointment of consultants to develop the Darwen Town Investment Plan (TIP). The Board agreed the need to develop and submit the strongest possible TIP by January 2021. There are earlier opportunities to submit our TIP, but given the scale of the task and the quality of submission required to maximise Government support, completing this task by the end of this year seems like the right approach.

It should be noted that we are not in competition with other Town Deal areas with regard to securing new Government investment of up to £25M for Darwen and submitting in January will not put us at any detriment.

Government has recently announced that £750,000 will be allocated to our Town Deal to support the early delivery of project priorities that will feature in the Board's TIP. The Board will be required to update Government in the coming weeks and identify early priorities for investment.

Blakey Moor / Northgate

The planning application for Blakey Moor Terrace has been submitted by architects, Group Ginger, on behalf of the Council. The application for conversion of the Terrace to 2 units including new through access and public realm improvements to the rear, included detailed design and new visuals and will come to July Planning Committee. Although COVID-19 has delayed planned works on Northgate and Lord Street West, schemes are still being progressed and it is hoped that designs for a number of properties will be coming forward to planning in the coming months for private sector schemes on Northgate.

Blackburn and Darwen Town Centre Updates

Although our Town Centres have been open for essential services and retail throughout the lockdown period, non-essential retail re-opened on the 15th June. The Mall, markets and other retailers had to comply with COVID-19 safe requirements and undertake risk assessments, as set out by Government. The Town Centres opened safely and although busy in the first week, footfall is at least 50% down on previous years with many customers still not ready to return with footfall significantly affected by employers encouraging staff to work from home.

The hospitality industry opened on Saturday, 4 July with around 50% of bars and restaurants in Blackburn town centre with more re-opening in Darwen. Significant restrictions have been placed on these outlets despite social distancing requirements reducing to “1m plus” though it is expected to take time before all customers have the confidence to return to our Town Centres.

Housing Developments

Following completion of a joint marketing exercise and an Informal Tender, a housing developer has been selected to purchase the Council land at Ellison Fold Way in Darwen, and to take forward a detailed planning application for a residential development in late 2020, which will include the adjacent privately-owned land and deliver a combined total of around 320 new family dwellings.

Seddon are scheduled to commence development in August, for the first phase of the Griffin clearance site to provide 56 new homes. Development has also recently commenced by Great Places, who are building new affordable homes at Bowen Street and Shorrocks Lane (former Laneside Care Home) in Mill Hill.

A new Masterplan for the development of the Bank Hey major housing site in Blackburn was adopted by the Executive Board in June. A planning application for development of the first phase is expected later this year.

The Council’s first online Planning & Highways Committee Meeting took place in June, during which planning permission was granted for 435 new high-quality dwellings at the award-winning Gib Lane major housing site. Planning permission is now in place for the whole Gib Lane Masterplan site, which was allocated for development in the Council’s current Local Plan.

Commercial Developments

Progress is continuing to be made at the Milking Lane development site, which the Council is progressing as part of the Council’s Joint Venture Company – Barnfield Blackburn Ltd. Planning permission has been secured for the new link road through the site (and outline permission for the development plots). Planning conditions are to be discharged next month to enable a start on site in August, with completion of the road in 2021.

Following the success of the Milking Lane Joint Venture in bringing forward a long-term stalled brownfield site, the Council’s July Executive Board has been asked to consider the addition of a new site to the Joint Venture portfolio – the

site at Chapels South in Darwen which is allocated for employment development.

One Public Estate (OPE)

There has been a further delay with the launch of the next OPE funding round (OPE 8) due to COVID-19 and funding is now expected to be considered as part of the next Government Spending Review, although there are no definite timescales. There is likely to be an emphasis on projects which support post COVID-19 economic recovery and Net Zero Carbon initiatives.

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION
COUNCILLOR JULIE GUNN
PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: JAYNE IVORY
DATE: July 2020**

PEOPLE: A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OUR RESIDENTS

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

Our Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) continues to offer a consistent service to our partners and communities. We have just completed the CADS six month review and the impact of this change continues to be felt in a positive way by the service, and by partners who have an opportunity of speaking with a qualified social worker who determines what the required response should be. The total number of cases open to Children's Social Care is 1,475, this is a reduction from last year and puts our service more in line with our statistical neighbours. The number of children subject to child protection plans is 222 and the number of Children in our Care is 409, with numbers of children in our care having been relatively stable over the last 12 months. In addition, 860 children are being supported by Early Help Services and our partners. 26 children have been adopted since April 2019 and 24 children are currently placed in adoptive placements.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Over the Covid 19 period Adolescent Services have continued to deliver face to face work to the YP identified as most vulnerable during this period. The team have developed a number of innovative ways of delivering services whilst maintaining social distancing (1-1 cycling, nature walks, bush craft skills, outdoor fitness challenges etc.)

Other YP have been contacted weekly (minimum) via skype/tel and in some cases this has proved a very successful alternative, with some YP preferring this communication method when discussing their issues and behaviours and working through challenges..

Earlier this year the Youth Justice Service and the Engage Team co-ordinated and participated in a number of multi-agency meetings to develop a response to a group of young people in and around the Darwen town centre who had repeatedly come to the negative attention of the Police. Following involvement and intervention with some of the individuals involved, it became apparent that there were significant concerns around the welfare of some of these young people in the context of them being exploited, or there being significant potential for this given their vulnerabilities. Following a 'peer mapping' exercise completed by the Engage Team and the sharing of information with Police colleagues, this contributed to a large-scale Police operation. Through this, a number of adults, regarded as being key operators in the supply of drugs in the area, were arrested. The role of the services has been acknowledged by Police colleagues as being extremely significant in the success of this operation, highlighting extremely effective multi-agency working to provide better outcomes for the young people of Darwen and undoubtedly for the local community as a whole.

<https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/18543412.18-blackburn-darwen-charged-major-drug-operation/>

The SEND Inclusion team has continued to deliver term time and holiday offers. The team devised a programme of simultaneous 1-1 sessions that has enabled the service to offer half and full day provision throughout Easter and May holidays, which has received lots of very positive feedback from parents during this period.

YPS has secured HAF (Holiday Activity Fund) funding to enable the service to expand its offer to this cohort and will offer an all-day 1-1 offer for the 5-19 years cohort for the full 6 weeks holiday term. All YP will receive the offer of a meal too.

If guidance allows YPS will look to offer as many places as is possible whilst remaining within guidance.

YPS have also secured HAF funding to allow it to deliver a TYS specific summer offer. The Targeted Youth Support team will offer 30 places per day for 4 hours a day for 4 weeks, increasing it's targeted offer significantly. Young people will be taken on a range of activities and will all receive a meal each.

YPS has continued to deliver vehicle only detached youth work throughout the Covid period and now that government guidance allows for more interaction outside has launched a 7-day detached youth work offer commencing on June 15th 2020.

Offering 3 hours per session, the detached team will pass on key public health messages as well as signposting YP to help and support, challenging them around behaviour and informing them of new opportunities as the service awaits opening of Youth Centres to begin to offer group work and activities again.

PERMANENCE SERVICES

Looked after children, care leavers and children with disabilities were all RAG rated at the start of Covid to ensure that the most vulnerable were identified and provided with the highest levels of support. The most vulnerable have continued to receive direct visits and all children have enjoyed enhanced virtual and telephone contact by social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and the Virtual School. The additional support has helped to sustain placements that might otherwise have disrupted and feedback from children and carers is that they have felt well supported. Some children who struggled to manage virtual contact at the beginning have become much more confident with it and some have indicated that they prefer it to direct contact. Overall, children in care and care leavers have coped much better with lockdown than anticipated and placement stability has been good.

Foster carers have been provided with some additional financial support and with Pupil Premium money to help them to purchase appropriate resources to help with home schooling and again feedback is that the extra help has been appreciated and they feel that the additional pressure of home schooling and managing children at home 24/7 has been acknowledged. Most children are once again having appropriate direct contact with their birth families which they missed during lockdown. The Revive Service continued to offer virtual support around emotional health and well being and although some children have really struggled with this during lockdown, with support they have got through it and more of them are now attending school and getting back to some sense of normality.

Children with disabilities have been particularly vulnerable during lockdown, particularly those with significant health needs. Children were RAG rated and the CwD team worked with the CCG to ensure that packages of care and support remained in place wherever possible. Some care providers offered practical support such as shopping, fetching medication etc where families have been shielding or self isolating. Appletrees have

focussed the short breaks offer for children with autism without additional health needs to ensure that those vulnerable to entering care were helped to maintain their place in the family. This support has been successful and no new children with disabilities have come into care.