

Council Forum

Thursday, 28th January, 2021

6.00 pm

Virtual Meeting

[Join Here](#)

AGENDA

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain**
3. **Minutes of the Policy Council Meeting held on 3rd December 2020**
Policy Council December 2020 5 - 10
4. **Declarations of Interest**
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FORM 11
5. **Mayoral Communications**
6. **Council Forum**
To consider any questions from members of the public received under Procedure Rule 12.
7. **Motions**
To consider Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.
One Motion has been submitted as follows:

No cuts to Universal Credit – let families keep the £20 increase

Aim: To maintain the income of low and middle income families.

This Council notes:

Next April the government plans to cut the benefit level for millions of claimants by ending the time limited increase to the basic rate of Universal

Credit (and the tax credit equivalent) announced by the Chancellor on 20th March as part of his pandemic response package.

The £20 a week boost reflected the reality that the level of benefits were not adequate to protect the swiftly increasing number of households relying on them as the crisis hit. Exactly because that increase was a very significant and welcome move to bolster low- and middle-income families' living standards, its removal will be a huge loss.

Pressing ahead would see the level of unemployment support fall to its lowest real-terms level, since 1990-91, and it's lowest ever relative to average earnings. Indeed, the basic level of out-of-work support prior to the March boost was – at £73 a week (£3,800 a year) – less than half the absolute poverty line.

The increase in benefits has had a positive effect on the lives of thousands of local claimants who are better able to pay for life's essentials such as food, clothing and utilities, many of which have increased for families as children are once again learning from home.

The local economy has also benefited from the increase in benefit levels as claimants spend their money locally thereby supporting local businesses and jobs.

That this matter was debated in the House of Commons on 19th January and a non-binding motion was passed calling for the extension of the £20 increase to Universal Credit beyond 31st March 2021.

This Council requests the Chief Executive to:

Write to the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak and to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson demanding that the £20 increase to Universal Credit is made permanent and extended to claimants on legacy benefits.

Write to both Blackburn and Darwen and Rossendale MPs and also write to Rishi Sunak and to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson demanding that the £20 increase to Universal Credit is made permanent and extended to claimants on legacy benefits.

Moved by: Councillor Vicky McGurk

Seconded by: Councillor Maureen Bateson

8.	Review of Petitions Scheme	
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9.	Community Governance Review - Update	
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	Livesey Parish.draft Order 2021	
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10.	Updates from other Committees	
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	To receive a joint report from the Chairs of the PEOPLE, PLACE, Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committees.	
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12.	Questions from Members	
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13.	Year Planner 2021-2022	
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	To note the final version of the Year Planner for 2021/2022, a draft of which was submitted to the Policy Council meeting in December 2020.	

PART 2: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

Date Published: Wednesday, 20 January 2021
Denise Park, Chief Executive

POLICY COUNCIL
Thursday, 3rd December 2020

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

RESOLUTIONS

33 Welcome and Apologies

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting and the Mayor advised how the remote meeting would operate.

Apologies were received from Councillors N Slater, Ju Slater, Akhtar H, Fazal and Marrow.

34 Minutes Of The Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Council Forum meeting held on 1st October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chair of the Standards Committee, Councillor Saima Afzal, reported that further to the update on appointment of Independent Persons at the last meeting (Minute No.30), following recent interviews Alan Eastwood had been reappointed as an Independent Person, and that the other Independent Person appointed was Miranda Carruthers Watt, and asked the Policy Council to note the appointments, which were for a four year term, effective from 3rd December 2020.

35 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

36 Motions under Procedure 12

The Chief Executive reported that one Motion had been received as follows:

Save Union Learning

On Tuesday 6 October 2020, the TUC received a letter from the Department for Education saying that ministers have decided to end the Union Learning Fund from March 2021.

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was set up in 1998 to support trade unions to widen access to learning and training in workplaces for both union members and non-members. The fund supports workplace projects across England, and is coordinated by the TUC.

Each year around 200,000 workers are supported into learning or training with union support through the ULF and the TUC. These learners undertake all sorts of job-relevant learning and training, including basic literacy and numeracy, ICT skills, apprenticeships and traineeships, vocational training, continuing professional development and many other informal and formal courses.

In 2019–20, the ULF was worth £12m. If upheld this decision will effectively end union-brokered skills training, and will undermine key government skills and retraining priorities at a crucial moment for our economy.

This Council understands that:

- 1. Union learning reaches people that other DfE programmes do not reach.*
- 2. There is an independent evaluation of the Union Learning Fund every two years. It was most recently evaluated by the University of Exeter in 2018. They spoke to 2,459 learners, and found a number of key benefits and outcomes from the Learning Fund, in terms of skills, qualifications and also benefits to both the employer and employee.*
- 3. The 2018 independent evaluation found that union learning provided excellent value for money in terms of return in investment for both the employer and employee, contribution to the economy, return to the exchequer and leverage of additional funding.*
- 4. The Government has said it will put reskilling workers at the heart of its economic recovery plans after the pandemic. In September 2020, the Government announced a new fully funded entitlement to achieve a first level 3 qualification, delivered through the National Skills Fund. Union learning is ideally placed to support this aspiration.*
- 5. Successive governments of all parties have valued this role – and have supported the Union Learning Fund. As government funding, it is paid as a contract and is subject to stringent monitoring requirements. Union Learning Fund money can only be spent on the direct costs of getting working people into learning and skills training, and the associated costs of delivering this programme.*
- 6. ULF projects adapted quickly to delivering online learning and training for workers during the pandemic and have actually surpassed the number of outcomes expected by Government since the beginning of April.*

This Council resolves to:

- 1. Express its public support for the continuation of the Union Learning Fund; and*
- 2. Raise this issue with Kate Hollern MP and Jake Berry MP and encourage them to call on the Government to reverse its decision.*

Moved by: Councillor Brian Taylor

Seconded by: Councillor Julie Gunn

Councillor John Slater requested advice from the Monitoring Officer about a potential conflict of interest for one of the Members supporting the Motion. The Monitoring Officer advised that the motion related to the withdrawal of a national scheme funding learners across the country, and the Members expressed in the motion their concern about its withdrawal and impact on the local community. The Monitoring Officer indicated that there has been no declaration of interest submitted and equally no evidence provided of any personal, financial or other personal benefit to the Councillors who promoted the Motion.

Following debate, Members voted on the Motion. Councillors John Slater, Jacqueline Slater, Denise Gee and Jean Rigby voted against the Motion.

RESOLVED – That the Motion be carried.

At this point of the meeting, the Chief Executive advised that in line with the Constitution, the Policy Council would now be held in Committee.

37 2020 Local and National Reflection: 2021 – Future Priorities

A report was submitted, and presentation delivered, by the Leader and Chief Executive, which outlined the key national and local policy challenges and proposals in relation to Local Government, reflected on the Council's performance over the last 12 months, and looked ahead to the next 12 months.

In terms of national reflection, Covid-19 had dominated national policy throughout 2020 and the response to it had been the Council's main focus, and the Leader was very sad to note the 186 deaths from Covid-19 in the Borough.

There were a number of other key policy areas of national interest, which included the Budget 2020, the exit from the European Union, and the impact of Covid-19 in terms of health and productivity in the Northern Powerhouse.

Locally, the existing Corporate Plan priorities still stood – People, Place, Economy and Council, and the report reflected on activity over the last 12 months, whilst recognising the impact of Covid-19 on council services and the budget.

Appended to the report were the performance measures for the period April to September 2020, and an exception report for measures that were considered to be under performing.

An Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken to capture the impact of the pandemic on residents and staff and the actions undertaken to mitigate the impacts where possible.

The report and presentation also looked at the next 12 months for the Council across the four Corporate Plan priorities, as well in terms of the continued response to Covid-19 and the financial position of the Council.

Members thanked the Council's workforce for their outstanding efforts

across an unprecedented year, and also the efforts of the Borough's young people were noted in continuing their studies in difficult circumstances, and still achieving great results, including the Borough's Looked after Children. Members also commented on the need for the whole community to ensure they adhered to guidance to assist in the helping the Borough move out of its current Tier 3 status.

RESOLVED – That Policy Council:

- 1) Note the content of the report and presentation;
- 2) Note the overall performance of the Borough against its outcome measures; and
- 3) Note the overall performance of the Council against its own strategic objectives.

At this point of the meeting, the Chief Executive advised that in line with the Constitution, Policy Council would move out of Committee.

38 Community Governance Review – Parish of Livesey

Members received a report which set out the requirements and procedure should the Council agree to undertake a community governance review in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act) and associated government guidance.

Following the boundary review by LGBCE (which came into effect from May 2018) the ward boundaries in the Borough changed. This was followed by a polling district review in October – December 2018. Due to the LGBCE review and the ward boundary changes, the boundary for the Livesey with Pleasington ward no longer aligned exactly with the boundary of the parish of Livesey, and thereby created an anomaly on the polling district map. This necessitated a separate polling district to be created (LP 6), which currently consisted of 69 properties (mostly new builds) and 88 electors – shown in Appendix 2 (polling district map for Livesey with Pleasington). To remove the anomaly mainly for electoral administration purposes, it would be beneficial to merge the polling district LP6 with LP5, which also formed part of the parish of Livesey. As the merger of the two polling districts would result in changes to the boundary of LP5 (and therefore the parish boundary), a Community Governance Review would need to be undertaken.

Subject to approval of the recommendations in the report, a further report to Council would be presented to Council Forum for consideration in January 2021 to report on the outcome of the consultation and any recommendations. Subject to any recommendations being approved in January, the Council would make and publish a Community Governance Order. The Order would take effect from 1 February 2020, which was also the revised date for the publication of the new electoral register.

RESOLVED –

That Council:

1. Exercises its power under Section 82 of the 2007 Act and conduct a

Community Governance Review of the parish of Livesey in accordance with the requirements of 2007 Act, and associated government guidance as described in this report.

2. That the terms of reference in respect of the Community Governance Review including the proposed timetable, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, be approved and published; and
3. Authorises the Chief Executive to conduct the Community Governance Review on the Council's behalf and to take all necessary action to comply with the Council's statutory obligations in that regard.

39 Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report 2019/20

Members received the Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee for 2019/20, which was submitted to the meeting of that Committee on 29th July 2020. As outlined in the Constitution, the Annual Report and Minutes for the relevant year are submitted to Council, and were now submitted for the Policy Council to note.

RESOLVED – That the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2019/20 be noted.

40 Council Organisational and Departmental Structure

Policy Council received a report outlining recommendations from the Chief Executive, the statutory Head of Paid Service, for a realignment and consolidation of the Council's organisational structure to reduce the number of separate and distinct Departments, to coordinate complementary services with clear synergies, to enable effective delivery of the Council's key priorities as well as the continuing response to, and planning for recovery from, the Covid-19 pandemic.

This process would be coupled with a corresponding realignment of responsibilities of the current Chief Officer team within a revised Senior Leadership structure which ensured resilience and maintained senior level capacity to support elected members, and to lead and deliver key strategic priorities, against the backdrop of the Covid pandemic, in the short and medium to longer term.

The report together with independent HR and employment legal advice had been considered by the Chief Officer Employment Committee who were responsible for Chief Officer appointments.

RESOLVED – That Council:

- a) Approves the organisational and departmental structure recommended by the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Services as outlined in the report (Appendix B refers);
- b) Notes that there is no increase in senior leadership posts or overall

- management costs;
- c) Approves the revised, consolidated Chief Officer grades and posts as outlined in the report; and
- d) Agrees that the Chief Officer Employment Committee confirm appointments to the Strategic Director and Director posts.

41 Year Planner 2020/21 and 2021/22

Members were asked to agree a change to the 2020/21 Year Planner – that Finance Council move from Monday 22nd February 2021 to Monday 1st March 2021.

Also Members received the draft Year Planner for 2021/22, and were asked to agree changing the dates agreed at Finance Council for Annual Council and Civic Sunday in May 2021, with the new dates being Thursday 20th May 2021 for Annual Council and Sunday 6th June 2021 for Civic Sunday.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the amended Year Planner for 2020/21 be agreed;
- 2) That the changes to the dates for Annual Council and Civic Sunday 2021 be agreed; and
- 3) That the final Year Planner for 2021/22 be submitted to Council Forum in January 2021 for approval.

The Leader thanked the Mayor for his Chairing of the meeting, and also advised that he had recently appointed Councillor Quesir Mahmood as his second Deputy Leader, a position which had been vacant since the Council Appointments list had been circulated in May 2020.

Signed at a meeting of the Council Forum
on Thursday, 28th January 2021

(being the ensuing meeting of the Council) by

MAYOR

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Members attending a Council, Committee, Board or other meeting with a personal interest in a matter on the Agenda must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and, if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Interest under paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Conduct, should leave the meeting during discussion and voting on the item.

Members declaring an interest(s) should complete this form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer at the commencement of the meeting and declare such an interest at the appropriate point on the agenda.

MEETING: **COUNCIL FORUM**

DATE: **28TH JANUARY 2021**

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:	DIRECTOR OF HR, LEGAL & GOVERNANCE
TO:	POLICY COUNCIL
ON:	28th JANUARY 2021

SUBJECT: CONSTITUTION UPDATE – REVISED PETITIONS SCHEME

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present to Council Forum proposals to update the Petitions Scheme in the Council's Constitution, and recommendations for Members to consider to improve the existing scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to:

- I. Approve Option 1 as outlined in the report and.
- II. Subject to I) above, authorise amendments to the Petition Scheme reflecting the changes referred to in Option 1 and update the Constitution accordingly.

3. BACKGROUND

The Council's petitions scheme has been in place since 2010 and was adopted following the requirements under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 for local authorities to have in place a petition scheme and having arrangements for receiving e-petitions. This was repealed by the Localism Act so currently there is no legislation requiring councils to adopt a petition scheme or to respond to petitions/e-petitions. Nevertheless, the Council has a long track record of listening to and working with residents, and in fact accepted petitions well before the former national legislation was introduced.

So whilst it is no longer a requirement to have a petitions scheme, Members may feel that petitions should still be considered, but that in doing so there are realistic parameters established to ensure such a Scheme is fit for purpose for our current governance arrangements.

Currently, there are three types of petitions:

- "*Ordinary*" petitions

These must be signed by at least 6 people.

- *Petitions requiring debate*

Petitions which contain 4,200 signatures or more will be debated by the full Council.

- *Petitions to hold council employees to account*

Petitions which call for evidence from a senior council employee and have at least 2,100 signatures will trigger that response.

4. OPTIONS

As Members will be aware, the majority of petitions received are considered at the Executive Board, with the remainder considered at the Planning and Highways and Licensing Committees as appropriate.

If Members are minded to recommend the retention of a Petitions Scheme it is proposed that the qualifying threshold for a petition be increased from a minimum of 6 to a minimum of 50, given signatures can now be collected far more quickly, easily and electronically.

Officers have reviewed petitions schemes at some neighbouring Councils and their thresholds are as follows:

Blackpool – 50

Bolton – 100

Bury – 50

Manchester – 100

Stockport – 50

Wigan - 100

Some of the Councils use discretion to consider petitions of less than 50 that call for local action, ie. traffic calming measures in an area.

No changes are proposed to the thresholds for petitions requiring debate, or those that hold employees to account.

No changes are proposed to the current criteria relating to who can sign a petition – signatories must live, work or study in the Borough.

Option 1 – Improve the existing scheme.

In considering improving the current Petition Scheme the Members could as a minimum review the terms of 'Ordinary' petitions. For example by recommending that only petitions receiving 100 signatures or more are submitted to the Executive Board, with an invitation for the Lead Petitioner to speak. Similarly, petitions receiving 100 signatures or more are submitted to the Planning and Highways and Licensing Committees, in respect of qualifying petitions. For signatures received that are less than 100:

- 50-99 signatures – Chief Officer to consider and respond (with the Chief Executive having discretion to ask the Chief Officer to consider in exceptional circumstances consider petitions of less than 50 that call for local* action).
- For Planning and Highways and Licensing matters it is proposed that for petitions of 50-99 signatures these are dealt with by the relevant Chief Officer with delegated powers, (with the Chief Executive having discretion to ask the Chief Officer to consider in exceptional circumstances consider petitions of less than 50 that call for local* action, ie. traffic calming measures in an area).

* The primary criteria being the low number of residents affected being determined by general circumstances.

Option 2 – Retain the existing scheme. As explained above, the existing scheme has been in place for over 10 years, and whilst it has been a good tool for residents to engage with the Council, it is considered an appropriate time to refresh the scheme and bring it up to date.

Option 3 – Remove the scheme. There is no legislation that requires the Council to have a petitions scheme, its removal would result in savings in officer time and resources at a time when administrative services in particular are under extreme pressure. Removal of the Scheme completely however may result in a loss of engagement with residents and opportunity to receive feedback, and petitions are an important tool in this regard.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Petitions are a vital tool for engaging with residents and supports other Council policies in this regard.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to prepare, keep up-to-date and publicise their constitution.

There is no legal requirement to have a Petitions Scheme.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Officer/Member time in responding to Petitions.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Petitions are an important way for residents to highlight equalities issues.

10. CONSULTATIONS

Council Forum are being consulted and asked to agree the proposals.

Contact Officer: David Fairclough, Director of HR Legal & Governance
(01254 585642)

Date: 7th January 2021

Background Papers: Existing Petitions Scheme (as set out in the Constitution Part 7).



REPORT OF:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
TO:	COUNCIL FORUM
ON:	28th January 2021

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – PARISH OF LIVESEY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report provides an update following approval by Policy Council on 3 December 2020 to commence the community governance review (CGR), and to report on the outcome of the consultation. The report also seeks authority to implement the recommendations to take effect from 1 February 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to:

1. Note the outcome of the consultation undertaken as part of the Community Governance Review.
2. Agree the final recommendation to merge polling districts LP5 and LP6 to align and approve the making and publishing of the community governance order (attached), which is to take effect from 1 February 2021.
3. Subject to 2) above, authorise the Chief Executive (as the Electoral Registration Officer) to make the necessary changes to the electoral register in readiness for publication on 1 February 2021.

3. BACKGROUND

It was reported at Policy Council on 3 December 2020 that following the boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), which came into effect from May 2018, the ward boundaries changed. This was followed by a polling district review in October – December 2018. Due to the LGBCE review and the ward boundary changes, the boundary for the Livesey with Pleasington ward no longer aligns exactly with the boundary of the parish of Livesey, thereby creating an anomaly on the polling district map. This necessitated a separate polling district to be created (LP6), which currently consists of 69 properties (mostly new builds) and 88 electors. To remove the anomaly, mainly for electoral administration purposes, it would be beneficial to merge the polling district LP6 with LP5, which forms part of the parish of Livesey. As the merger of the two polling districts will result in changes to the boundary of LP5 (and therefore the parish boundary), a Community Governance Review needed to be undertaken.

To enable the Review, Council approved the terms of reference for the review and the area under review, which were then published for consultation. The consultation took place between

4 December 2020 and 4 January 2021. The Policy Council report of 3 December 2020, the terms of reference and the polling district map were hand delivered to each property in LP6, and also sent to Livesey Parish Council and the ward councillors for feedback. The consultation and the documents were also published on the Council's website. There has been one response to the consultation which was supportive of realigning the boundary.

Subject to Council approval of the recommendations and the making of the community governance order, polling districts LP5 and LP6 will be merged to align with Livesey Parish Council boundary, and the amendments reflected in the electoral register. A draft of the Order is attached to this report.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Electoral administration work needs to be undertaken efficiently and accurately, and where improvements can be made, for example by removing such anomalies they must be considered.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Although there are some small costs in relation to the consultation process, there will be efficiencies in electoral administration with the merger of the two polling districts.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has power under Section 82 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct CGRs. A CGR must be conducted in accordance with the requirements set out in Chapter 3 of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended) and guidance issued by the Secretary of State under Section 100(4) of the 2007 Act. Approval of the final recommendations would need to be effected by making and publishing a community governance order, and thereafter inform relevant organisations that an order has been made.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Governance team administered and assisted in conducting the CGR.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The process to be followed in conducting the CGR is laid down in legislation and guidance issued by the Government. Every attempt is made to engage electors and interested parties in the CGR through the consultation process that was led by the Governance team.

10. CONSULTATIONS

All the properties in polling district LP6, Livesey Parish Council and the ward councillors were consulted

Contact Officer: Asad Laher, Head of Legal & Governance
(01254 585495)

Date: 18th January 2021

Background Papers: None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

The Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (Parish of Livesey Community Governance) Order 2021

Made 28th January 2021

Coming into force in accordance with article 1(2)

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (“the council”), in accordance with section 82 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”), has undertaken a community governance review and made recommendations dated 28 January 2021.

The council has decided to give effect to those recommendations and, in accordance with section 93 of the 2007 Act, has consulted with the local government electors and other interested persons and has had regard to the need to secure that community governance reflects the identities and interests of the community and is effective and convenient.

The council, in accordance with section 100 of the 2007 Act, has had regard to guidance issued under that section.

The council makes the following Order in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 86 98(3),98(6) and 240(10) of the 2007 Act.

Citation and commencement(a)

1. (1) This Order may be cited as the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (Parish of Livesey Community Governance) Order 2021

(2) It shall come into force on 1 February 2021.

Effect of Order

2. This Order has effect subject to any agreement under section 99 (agreements about incidental matters) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 relevant to any provision of this Order.

Electoral boundary for the parish of Livesey

3. The electoral boundary for the parish of Livesey shall be amended to include area shaded on the map labelled “Map A”, and the area delineated by the red line on the map labelled “Map B” shall be the electoral boundary of the parish of Livesey.

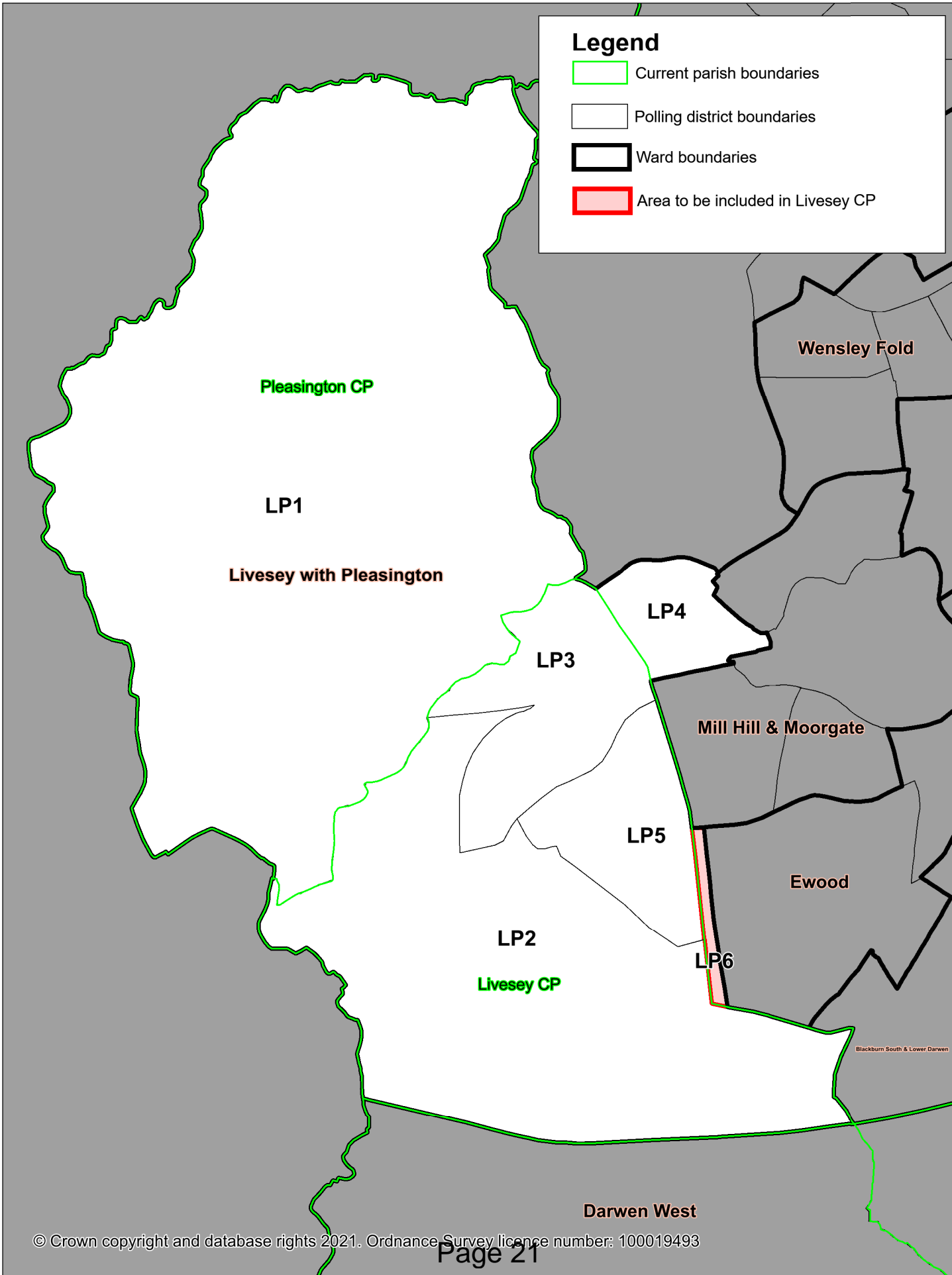
Order date

4. 1 February 2021 is the order date for the purposes of the Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008.

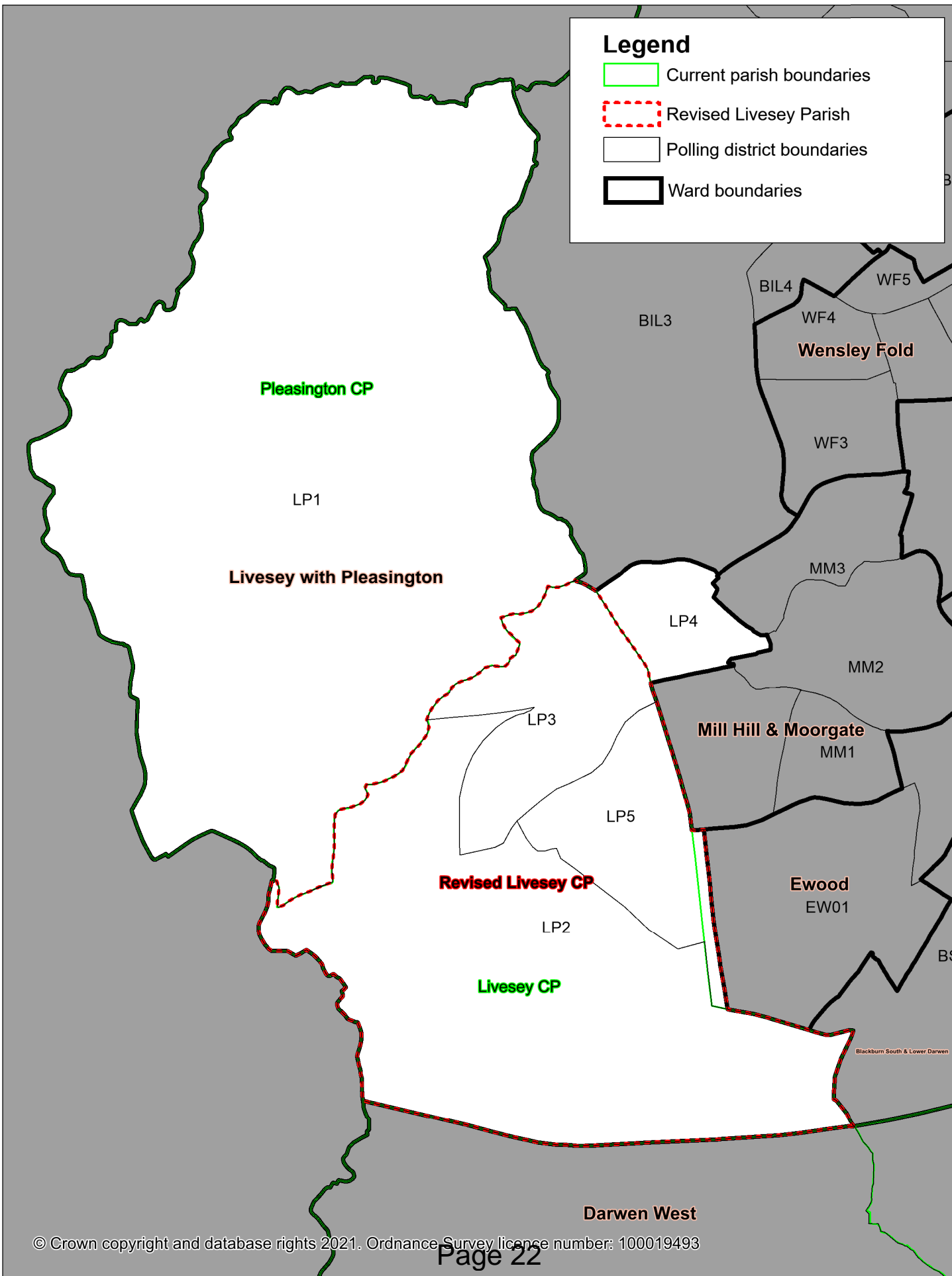
Sealed with the common seal of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council on the 28th day of January 2021

Authorised Officer

Electoral boundary for the parish of Livesey - Map A



Electoral boundary for the parish of Livesey - Map B



Council Forum

Report of the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The three Overview and Scrutiny Committees met in December to continue work on their scrutiny of the Council's response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee 7th December 2020.

The Committee followed up their work on the reconfiguration of renal dialysis services in the area and the recommendations that had been made as part of the consultation in 2019. The Committee were pleased to note that the services provided in the borough were to be enhanced and expanded to better meet the needs of users.

Schools and COVID19

The Committee continued to look at the way that the Council had responded to the services provided to children through schools and children's services. The Committee looked at the way that schools had worked to open and continue to stay open safely for both children and staff. The Committee looked at the support that schools had received from the department and the guidance on interpretation of the government changing rules. The Committee reviewed how the education response team had worked with schools and to keep people safe and would continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Ofsted Children in Our Care Focused Visit update on Practice Improvement.

The Committee looked at the findings of the focused visit from OFSTED that had taken place in February 2020 and would be followed up in the near future. The focused visit had found that-

- Senior leaders understand the strengths and areas for development within the service. While there have been improvements in some areas of service, progress remains slow in key areas of weakness that were identified at previous inspections.
- When children are at immediate or significant risk, decisions to bring them into care are made promptly and appropriately. However, decision-making when children are suffering neglect is too slow. This means that some children are left in harmful situations and plans for their future are delayed.
- Social work caseloads are too high in the assessment and support teams, which impacts on social workers' ability to build relationships with children and understand their experiences. Although leaders have acted to try and reduce demand for social work services, this has not had any impact on workloads in these social work teams. At the point of this visit, effective interim plans to address workload pressures were not addressed.

The improvements highlighted in the area of social work were outlined and the Committee were informed that the department had taken steps to meet these together with improvements made which included updating the service development plan, implementing and embedding the quality assurance and practice improvement framework and implementing a workforce strategy which had seen social work caseloads reduced by 25%. All newly qualified social workers would have caseloads under 15 children each. A number of areas of practice improvement were outlined together with the next steps that included Ofsted focused visits in January and peer challenge in February. The

Committee were supportive of the actions taken by the Portfolio and the Council and would look to receive further reports back to the Committee on the outcome of the review to improve services delivery and outcomes for children in the Borough.

Test and Trace, the Vaccine and arrangements for Vaccination.

The Committee received an update on the test and trace system and how this was working in the Borough. Blackburn with Darwen had been one of the first Councils in the country to start tracing cases locally as it had been recognised that the sooner a positive case has been identified and contacted the sooner their contacts can be identified and supported to self-isolate. The aim was to break the chain of transmission and support people in isolation. The Council will continue to work closely with the Government and Public Health England to secure additional resources and testing pilots to maximise capacity and value of test and trace at a local level.

The Committee looked at the way that the vaccine was proposed to be rolled out for inoculations and the priority order that would be used. The logistics of the actual delivery was examined and the sites that would be used as delivery centres.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 14th December 2020

The Committee continued its work programme of looking at the Council's response to the challenges of the Corona Virus and how service areas within its remit continued to deliver services to meet the needs of residents of the Borough.

Waste Collection, Disposal, Recycling and The Blue Bin Service.

The meeting looked at two key areas in particular this time. The first of these was the waste collection, disposal and recycling. The Committee had previously been informed that the contract for the collection of waste and recycling had been brought back in house and had looked at how this was to be achieved. The Committee were also aware that the blue bin service had commenced in the summer and was expected to increase recycling rates.

The Committee were informed that the transfer had taken place as proposed and the services had continued. The staff had been transferred and the new fleet of vehicles commenced service delivery on time with a seamless transfer. The Committee looked at-

- How the service transition had taken place
- How the household recycling centres had changed work practices and allotted times for use
- The ways that fly tipping was being tackled
- The introduction of the blue bins and how this had affected recycling of paper and card
- How operatives were kept safe and safer working practices were introduced
- The way that services were maintained throughout the period and continue to be delivered.

The Committee were informed that no collection times had been missed and that the service maintained throughout lockdown periods.

Public Protection service.

The Committee also looked at the Public Protection Service and how this had been meeting the challenges that were presented due to the pandemic. The Committee looked at how the role of the service had changed to include test and trace roles and ensuring that lockdown restrictions were being

maintained. The Committee were informed that the service had also given information and advice to businesses in the borough about safe practices and restrictions and had where necessary issued restriction notices where rules were being broken or safe practices not followed.

The Committee congratulated the department on the way they had responded to the multiple challenges that had been presented by the COVID19 pandemic and the positive way that they had done this whilst recognising the difficulties that had been faced by such an outreaching service.

Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee 21st December 2020.

The Committee looked at the key issues of resources and the effects meeting the challenges of the pandemic had had on the Councils finances. Members had previously been made aware of the concerns expressed regarding the significant increase in costs and losses of income that had been incurred in responding to the pandemic, through the first national lockdown, then coming out of the restrictions in June only to have further restrictions imposed in July.

The Committee were informed that given the lack of additional government funding at the time, it was apparent that unless further resources were forthcoming, the Council would not have been able to contain these costs and losses within the existing budget for 2020/21, also due to the low level of reserves held. In that situation it would have become more likely that the Director of Finance, as the Section 151 Officer, would have needed to consider issuing a Section 114 notice, this would effectively have meant declaring that the Council would not be able to balance its budget for the year.

The Committee noted that due to the continuous lobbying by the Leader, Members, Officers, both of our MPs, together with other local authorities and representative bodies across the country, further funding had been provided by the government to support local authorities and the risk of issuing a Section 114 notice had subsided.

The Committee received an outline of the funding received as at 11th December and were informed that:

- for some funding streams such as the Business Rate and Business Restrictions Grants schemes, the Council acts as a conduit, administering the payments on behalf of government,
- some that are listed are the maximum amount of funding earmarked for the Borough, which can only be accessed retrospectively on submission of a claim detailing the costs incurred
- some are paid in advance but are subject to a reconciliation and evidence of payments made with recovery by government for unspent funds
- some relate to general funding provided to address additional costs incurred and income lost as a result of the pandemic

The Committee looked at the total forecast additional expenditure the Council expected to incur and the income losses expected, excluding those on business rates and Council tax. The Council expects that the government funding at this point in time is sufficient to cover costs and income losses.

With regard to Business Rates and Council Tax, the government has given an undertaking to fund 75% of 'irrecoverable losses' incurred in 2020/21, with further information to be provided on the definition of irrecoverable loss, and for any resulting deficit on the Collection Fund in 2020/21, legislation has been amended to provide for recovery of this by the Council over a 3 year period rather than the normal 1 year process.

The Committee looked at the specific challenges that had to be faced by the Council and how the challenges had affected delivery of corporate priorities and also the wellbeing support that had been made available to staff.

The Committee will continue to monitor the Councils financial position and the resources being made available to meet the challenges of the pandemic.

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 28th January 2021

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

Together an Active Future (TaAF) - Sport England

I'm pleased to report that Pennine Lancashire's Together an Active Future continues to support local organisations to better understand target groups and work with them to develop ideas and different ways to increase access to physical activity. The latest Active BwD initiative is being led by Lancashire Wildlife Trust and will see investment in the greenhouses at Witton Park and linkages with the cycle centre, walking routes and Creative Football programmes to improve mental wellbeing. Encouragingly in these challenging times Sport England has confirmed that funding remains available through to 2025. The core team, led by BwD are currently working to secure additional Accelerator phase investment of £7M into Pennine Lancashire which of course will see benefit for BwD residents.

Health and Wellbeing

On 2nd December 2020, the Health and Wellbeing Board held its third 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 included significant discussion of the Borough's response to the COVID-19 pandemic locally and plans for managing the next phase of the pandemic, including the NHS vaccination programme.

Health and Care Integration

Integrated planning and delivery continues to take place across the Health, Care and Community system. Since the last report, the four Primary Care Neighbourhood Groups (PCNs) across Blackburn with Darwen have been continuing their monthly partnership meetings as planned and discussed the health and wellbeing priorities most significant to their local areas.

The Social Prescribing Alliance is now well established and maintains a focus on addressing the wider determinants of health through a range of non-medical interventions supporting both physical and mental well-being. Members of the PCNs have also been central to the Covid 19 response and are currently supporting a number of priority areas including testing, vaccinations and referral pathways from the Covid virtual ward. For this reason, in January, the monthly PCN meetings have now been temporarily paused for 2-3 months whilst this work completes.

Ongoing communication and joint working continues however and representatives from each PCN continue to meet informally on a weekly basis to share information and address any issues with the operational delivery of services during this very difficult time. Strategic planning for the PCNs continues as population health management data is analysed to help us understand in more detail the specific needs of our residents both at the current time and moving forward over the coming months and years.

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

Our Community, Our Future social integration programme

Blackburn with Darwen has received a little over £1million of MHCLG funding for another year of the Our Community, Our Future social integration programme.

This funding means that in 2021 the social integration team can move forward with plans for commissioned projects and community engagement work that have social integration at their heart. The Social Integration Manager is currently developing plans started a year ago, before the pandemic hit, and these will be shared with the Our Community, Our Future board before any projects are commissioned.

Blackburn with Darwen has also been successful in a bid for further MHCLG funding for their Community Champions initiative, which is a direct response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This funding will be used for targeted engagement work to support residents of the borough who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. These have been identified as people from our BAME communities, young people and residents with disabilities. The Social Integration Manager is working closely with MHCLG on this important new area of work.

Council: Delivered by a strong and resilient Council

COVID-19

The Council continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in a number of ways. Staff are responding to increased demand from the Help Hub and supporting residents through the third national lockdown. Local businesses, where eligible, are being supported with government business restrictions grants and staff have been working hard to get the money to businesses as quickly as possible.

It is hard to believe that we have been living with the virus for nearly 12 months now and to help us capture the response work we have done to date and recognise some of the work of our staff, we have put together a *Key Achievements & Innovations during the COVID pandemic* report. This is available [online](#).

The NHS vaccination programme has started with priority groups set out by the Government. We are supporting NHS colleagues as they begin vaccinating care home residents and staff and others in the first 4 priority groups. Further capacity for vaccinations has been added from Monday 18th January 2020 when the Crypt at Blackburn Cathedral opened as a mass vaccination site, with approximately 1700 vaccines available at this site each day once it is fully established. As the programme gathers pace we look forward to a future where we can go back to doing the things we love with the people we love.

Regional data around the vaccination programme is available on the NHS website and updated each day. There are also weekly data releases which provide more accurate and detailed data. We do not have local authority level data at this stage however, Public Health colleagues believe the programme is progressing well in the Borough. All the latest information around the vaccine programme, restrictions and COVID19 data continues to be available on the [BwD website](#). We continue to press the government and the NHS to make full local data available to us as soon as possible so we can ensure equitable access to and take-up of the vaccine for our population and engage with those who might be reluctant to have the vaccination at this stage. I strongly encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated when they are offered an appointment by the NHS.

Alongside the vaccination programme we are also looking to the future and how we can support our communities, local businesses and the local economy to get back on track. This will be a big task but we will be asking the Government to fulfil its promise of levelling up the country to bring benefits to towns like ours.

Census 2021

The next census day is 21st March 2021 and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are working to ensure the survey is carried out within any covid-19 restrictions in force at the time and that all people completing the census and those working for the ONS can do so safely.

As the Census 2021 will be carried out using a 'digital first' approach, online responses will be encouraged and ONS have set themselves a target of 75% of responses being online. Whilst many of our residents have been utilising online resources more during the covid restrictions, they will be comfortable with this approach. However, our ONS Census Engagement Manager will be focusing time on engaging with those communities and groups who may struggle more with getting online and making sure people know what the census is all about. She is already in contact with a range of organisations in our borough and this work will develop once the ONS Community Advisors for Indian and Pakistani communities in the borough start their roles.

Elections 2021

Local elections in 2020 were postponed due to the pandemic and we are currently being advised that local and Police & Crime Commissioner elections will take place in May 2021. The decision to go ahead remains under review

by the government. Whenever elections take place our Returning Officer and elections team will obviously ensure that polling stations and the count are COVID-secure and that people are aware of all the options available to them including postal and proxy voting. The health and safety of candidates, elections staff and voters is our priority. This is likely to mean some changes to polling stations and arrangements for the count which will be shared as arrangements are finalised.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SERVICES AND PREVENTION COUNCILLOR MUSTAFA DESAI

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

DATE: 28 January 2021

ADULT SOCIAL CARE NEIGHBOURHOODS TEAMS

Embracing change and flexibility, the Adult Social Care neighbourhood teams have continued to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Teams continue to work remotely where possible; however, in utilising PPE and undertaking dynamic risk assessments have been able to undertake face-to-face assessment and support visits within the community. Court of Protection cases have increased which demonstrates the complexity of people's needs; undoubtedly, compounded by the current situation.

The application and allocations process for Albion Mill, Extra Care apartments continues in preparation for the building completion. The allocations panel meets every two weeks to discuss and approve applications. The inclusivity of the scheme is looking a popular alternative to traditional models of care for local people.

Primary Care Neighbourhood (PCN) meetings resumed in August, but have recently stepped down to allow colleagues to focus on projects such as Covid testing and vaccination; and to allow colleagues to respond to increasing demand within their service areas. Our Integrated Neighbourhood teams (INTs) continue to meet virtually to ensure that joined up care and support is available, which is further enhanced by newly commissioned, 'Social prescribers'.

The Independent Living Service has continued to support people in their own homes and communities via our Occupational Therapy activity, moving and handling and sensory impairment offer. The Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) program resumed following the first lockdown and work is currently be progressed through the buildings team. In December, internal stakeholders were briefed regarding DFG activity within the current financial year.

Overall the Adult Social Care Neighbourhood Teams, continue to meet our statutory responsibilities despite the demand and complexity of cases. Team members have been thanked for their resilience, tenacity and commitment in providing a service despite personal and organisational challenges.

COVID RESPONSE WORK

Help Hub – since it was set up in March there have been over 4000 calls to the Help Hub and 284 people requiring support from September to December. The main reasons for calls are concerns about wellbeing, inability to buy food or essential supplies, loneliness or issues with bills, debt and benefits. Of those who ring 41% identify as clinically extremely vulnerable, 64% are isolating, 39% live alone and 34% have children. Calls are triaged and either successfully supported directly by Community Connectors or by the large network of partners in the Borough who are part of the wider Hub network.

Other Covid response work undertaken by the Prevention, Neighbourhoods and Learning teams includes telephone befriending, local Case Tracing and Community Testing. Community Testing supports symptomatic people who are unable to get to a test site. Referrals come mainly from schools and include families with children with additional needs,

people without smart phones or those who are unable to understand the on-line registration process. The team deliver and support families to complete the tests in their own homes.

COVID ENGAGEMENT

The Social Integration team began a campaign of engagement in December and distributed over 5000 postcards outlining key Covid Christmas safety messages. 1609 people were directly engaged with and 286 of them agreed to share 10 postcards with their family and friends. Young People's Services and Public Protections teams also distributed the postcards. Key findings from the engagement were:

- people want to be sensible but struggled to understand changing rules
- concerns about mental wellbeing, particularly for those who are already vulnerable
- difficulties for those without digital access
- concerns about relaxation of rules over Christmas
- hope around the vaccine
- the difficulties of home schooling
- concerns that volunteers and small groups can't operate as support for people

An example of the engagement was in a pre-entry ESOL class where three learners said they were intending to gather 3 households over Christmas. One of these gatherings would have resulted in 18 people meeting in a small terraced property – including 5 individuals who would be considered “vulnerable”. The engagement officer talked to participants about the risks involved with so little opportunity to distance. All agreed it was high risk and that they should reconsider.

COMMUNITY CENTRES – SUPPORT FOOD AND POVERTY

Volunteer-managed Community Centres have secured funding from the Covid-19 Winter grant and National Lottery to provide food help across Blackburn with Darwen. 'Food & Essential Bags' are available for vulnerable families and elderly people in the local community, there are also breakfast bags available for children during Christmas school holidays. Volunteers are keen to make sure there is support available to anyone who is struggling at this very difficult time and be comforted to know there is help available locally via Accrington Rd, Greenfields, Ivy St, Little Harwood, Mill Hill and Darwen Valley Community Centres. People who need help can contact the Blackburn with Darwen Help Hub on 01254 588111 who will be put in-touch with their local community centre.

MORE POSITIVE TOGETHER PROGRAMME

More Positive Together (MPT) is a Lancashire wide project that aims to help residents of some of the County's most deprived areas improve their skills and employment prospects. The project funded by European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) brings together over 20 partners including housing associations, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to provide practical help and mentoring support to support the journey into work for those furthest from the labour market.

The Council joined the MPT partnership in 2020 and commenced delivery in July 2020. The project has established an excellent referral pathway with a number of partners including the DWP. With the challenges of Covid-19, support to clients is provided using digital methods and where necessary providing Page 31 learning opportunities in partnership with the BwD Adult Learning Team. Demand for support has been high in part due to people being made redundant as a result of Covid 19. The project has started successfully and

many participants have achieved excellent progress despite the challenges and constraints. The face-to-face learning is a turning point for most people and the key to unlocking their potential after many years of unemployment, helping to achieve training and employment outcomes.

ROUGH SLEEPER PODS

As part of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPE) there is a duty on Local Authorities to provide emergency accommodation to rough sleepers in order to get them off the streets during the winter months. The current global pandemic has meant that the Council, like many others throughout the country, has had to re-think how it normally offers its communal emergency winter homeless accommodation.

Ten self-contained pods will be used for individuals as well as two kitchen/diner pods and a pod for security and support staff. The pods will be housed adjacent to Shadsworth leisure centre, offering a safe space for the most vulnerable rough sleepers. They are insulated, have a bed, toilet, shower, light and a secure door.

The risks to a person rough sleeping during winter are extremely high. Unfortunately and it's not an easy thing to communicate, but a small number of people sleeping rough choose to do so. This is due to a number of different factors and can include complex mental health issues, past traumatic experiences, drug or alcohol issues and sometimes a devastating concoction of all these factors. A small number sadly continue to refuse help.

We can't force people to take refuge, but we never give up on people and have staff working on the streets through our outreach teams. They provide the opportunity of help at any time – we don't want anyone to be sleeping rough in Blackburn with Darwen.

It is hoped that these units will help people take their first step out of homelessness and engage with the support services they need. The pods complement other winter provision that is being provided by Bodum Court (former Shadsworth House) and the Salvation Army.

All SWEPE provision will be available until 31st March 2021.

SPECIALIST SERVICES

The Specialist Services Social Work Teams (Safeguarding, Learning Disability, Mental Health and Emergency Duty Team) have all worked persistently and creatively, throughout the pandemic to ensure that our most vulnerable service users are supported and safeguarded.

Demand has increased for each of these teams, however, they have risen to the challenge and responded admirably whilst also recognising that their own safety and wellbeing is an important factor.

The Safeguarding Team have worked with a considerable number of care homes in order to safeguard their residents and staff and ensure that they are operating in a way which reduces the risk of Covid as much as possible.

The Learning Disability Team have worked with providers of Learning Disability Services to offer support and guidance with regard to legislation and PPE. They have also provided regular advice and support to families who have been struggling to care for their family members without respite or day care, due to the Covid restrictions.

The Community Mental Health Team have seen a significant rise in referrals into the service due to the negative impact that the Covid situation has had on local people, some of whom, have never been known to mental health services before. For many people, the restrictions have exacerbated issues regarding isolation and vulnerability and affected their mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Team have responded accordingly and have implemented creative ways of working in order to maintain regular contact with service users and provide support and intervention when required.

The Emergency Duty Team operate out of hours and cover all aspects of statutory social work – children's, adults and mental health. As you would expect, demand on their service has increased during the pandemic due to individuals feeling isolated and vulnerable, and families struggling to cope. An increase in the use of casual staff at weekends has assisted the team in coping with the multi-dimensional pressures. The Team have also worked closely with colleagues from our social care teams to ensure that care homes are supported when there has been risk of a care home breakdown due to high numbers of staff unable to work as they have tested Covid+.

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING

We continue to work closely with the Regulated Care, Domiciliary Care and supported living sector to support them throughout the pandemic and to ensure the Care sector remains supported and viable. The second round of the Infection Control Fund (IPC) has been issued to providers in line with Government requirements and monthly returns in respect of the usage of the fund are being submitted to the DHSC.

Daily welfare calls to providers have continued to complete the tracker and maintain up to date situation reports for the Care Sector. Calls continue to take place Monday to Friday, not weekends as the support needed for providers is in place, however the situation is continually reviewed and weekend calls will be stepped up as needed. The welfare calls continue to provide information, guidance and support to our providers and closely monitor any outbreaks, incidences, capacity, PPE and staffing requirements. In addition we have now established a dedicated Care Sector Response Group for all Covid 19 issues within the care sector. The group meet daily and respond to incidents and outbreaks, providing a situation report and response across all care settings. The group are also co-ordinating and monitoring take up of vaccinations for care home staff and residents as the vaccination programme is rolled out.

We continue to work closely with Pennine Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group and the NHS Acute Trust to ensure that we have a well co-ordinated testing process and routine testing across our care homes. In addition we have also worked with colleagues within the Health and Social Care system to establish designated settings for discharge of Covid positive patients from hospital.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

28 January 2021

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING

CHIEF OFFICER: PAUL FLEMING

28 January 2021

People: A good quality of life for all our residents

Customer services

The Town Halls and Duke Street have reopened from 2nd December following the ending of the national lockdown. The buildings will operate on the same COVID secure basis as it did prior to the lockdown. A full complement of front of house staff will be in place, however, all public access telephones and PC's will be unavailable for customer use.

Additional resources from the contact centre have now been trained and deployed to assist the Benefits Assessment Officers in the administration of Test and Trace Support payments. Five members of staff will assist with the assessment process and customer liaison. The increase in resources will improve the turnaround times of applications, and provide resilience to the team as the Borough looks to introduce mass testing.

Registrars

The Registration Service has continued to operate all of its services during national lockdown and the tiered system. Whilst the service has performed extremely well over the preceding months, the winter period always puts additional pressure on the team. With continuing pressures due to COVID and an increased number of rescheduled weddings, we will be reviewing the service to ensure its ongoing resilience.

Resilience & Emergency Planning Service

The Council has been in response to the Covid-19 crisis since March 2020 and is working with its Lancashire, regional and national partners to effect an adequate response for its Community and employees; this is achieved through working with the Core Team and Work Stream Leads that support the Chief Executive and Directors.

Whilst BwD has been in this response mode, we have also responded to other emergencies including; flash floods, mill fires, Gas leaks in the town centre and individuals protesting on the roof of a town centre building.

We have completely reviewed the Corporate Business Continuity plan and departmental operational level plans along with the "functional emergency plans" to ensure their currency and validity, assisting Blackburn with Darwen Borough council to prepare for any additional incidents during the prolonged ongoing response to COVID.

We have worked with 5 out of the 7 School Improvement Groups to deliver a consistent training package and approach to Emergency Response. This also provides a structure for the schools to plan for emergencies. We have been asked to deliver this training package (and exercising programme) to the Academies, Free and Independent schools.

Quarter 2 report – Duty Officer Statistics

Info received	3
Warning total	180
Total:	183
Strategic Officer Activations	4
Duty Officer Activations	29

Digital Customer Portal (DCP)

A number of new forms have recently been added to our DCP platform. These now provide residents with the ability to undertake more services online, including referring safeguarding concerns or applying for school transport vouchers. The recent additions take the total of online services on the new portal to 46.

Since the introduction of our new platform in April we have seen the number of online forms completed increase significantly. Traditionally 30% of all forms received had been completed by the Councils Contact Centre, on behalf of residents who had telephoned with their enquiry. This proportion has reduced to 10%, showing that residents are more confident in using digital platforms and self-serving. Since its inception, the customer portal has received 69,000 service requests and now has over 27,000 registered users.

The DCP continues to support the COVID effort and in light of recent government announcements the team have produced a number of new online forms and advice to assist with isolation support and grants to businesses affected by the pandemic.

Work on waste services has now begun and the Digital team are working with the DCP supplier to co-design a user friendly online view for residents to report issues with, or book, council waste services.

Digital Integration of Health and Social Care

Work has now restarted around integrating NHS and Social Care records. The Councils Adult Social Care system was upgraded during December. It now holds 99% of all NHS numbers of residents receiving social care. Testing will commence in January 2021 to allow social care staff to view relevant NHS records. Work continues with the NHS pathfinder project to implement the infrastructure required to allow further sharing of information between health and social care, in relation to discharge from hospital to social care.

Support to Test and Trace

The Business Change team continue to contribute to the Council's COVID response, assisting with the Community Testing project; which has been developed to support the pilot delivery of the mass testing with Lateral Flow Antigen Testing Devices.

Business intelligence

The Digital Team have continued with COVID reporting as the pandemic progresses but have also started to investigate online forms that are being created by residents in the Digital Customer Portal. This will allow business users to report effectively on service requests and identify helpful insights into resident's needs, using business intelligence tools to map and visualise service request provision over time. A new council-wide business intelligence group has been created to promote the use of business intelligence across the organisation and this group now meets regularly to discuss corporate data and the wider implications of corporate business intelligence.

Support for remote working and digital transformation

The Digital team continues to support large swathes of the workforce who remain working from home. Microsoft continue to release enhancements to their software at a fast pace, and the team are working hard to translate these updates to staff and ensure we are achieving maximum benefit from the new tools.

Planning is underway to equip some Council meeting rooms with new video technology which will allow staff, partners and residents to meet in person whilst other participants join the meeting virtually. This will also transform what have traditionally been small meeting spaces into large, virtual conference rooms; increasing capacity and enabling participants to be 'in the room' from anywhere there is an internet connection.

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

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE 28th January 2021

COUNCILLOR VICKY McGURK

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: LOUISE MATTINSON
DAVID FAIRCLOUGH

People: A good quality of life for all our residents

Revenues and Benefits

The Council Tax and Business Rate teams have continued to administer recovery action in a responsible and proportionate way throughout the pandemic. During the first and second national lockdowns, the Council's approach has been to seek to engage with customers before taking action. In many cases this approach has resulted in a re-profiling of individual debts and an agreement to collect arrears over a longer period, as well as the opportunity to provide assistance by signposting individuals to the debt, welfare and housing support offered by Shelter. Whilst there has been a drop in the overall collection rates, it is hoped that a large proportion of this debt will be recouped over the next few months.

The Business Rates team has also been responsible for the administration of the Small Business Grants and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants in the earlier part of the pandemic. Over 3,700 grants were made to businesses totalling over £40m.

Further grants have also been made available by the Government to cover the period when restrictions were in place for businesses from 1st August. These grants are aimed in the main at the Hospitality, Leisure and Accommodation sectors. At the start of December, over 900 grants had been made totalling £1.3m.

In order to support the businesses as much as possible, the team is currently contacting all those businesses who it is felt may be eligible for the grants but have not yet applied.

Grants will continue to be administered whilst the Council is in either Tier 2, Tier 3 or national lockdown restrictions.

The Benefits team continues to perform exceptionally well despite a reallocation of resources to assist in the administration of the Test and Trace Support payments, and in the increases in the number of residents claiming benefits. New claims continue to be assessed in less than 9 days and 'changes to circumstances' in less than 5 days.

A total of 6 full time equivalent staff have been allocated to support the administration of the new Test and Trace Support payments. The volume of applications has been extremely high with approximately 2,000 received by the start of December, resulting in payments of over £290,000 to eligible applicants.

Advice Services

Due to the uncertainty of the pandemic with regards to the length of time it will persist, its impact and the increased number of residents seeking help with welfare entitlement, debt and housing, it has been agreed that the current contract period for welfare, benefit and debt advice services will be extended by a further 12 months. It is hoped that this will provide stability for the residents of the borough as the economic impacts become known.

Council: Delivered by a strong and resilient council

Financial Services

The team continues to work on the financial monitoring returns required by Government in relation to increased expenditure and losses in income due to the pandemic.

Work continues on development of the Budget Strategy for 2021-22, following the issue of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement by Government on 17th December; work is ongoing with Management Board and Executive Members to prepare a balanced budget for submission to Finance Council for approval on 1st March 2021.

Audit & Assurance and Insurance

The Audit & Assurance Team has continued its work to deliver the 2020/21 internal audit plan. The team reported its progress to the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 12th January 2021.

The Committee also received an update on the progress to date of the actions being taken to address the three significant issues identified in the 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement as well as a report on the risk management activity in the period, which included a copy of the Corporate Risk Register as at 30 September.

Corporate Procurement and Contracts

The Contracts and Procurement team has continued to support internal Council services and local Care homes and Care providers with supplies of PPE.

The team completed the sale of the Council's minority holdings in the Building Schools for the Future PFI companies in October 2020.

The team has supported a range of procurement activity working with colleagues across the Council including:

- Building materials
- Resurfacing of highways
- Grass cutting
- A dynamic purchasing system of consultants to support the work of Growth Lancashire
- a new HR and Payroll IT system
- Furniture and works related to the refurbishment of the Town Hall

HR Services Including Resilience & Emergency Planning

The service has supported the response to Covid-19, particularly by addressing any health, safety & wellbeing activity to support the response to the pandemic. In addition key staff have been deployed to directly support the response to the pandemic and prepare for all aspects of Winter planning

The service continues to prioritise the reduction in sickness absence and develop initiatives to promote wellbeing.

More detailed MI reports continue to be developed using Power BI, to support the organisation in workforce planning and decision making.

The current contract for the Council's HR & payroll system expires on 31st March 2022 and therefore we are currently undertaking an exercise to procure a new cloud base solution.

Legal Services

Legal Services has been as the forefront of providing legal advice and guidance in relation to the constantly changing Covid-19 health protection legislation and guidance. In particular, Legal Services supported other teams in the council in relation to understanding and responding to compliance issues and residents' concerns/queries relating second lockdown and Tier restrictions. Legal Services also lead the Lancashire LRF Legal Group ensuring comprehensive and consistent advice across Lancashire, and also provide legal support to the LRF Business Compliance Group.

Governance Services

Following the annual electoral canvass, implementing the new process for confirming electoral registration the Governance team have commenced preparations for the combined elections in May 2021. To date, this has included assessing the polling stations in view of the current health protection guidance, ordering equipment and preliminary staffing arrangements for polling stations and the counts. The team has also been supporting the Chief Executive (as the PARO for the Lancashire PCC election) with preparing and issuing joint Directions to the Lancashire Returning Officers, and coordinating with their election teams. The team are also liaising with the wider North West election managers group and the Electoral Commission on additional requirements for elections in May 2021.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY
DATE: 28 JANUARY 2021**

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

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

South East Blackburn Growth Deal Major Transport Scheme

Construction works have progressed well in relation to the final Local Growth Fund 3 package at South East Blackburn. Significant progress has been made in relation to the installation of significant surface water drainage infrastructure for the new link road at Newfield Drive and Roman Road. A wetland swale will be formed when the drainage attenuation pond is finally landscaped in the new year. The relocation of the 33kVA electric overhead cable which runs from Blackamoor Road to Newfield Drive will be re-laid underground in the new year.

Haslindgen Road widening is progressing, with excavations for widening works allowing for Statutory Undertakers to carry out their works in stages, phased with others and the main construction works. Construction is advancing well at Old Bank Lane which will enable the delivery of the new Royal Blackburn Hospital roundabout entrance, with improved facilities for pedestrians and general traffic alike.

The project package is programmed for completion in Summer 2021 and will see the completion of the Council's Growth Deal 3 "Pennine Gateways" project which included the major infrastructure improvements at Carl Fogarty Way, Brownhill Roundabout, Pleckgate Road, Whalley Old Road and Four Lane Ends.

Blackburn with Darwen Highway Service Improvements

Over the Summer and Autumn period the Highways service surface dressed 10,750m², patched 5,300m² and resurfaced 57,600m² of our network, delivering a significant improvement to the condition of our roads and facilitating enhanced connectivity across the Borough. Further works are also planned for March 2021 to deliver the remainder of the 2020/21 Local Transport Plan capital maintenance and improvement programme.

Although the Autumn period was very wet Highways still undertook gritting treatments on 11 days and used 330 tonnes of salt. Our teams have remained on call 24/7 throughout the Winter period and work closely with volunteer groups, including our 56 winter grit squads.

Blackburn with Darwen School and College Bus Services

The Council has worked proactively with local bus operators to provide additional capacities on the local commercial and subsidised bus network since schools and colleges returned in September 2020.

The busiest routes used for education have been identified and a range of local bus operators have duplicated both open and closed local bus services at peak times. Additional dedicated coaches have also run to Blackburn College which has taken considerable pressure off local commercial services which has enabled greater social distancing and safe travel.

The Council has worked with local school bus operators and parents to introduce a new online voucher based payment system for dedicated school buses which has helped to ensure additional safety through cashless travel.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

A focus of the service has been the delivery of road safety and traffic signals improvement projects with new zebra crossings at Redlam, Blackburn and Blackpool Street, Darwen ensuring safer crossing provision for residents. 72 speed surveys have been recently undertaken to determine vehicle speeds in highlighted areas and three new permanent, interactive speed indication devices are scheduled for introduction by April 2021. A speed cushion refurbishment programme will also roll-out at Bridge Street/George Street, Blackburn Town Centre, and Marsh House Lane, Darwen. Further safety schemes to reduce the speeds of traffic will also be delivered in the early part of 2021 at Pole Lane, Darwen and Lammack Road, Blackburn.

PLACE PRIORITY 6: Strong, Growing Economy to Enable Social Mobility

Darwen Town Deal

The Darwen Town Investment Plan will be submitted to Government by 31 January. The Plan has been developed by the Town Deal Board with support from a team of specialists. Detailed economic analysis, public engagement and project identification and development. The vision, objectives and projects proposed aim to establish Darwen as highly productive and sustainable town of regional importance with a focus on town centre regeneration, new employment housing development and sporting facilities, while improving urban and green gateways linking town to the countryside.

Projects have been shortlisted and prioritised to respond to key challenges and opportunities, and the economic impacts of COVID, as well as maximising the economic benefits with the aim of securing up to £25M in Towns Fund investment for Darwen.

Planning applications have been submitted for the three accelerated Town Deal projects, and have been granted planning permission in January - Darwen AFC and J4 Skatepark expansions alongside the restoration of Darwen Tower (subject to referral to the Secretary of State).

Blakey Moor / Northgate

Tender packages for the construction contract at Blakey Moor Terrace are being finalised with a view to being issued in February. Subject to funding approvals, work could start onsite in March for 12-18 months. The internal reconfiguration of the two units have been slightly revised to better accommodate some structural issues.

Works to restore Council owned 14 and 20 Lord Street West (Prism Gallery and Studios) and privately owned 10-12 Lord Street West (former Mellors Wire Works) started onsite at the beginning of December. Works will see the upper floor at 14-20 Lord Street West brought back into use and the creation of two refurbished retail units at 10-12. Internal works to 35 Northgate (former Ribblesdale Hotel) were put out to tender in December and costs will be reviewed in the New Year.

Growth Programme

The Growth Programme for 2020/21, which was approved at Executive Board in September, is continuing to be implemented as per the updates below.

Housing Developments

Further to the Growth Programme, the following major housing projects involving Council land are progressing through the planning stages:

- McDermott Homes has been selected to purchase the Council land at Ellison Fold Way in Darwen and take forward a detailed planning application for residential development imminently. This will include the adjacent privately-owned land and deliver a combined total of around 320 new family dwellings.
- A new Masterplan for the Holden Fold Development Site (former Darwen Moorland High School Site) was adopted in November 2020. The site could provide up to 430 new homes and associated infrastructure, including highway improvements and a contribution towards extending a local primary school. The Council will continue to work with adjacent landowners in 2021, to progress towards tendering to selecting a developer in late 2021.
- Countryside Homes and Together Housing have submitted a planning application to build around 390 new homes around Fishmoor Drive and Roman Road. The application incorporates two sites on Fishmoor Drive and one on Roman Road, and infrastructure works on Fishmoor Drive.
- An outline planning application is being assessed for up to 165 new homes at Whalley Old Road, a partially Council owned site. A decision on the application could be made at the January Meeting of the Planning & Highways Committee, or subsequent meeting.
- The Council is expecting a planning application for 30 new family homes in early 2021 from McDermott Homes for the Lomond Gardens site in Feniscowles.

Other developments of Council land, at a more advanced stage, include the Griffin Redevelopment site, where Seddon Homes have commenced first phase delivery of 56 new homes. Two sites in Mill Hill are currently under construction by Great Places at Shorrock Lane (former Laneside Care Home) and Bowen Street and both progressing well. Great Places have also commenced on a third site at New Wellington Street. Places for People are making good progress at their development in Alaska Street, in Infirmary waterside, which is planned to complete spring 2021.

Commercial Developments

Good progress is continuing to be made at the Milking Lane development site, which the Council is bringing forward as part of a Joint Venture Company – Barnfield Blackburn Ltd. Construction of the new link road through the site with associated flood prevention infrastructure began in August, and is to be completed in 2021.

At Wainwright Way, the new Home Bargains store opened in October 2020. Work to agree disposal of the remaining plots is on-going, and is expected to be agreed in 2021. Enquiries are continuing to be received regarding the Council's development plots at Carl Fogarty Way. So far, preferred bidders have been selected for Plots 1 and 4, with contracts expected to be exchanged in 2021. Plots 2 and 3 will be made available in 2021.

Construction works are complete regarding Blackburn Cinema. Reel aim to open when Covid restrictions allow.

New Local Plan

Works to prepare an ambitious new Local Plan for the Borough are continuing. Widespread public consultation on a draft Plan is taking place from 8th January until 19th February 2021, with lots of information available on the Council website and exhibitions at Blackburn and Darwen Markets. Everyone is being encouraged to take a look at the details and to leave a comment. Adjustments to the Local Plan timetable and format may be required in 2021, in light of the Government's 2020 White Paper which set out radical changes to the national planning system.

Development Management - Recent Major Developments

In December, two major development proposals were granted planning permission creating a significant number of jobs, thus contributing to the regeneration of the local area and providing significant benefits to the local community. Firstly, the Kay Group were granted consent to develop their Grimshaw Park Service Station for a new Petrol Filling Station and Head Office, providing a striking modern building on an important gateway. Secondly, Oaklands London Property LTD were granted consent to develop the former East Lancashire Coachbuilders site on Whalley New Road, which has been long vacant along an important gateway. The proposal is for commercial units for B1 (Business) and B8 (storage) uses with ancillary trade counters, and a new petrol service station complex on Whalley New Road. As well as a petrol station/store, the site will feature a restaurant, coffee shop, workshops, and storage and trade counter units.

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION
COUNCILLOR JULIE GUNN**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: JAYNE IVORY
DATE: 28 January 2021**

PEOPLE: A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OUR RESIDENTS

Children's Social Care

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

Our current figures as regards Children's Social Care statistics are as follows:

Child in Need	355
Child Protection	190
Children in our Care	378

KEY PRIORITIES

Our priorities over the past nine months and since the onset of the pandemic has been 'Business as Usual' but we have delivered our services in different ways.

- There has remained a clear focus on our statutory services and our duty to assess, plan and intervene for all children subject to child in need plans, child protection plans and in our role as Corporate Parents. Social work staff and our support service staff have maintained direct face to face visits for those families most at risk. Our risk assessment tool has had a refresh and been revisited for all of our families to ensure assessments are realistic and supported and sanctioned by line managers in all parts of the service. Other alternative forms of contact with children and families have been used to stay in touch and to form relationships and make assessments. Virtual visits, garden/doorstep visits, face time and the use of social media has been used responsibly to work as effectively as possible with families.
- There have been strong links with our schools and settings during the past ten months of the pandemic. Using the same risk assessment tool to determine an offer to our most vulnerable children and families has been a good example of children's social care and education colleagues working together.
- Work has been undertaken to further embed our Quality Assurance Framework through thematic audit activity and routine audit activity. This is key to aiding our level of understanding of both outstanding good practice and practice which requires improvement. Our third practice week took place November 2020 which had a focus on the Local Authority as Corporate Parents.
- We are updating our Self Evaluation Framework across all parts of children's services. This exercise is cathartic in terms of it highlighting the journey travelled within children's services and education and helps us to prepare for the sharing of the journey we are on with Ofsted.

What our data tells us

The Children's Advice and Duty Service 6 month review held in June 2020 highlighted a job well done. There has been a downward trend in the number of open cases in the safeguarding teams from 1216 in November 2019 to 831 open cases in November 2020.

The 12 month review is taking place this month (December 2020) and will enrich our understanding as regards the embedding of the model. Overall our front door service is deemed to be a success story and can be held as an example of good practice. A strong message remains in place to the public, and with our partners that our service is ever present, social work led and is very much accessible and open if anyone has concerns about the welfare of a child. This has proved to be effective.

The timeliness of our assessments has increased to 90% a significant improvement from the average twelve months ago which was in 2019/20 61%. Our social work staff have continued to prioritise their assessments of vulnerable children and our compliance levels have increased despite the impact of Covid.

Our looked after children figure has seen a reduction from a steady 400 during the first 6 months of this year down to 378 currently. The demand for external commissioned placements has not seen any increase. This has ensured that budgetary demands have not increased and this is despite the impact of Covid. A joint commissioning strategy is now in place on a tripartite basis with health and education to support joint funding for our most complex children where this is relevant.

There has been a great deal of scrutiny and the driving of plans to ensure right across our service that the right children have the right level of intervention for the right length of time. This work has been supported by the implementation of CADS; by the strong early help offer; by the strong edge of care and adolescent offer; and by our staff ensuring cases are closed promptly or stepped down to the right type of plan to safeguard that child and family; by discharging care orders through the courts where appropriate.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES

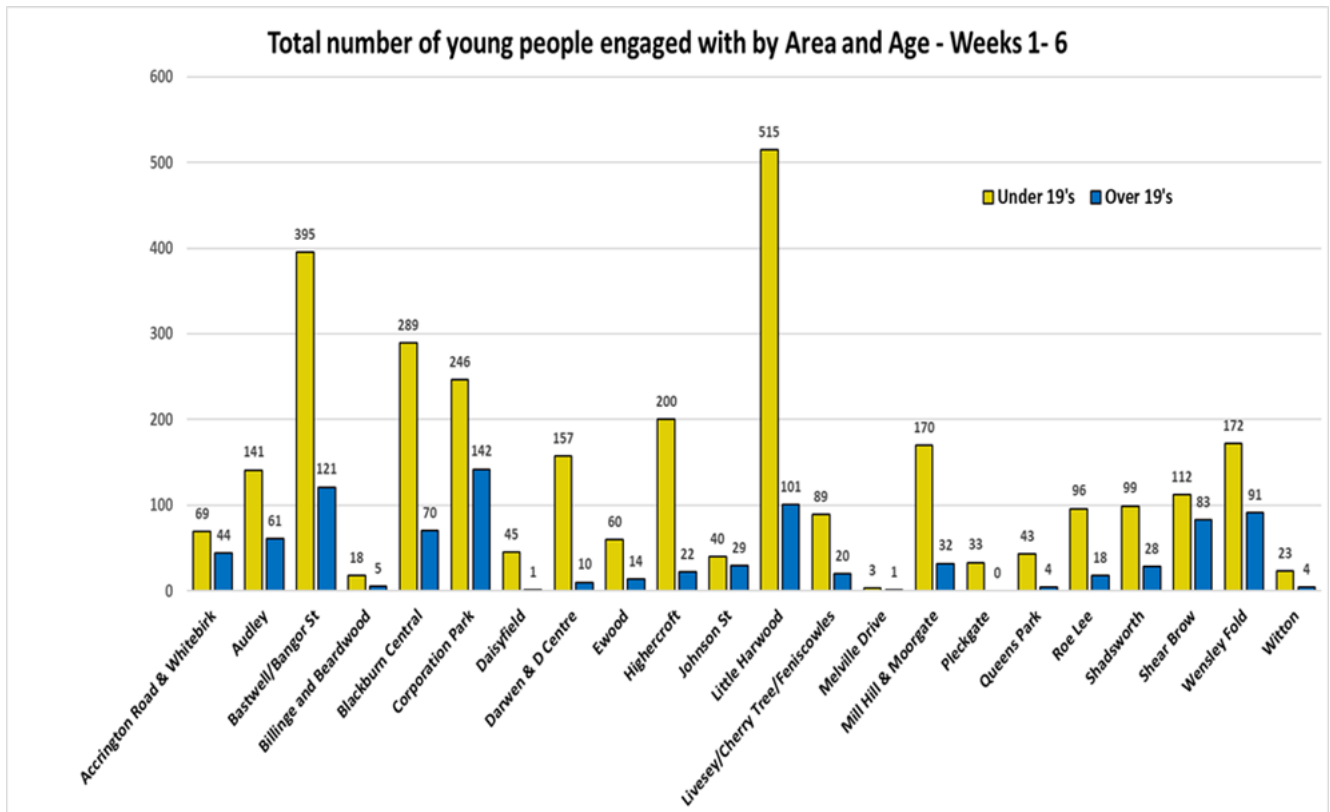
October Half Term HAF programmes

YPS delivered 2 x HAF programmes over summer. One for our Targeted Youth Support Service and one for our SEND provision. Both projects were praised by the visiting DfE representatives and as such YPS were asked to provide similar provision over October half term.

COVID Detached Project

Young Peoples Services led a multi-agency detached project in October and November – requested by BwD Public Health. The project included five additional VCFS providers (BRCT, BYZ, CANW, Youth Action and IMO). Every evening and weekend a minimum of two youth work teams hit the streets to pass on Covid safety messages to young people and young adults. The detached team used intelligence from various sources (Police, Community Safety Team, Elected Members and Neighbourhood Teams) to actively target areas where young people/young adults were congregating.

The team handed out masks as well as tough messaging on how to stay safe and play safe. The project evidenced an increase in compliance. Chart below details areas visited and numbers of under and over 19s engaged with below:



SEND Commission

YPS's SEND project has received lots of positive feedback from parents/carers/YP and visitors over the last few months. As a result of this positive feedback YPS have been asked to take on an additional SEND commission providing a range of leisure and informal education sessions to a group of up to ten ASC YP who need intensive support. The project commenced in December 2020.

YOUTH JUSTICE

Following persistent problems of anti-social behaviour amongst a small group of young people in and around Darwen Town Centre, a project is being set up to target these specific individuals to engage them in more constructive use of their leisure time. Through Youth Justice engagement with these young people, and that of partners in Community Safety and Blackburn Youth Zone, it has been established that a number of these young people have developed a particular interest in music production through an organisation operating from the Meeting Places venue, called 'We Are Noise'. Through a combination of funding from the Youth Justice Service and a successful bid for match funding from Lancashire Partners Against Crime (LANPAC), an initial 12 week programme is due to commence in the new year, allowing eight young people to access the service twice a week for two hour sessions. During these sessions they will cover various aspects of music production, allowing them to express their creativity in a constructive environment, with the hope of channelling their efforts and energy in a productive and engaging way to improve their future prospects. Successful completion of the course will be rewarded with a recognised Arts Awards and potentially lead to ongoing involvement with the project.

SEEDS

Over 65 young people and their families have continued to engage with the SEEDS despite having to adapt to the ever changing restrictions placed upon us all. A creative and flexible approach utilising virtual resources, local resources and tailored kits have helped maintain relationships with The SEEDS, minimise boredom and strengthen family relationships.

Irrespective of the challenges that The SEEDS has faced, positive outcomes for the young people and their families remains our priority. The service continues to go from strength to strength working with some of the boroughs most complex and vulnerable YP and their families.

During the past 6 months the SEEDS have facilitated two HAF programmes (Holiday Activity Fund), one in August where over 24 YP participated and a further one in October half term where 16 YP engaged with the programme. Young people took part in a range of activities, including 'bike' rides, country walks, night walk, trip to Blackpool Zoo, science museum, cross country running, archery, 'come dine with me' and craft sessions. As part of the program supporting families with food and a hot meal in the October HAF programme families and the YP were given choices of an 'air fryer', George foreman' grill or a slow cooker. They were then provided with relevant recipes, menus and ingredients so they could all cook together as a family.

Engage

During the past year, the Engage Team has expanded to cover Child Criminal Exploitation alongside Child Sexual Exploitation and missing from home. Through this new remit the team are already having positive outcomes in this new area of practice. Joint working with the Police, health and education has led to the success of Operation Florence, which resulted in charges against 18 individuals involved in criminally exploiting children. The Engage team have gained the views of children and their families to co-create a new Engage feedback process, and have received good ratings in all audits completed of the team's performance and most importantly their manner in which they work alongside young people to support them through extremely difficult and traumatic circumstances. Engage have adapted to the Covid restrictions with creative new ways of working, whilst ensuring they see all the children and young people they support face to face in recognition of the positive benefits this brings. The team have also delivered multiple training sessions to over 150 professionals within Children's Services, Police, education, health, housing and other key agencies to help ensure children are supported and safeguarded from exploitation.

PERMANENCE SERVICES – Alyson Hanson

Placement stability has improved in Quarters 1 and 2 despite anticipation that Covid would have a negative impact. In 2019 /20 13.1% of children in care had three placements or more and this has improved to 8%. High levels of support to children in care, care leavers and foster carers has succeeded in stabilising a number of fragile placements. Foster carers have fed back that managing adolescents has been especially challenging during Tier 3 and full lockdowns but carers have shown great perseverance and very few placements have disrupted as a result.

Placement stability will remain a strategic priority.

Delays in court proceedings from 26 weeks to 57 weeks on average means that children are in placement much longer and the delays are affecting placement throughput and creating considerable pressures locally, regionally and nationally. The fostering service continues to be able to place babies and very young children with in-house foster carers but in recent weeks it has become increasingly difficult to source placements through the independent fostering sector. There has also been a steady influx of 14/ 15 year olds entering care for the first time because their home living arrangements have broken down. A number of these have been in and out of hospital with mental health difficulties and suicide ideation.

Foster carer recruitment activity has been severely restricted during lockdowns and the overall number likely to have been approved this year will be low at 10 – 12 new households. Tri-partite funding is now in place for residential placements and for children in commissioned foster placements with an EHCP which will help if placement costs rise as a result of these pressures. Adopter sufficiency is much less of a problem. Currently only 2 BwD children (siblings) waiting to be linked with adopters.

Children in care and care leavers have been RAG rated since the start of the pandemic in March and ratings are reviewed weekly. Children in the red category include children in new or fragile placements, young people with a history of missing from home, young people experiencing poor emotional and mental health and various other individual circumstances rendering children vulnerable. The number of red and amber steadily increased slightly in July and August but fell in September when children returned to school and has been fairly static ever since. School attendance of looked after children is 92.08% are actual attenders and official attendance is 95.62

For care leavers episodes of missing from home, fragile living arrangements, poor finances and poor physical and mental health are features of those RAG rated red and to a lesser degree those rated amber. The red and amber young people have had high levels of virtual support from their PA's, and visiting has continued for the most vulnerable. Child Action North West has provided some additional support for a small number including counselling, virtual cooking lessons and other activities. Some care leavers have struggled financially. As those on benefits have had an uplift of £20 a week during Covid, a decision was made to uplift those dependent on their leaving care allowance by the same amount for a three month period. Overall, care leavers have shown themselves to be very resilient and have managed to maintain college placements and remain in stable placements.

Education

Support to schools to manage COVID

In order to support the effective return to school for all year groups in September 2020 – the council facilitated an Education Response Team to support schools in managing the COVID pandemic. The Education Response Team is a Multi-Disciplinary team consisting of colleagues drawn from Public Health, Health and Safety, Human Resources, Education, and Business Support. Its primary role has been to support schools and settings following the full reopening of schools at the beginning of September. Colleagues in the team have their own specialism, but the real success has been that the team is greater than the sum of its parts, and that in the face of complex and challenging enquiries, schools have received measured, sensible and professional support to be able to help manage their anxieties and do the right thing for the children, young people and staff.

The team has dealt with over 1,400 confirmed cases in schools and settings resulting in over 13,000 children being sent home to isolate and over 1000 staff. Many of the confirmed cases have generated phone calls, and emails looking for advice, reassurance and guidance. Meetings have taken place with Headteachers and senior leaders to review cases where multiple cases have been reported or concerns have been raised.

Some of the practical aspects of establishing a new team are often overlooked when looking at how successful it has been. Systems have been established and developed where nothing existed before. The team now has a rich set of data that enables daily and weekly updates to be provided to a range of different audiences and service users.

The team has had to interpret, re-write and keep on top of guidance that is provided on a daily basis. Given the nature of the virus and the need to take swift and decisive action responses have had to be immediate and this has presented an added layer of challenge. Members of the team have carried out walk-throughs of schools looking at how they operate, forensically checking procedures and risk assessments to ensure that what they say, they do. In addition training has been provided for Madrasahs in BwD including providing a user friendly resource to help manage single and multiple cases in their settings.

A daily de-brief allows cases to be discussed, lessons from the day to be shared, and concerns raised to allow for a proactive approach to be taken to emerging issues.

Attendance

Despite our schools and settings dealing with cases of COVID they have continued to ensure attendance returns to the DfE are the highest in the region. Attendance of our children with an EHCP and vulnerable learners (those with a social worker) are typically in line with national average or slightly above / below.

Due to the excellent management of bubbles – BwD have the lowest number of children and young people on average that need to be isolated due to a confirmed case – this good practice has been highlighted by the DfE and RSC office.

Schools have worked hard to develop remote learning strategies that meet the needs of learners. Despite an indication schools and settings may receive a lower number of laptops from the DfE during the half term break – this was remedied and schools did receive allocation needed.

Electively Home Educated

Throughout the pandemic period, EHE families have all been contacted either via telephone or email on a regular basis to ensure that information about support services was shared with families and that families had a key contact person for any concerns or worries that they may have had. Initially home visits were cancelled unless deemed necessary for safeguarding reasons, these visits resumed towards the end of the summer term with staff undertaking COVID secure doorstep visits.

The increased contacts with families has enabled the service to review the information that the department holds about children who are home educated and enabled the production of a monthly data dashboard. This provides more detailed information in respect of children who are home educated, and allows the department to focus its resource particularly at those families or children that are more vulnerable.

The data dashboard has been shared interdepartmentally and resulted in staff across the Children's Social Care and Education workforce having a greater depth of understanding about home education and supported the targeting of resources in a more efficient and effective way.

The service did see a significant spike in the number of families choosing to home educate their children in September 2020, with families reporting that Covid was either the main reason for this decision or that it was a contributing factor. As at the end of December 2020, there were 232 children known to be receiving elective home education in BwD, an increase of 113 on the same period in the previous year.

A review of the home education service has been undertaken resulting in:

- A commission with a local school to undertake annual qualified teacher home visits to ensure that the education being provided is suitable, efficient and full time (as directed by the guidance).
- Half termly caseload discussion meetings have been implemented for accurate management oversight of each case.
- The development of a pathway between health and education to share EHE data

Further work to review the service is continuing, including reviewing existing policies, procedures and digital information and resources for families

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
DATE: 28 JANUARY 2021**

WASTE AND RECYCLING

General waste from householders burgundy bins has increased because of the pandemic, with more residents being at home, the 'lockdowns' and the increased use of takeaway meals. For the months of October and November, in 2019, we disposed of 4,876 tonnes of general waste and for the same period in 2020, we disposed of 5,678 tonnes, an increase of 16%. The collection of this waste has been achieved by the hard work and effort from our collection teams, who have continued to maintain full collection services throughout the pandemic.

The recycling tonnage is now split with paper and cardboard collections in the blue bins, and glass, cans and plastic bottles/containers and certain packaging collected in the grey bin. The key issue for recycling is the quality of the material collected having to meet the stringent standards set by the companies who process and use the materials we collect.

On a positive note, we have seen the level of contamination in our recycling bins reduce from 35% to the latest figure of 12%, which has been consistent for September, October and November 2020 with the results for December expected by late January. This compares well with the average for Lancashire Councils who currently have a contamination figure of 19%.

In terms of specific data for the recycling, 2,702 tonnes of recycling from blue and grey bins was collected in October and November 2020 of which 324 tonnes of recycling was rejected. For the same period in 2019, 2,926 tonnes of recycling was collected, of which 1,024 tonnes of recycling was rejected. This demonstrates that the new collection system is providing a better quality product with more material being recycled and less being rejected.

To help tackle contamination, the leaflet distributed to every household in early December again highlighted which items can and cannot go into which bin. The leaflet also included competition details for the Council's recycling website www.recyclebwd.org. The competition included prizes supplied by our waste and recycling partner, Suez UK, with a first prize of £500 and 5 prizes of £100. At the time of writing, we have had over 3,000 entries to the competition, the winners will be announced late January 2021.

BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

The Council's cemeteries and crematorium continue to work within the restrictions placed on them due to the pandemic, with mourner numbers limited. The crematorium is closed to all but cremation services and only those attending a funeral or visiting a loved ones graveside are being allowed to visit the cemeteries. The portfolio has decided not to increase the fees and charges for cemeteries and crematoria in 2021 in the midst of this pandemic.

PARKING SERVICES

The following Council Owned Car parks have been allocated to support the vaccinations programme in the Borough

Simmons Street - has been allocated as a car park for anyone using the vaccination centre based within Barbara Castle Way Health Centre.

Weir Street and Penny Street - both of these car parks have been allocated as car parks for anyone using the vaccination centre based within Blackburn Cathedral.

Bank Bottoms - this car park has been allocated as a car park for anyone using the vaccination centre based in Darwen Health Centre.

PUBLIC PROTECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Public Protection has continued to focus heavily on Covid secure enforcement in the period October-December 2020, responding to changes in legislation and intelligence provided by police and partners. Work with the police has been particularly close, and partnership working has been excellent.

Each time legislation changes officers are sent into the field to inspect and advise, and then intelligence is used to target resources where more formal enforcement is required. In the period October to December 2020, Public Protection staff carried out over 2000 compliance checks. In addition, the Health and Safety Executive have contacted and advised 360 businesses at our request, and community organisations have supported 200 small businesses to be covid secure.

Compliance has generally been good, although eight £1000 fixed penalty notices have been issued for breaches of covid-secure legislation, and closure directions were served on two premises for breaches of covid legislation. One remains in place.

In addition to enforcement work, during this period PP officers have carried out 415 personal visits to individuals who have tested positive but have failed to respond to the local test and trace staff, and have visited and advised 40 business premises, which had experienced clusters of covid-19 cases.

A covid marshal presence has been maintained in Blackburn and Darwen town centres, and other outlying areas to a lesser extent. The covid marshals are having a positive impact on mask wearing.

In addition to the covid secure work, the Service is making efforts to recommence food inspection visits, inspections to Houses in Multiple Occupation and market surveillance on product safety (there is the potential that Brexit could affect product safety standards in the marketplace).

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTORS: DOMINIC HARRISON &
MARTIN EDEN

DATE: 28 January 2021

PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents
Public Health

Substance Misuse Update - Change Grow Live (CGL) - Inspire and Go2 adults and YP drug and alcohol service: CGL has made some impressive adaptations to their service offer during the coronavirus pandemic to ensure high quality support continues for our some of our most vulnerable residents. The biggest risk of relapse or escalation in drug and alcohol use was isolation, so CGL quickly created a digital timetable of support that included the standard recovery programmes, health and wellbeing sessions, peer support and mutual aid, cooking, and other fun activities. CGL also bought 'burner phones' for service users for welfare checks, so they could continue to support their needs during the lockdown restrictions.

In addition, Inspire / Go2 also:

- Worked closely with The Oaks hotel to house and support homeless people during lockdown, which was well supported by Pennine Lancashire partners: <https://youtu.be/Z5ojp98NIBI>
- Implemented a new REACH worker post, to support homeless people experiencing multiple disadvantages who congregated in the town centre, which often caused challenges for town centre businesses. The impact of training to town centre staff, educating them around why people misuse substances (such as ACE's and trauma) has resulted in successfully smashing the stigma and discrimination these vulnerable service users experienced.
- Set up an innovative needle exchange 'deliveroo' service where service users could order the required stock and had it delivered to their home. This increased coverage of take-home naloxone (an opiate overdose reversal and lifesaving medication) from 55% to 75% meaning that 20% more service users had kits that could prevent drug related death. They also targeted hotspots of injecting such as hostels, and satellite spots where they parked the needle exchange van.
- Supplied digital devices and connectivity to the digitally excluded over 50s across the Lancashire-14 area via a partnership with Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership.
- Moved their professional development training to a digital offer has meant that they have reached even further, with some learners joining from abroad as well as locally, putting BwD on the map in relation to drug and alcohol training.

Start Well – Feeding Future Generations programme: BwD's Food Resilience Alliance has been awarded £13.5k grant funding from Food Power with UNICEF to

deliver a 20 week pilot programme of support for up to 25 pregnant mums and their families who have been affected by COVID-19 and may be struggling to afford food. The project is being delivered in partnership with BwD Council Children's Services, the Wellbeing Service, Blackburn Foodbank, the Health Visiting team and ELHT's Baby Friendly team and provides a comprehensive programme of support in the weeks leading up to the birth of their baby and for 12 weeks after to give babies the best start in life. This includes

- A personal Health Trainer
- Access to five weekly family food parcels from Blackburn Foodbank
- 12 vouchers for hot meals at their nearest Children's Centre with a café
- Supportive Breastfeeding groups
- HENRY parenting programme, including crèche
- Cooking on a Budget programme with weekly food box to practice at home
- £50 worth of vouchers to use to purchase fruit and vegetables from Blackburn Market

Assets-based feeding help Before and After birth' (ABA) intervention study: To build on our achievements as a Baby Friendly Borough, our Infant Feeding Partnership has secured involvement in a national infant feeding research study in collaboration with the University of Birmingham and UCLAN. BwD is now one of ten national pilot research sites across the country, which involves the recruitment and training of local volunteer Infant Feeding Helpers to test the newly developed 'Assets-based feeding help Before and After birth' (ABA) intervention. The ABA intervention was designed to be inclusive and improve infant feeding behaviours, offering a woman-centred approach. Recruitment and training of Infant Feeding Helpers will commence in the New Year, and 'mums to be' and new mums will begin to receive this additional support in spring.

Leisure Services

Staying active has been a consistent and important Public Health message throughout the ongoing pandemic. Leisure teams have continued to make exercise available ensuring, when permitted to open facilities operated in the safest possible way and feedback from members of the public has been persistently positive about this. Technology is being utilised in every way possible to support residents to remain active (whether with us or at home) as part of a new, blended approach to delivering services. During the enforced closure periods of tier restrictions and national lockdown arrangements leisure staff have been deployed across a broad spectrum of roles right across the organisation to support the Covid response.

Healthy Lifestyles & Wellbeing Service

The Wellbeing Service continues to be the point of contact for the public and partners to access any and all health and wellbeing support locally. Teams continue to deliver a broad range of live streaming and online support sessions alongside in-person delivery when permitted.

Wellbeing Service managers are leading the Council's integrated Contact Tracing response, supported by Health Trainers and wider teams across several department areas.

Venues

Although there have been no events or shows at King George's Hall or Darwen Library Theatre for many months bookings from agents and artists continue to be positive with the 2021/22 calendar almost full and the rest of 2022 filling up. Promoters are also requesting dates much further ahead into 2023.

Both Venues were part of the national Save our Theatres campaign, recognising the important value of retaining access to culture. This was further emphasised by securing a £364,000 grant from the Arts Council Recovery Fund. This will help both DLT and KGH re-open with new technology such as electronic tickets, self-ticket scanning devices and the development of an 'at-seat' refreshment ordering app as part of new Covid secure operating procedures.

Libraries

Computer access - despite the full lockdown and T4 restrictions, Blackburn Library continues to provide computer access to residents, enabling those without digital means to stay connected. Over 70 bookings were attended since November and customer feedback demonstrated a clear need for online access, *"I'm so grateful I was able to use a computer, I needed to get into my Universal Credit account and had nowhere else to go, I was desperate – thanks so much."*

Similarly, the **Call and Collect Service**, offering books and audio books to suit all ages, continues at both Blackburn Library and Darwen Library when the buildings are closed and to provide a quick alternate to a longer browsing visit when open.

Believe in the Magic of Blackburn Town Centre book, written by Christina Gabbitas and illustrated by Ursula Hurst, was officially launched from Blackburn Library via a series of digital events on 20th November 2020. Commissioned by Blackburn BID and partners the book highlights and promotes the variety of cultural and visitor attractions that our town has to offer, including Blackburn Central Library, King George's Hall, Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery and The Mall – all of which feature in this historical fantasy story. Primary schools across the Borough dialled into the daytime launch events, with over 3,000 children enjoying Christina's live book readings and follow up Q and A sessions.

Arts & Heritage

Turton Tower: Funding secured from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund will support the Turton Seniors Wellbeing Covid Project. Part of the funding has been used to create a new socially spaced picnic area and to purchase 5 new picnic tables. This has been a huge benefit to the many visitors who walk around the gardens, woods and children's play area, for regular gardening volunteers and visitors to the new Woodland Café take away.

Redecoration of the Egyptian Gallery: During the current closure the museum has taken the opportunity to redecorate the Egypt Gallery. The gallery was last painted in the 1990s! This is not extensive gallery redevelopment and visitors will be reassured to know that Blackburn's Mummy remains at the centre of the gallery.

Year Planner 2021-22

Please note that all meeting dates are subject to change

Last Updated 12.01.2021

YEAR PLANNER 2021

	May	June	July	August	September	October
Monday						
Tuesday		1 DTC				
Wednesday		2 HWB			1 Schools re-open	
Thursday		3	1		2 HWB	
Friday		4	2		3	1
Saturday	1	5	3		4	2
Sunday	2	6 Civic Sunday	4	1	5	3
Monday	3 May Day Bank Holiday	7 Schools re-open PEOPLE OSC	5	2	6 PEOPLE OSC	4
Tuesday	4 DTC	8 GLSC	6 DTC	3	7 DTC	5 DTC
Wednesday	5	9	7	4	8	6 GLSC
Thursday	6 Elections	10 EB	8 EB	5	9 EB	7 CF
Friday	7 Elections Count	11	9	6	10	8
Saturday	8	12	10	7	11	9
Sunday	9	13	11	8	12	10
Monday	10 Elections Count - PCP	14 PLACE OSC	12	9	13 PLACE OSC	11
Tuesday	11	15	13 GLSC	10 GLSC	14 GLSC	12 LASC
Wednesday	12 Eid al Fitr	16	14	11	15	13
Thursday	13	17 PH	15 PH	12 EB	16 PH	14 EB
Friday	14	18	16	13	17	15
Saturday	15	19	17	14	18	16
Sunday	16	20	18	15	19	17
Monday	17 New Member Induction	21 RESOURCES OSC	19	16	20 RESOURCES OSC	18
Tuesday	18	22 LASC	20 L Eid al Adha Schools close	17 LASC	21	19 L
Wednesday	19	23 CI/T	21	18	22	20 CPSAG
Thursday	20 AC	24 SC	22 CF	19 PH	23	21 PH
Friday	21	25	23	20	24	22 Schools close
Saturday	22	26	24	21	25	23
Sunday	23	27	25	22	26	24
Monday	24	28	26	23	27	25
Tuesday	25	29 AUD	27 CPSAG	24 AUD	28	26 AUD
Wednesday	26 CI/T	30	28	25	29	27 SC
Thursday	27 PH		29 CI/T	26 CI/T	30 CI/T	28 CI/T
Friday	28 Schools close		30	27		29
Saturday	29		31	28		30
Sunday	30			29		31
Monday	31 Spring Bank Holiday Half Term			30 August Bank Holiday		
Tuesday				31		

YEAR PLANNER 2021/2022

	November	December	January	February	March	April
Monday	1 schools re-open					
Tuesday	2 DTC			1 DTC	1 DTC	
Wednesday	3	1		2	2	
Thursday	4	2 PC		3	3 CPSAG	
Friday	5	3		4	4	1 Schools close
Saturday	6	4	1 New Years' Day	5	5	2
Sunday	7	5	2	6	6	3
Monday	8	6 PEOPLE OSC	3 Bank Holiday	7	7 PEOPLE OSC	4
Tuesday	9 GLSC	7 DTC	4 Schools re-open	8 GLSC	8 GLSC	5 DTC
Wednesday	10	8	5	9	9	6
Thursday	11 EB	9 EB	6	10 EB	10 EB	7
Friday	12	10	7	11 Schools close	11	8
Saturday	13	11	8	12	12	9
Sunday	14	12	9	13	13	10
Monday	15	13 PLACE OSC	10 CPSAG	14	14 PLACE OSC	11
Tuesday	16	14 GLSC	11 GLSC	15 LASC	15 HWE	12 GLSC
Wednesday	17	15	12	16	16	13
Thursday	18 PH	16 PH	13 EB	17 PH	17 PH	14 EB
Friday	19	17 Schools close	14	18	18	15 Good Friday
Saturday	20	18	15	19	19	16
Sunday	21	19	16	20	20	17
Monday	22	20 RESOURCES OSC	17	21 Schools re-open	21 RESOURCES OSC	18 Easter Monday
Tuesday	23	21 LASC	18 AUD	22	22	19 LASC Schools re-open
Wednesday	24 SC	22	18 CI/T	23	23	20
Thursday	25 CI/T	23	20 PH	24 CI/T	24 CF	21 PH
Friday	26	24	21	25	25	22
Saturday	27	25 Christmas Day	22	26	26	23
Sunday	28	26 Boxing Day	23	27	27	24
Monday	29	27 Bank Holiday	24	28 FC	28	25
Tuesday	30 HWE	28 Bank Holiday	25 L		29 AUD	26 L
Wednesday		29	26		30 SC	27
Thursday		30 CI/T	27 CF		31 CI/T	28 CI/T
Friday		31	28			29
Saturday			29			30
Sunday			30			
Monday			31			
Tuesday						
Wednesday						

YEAR PLANNER 2022

	May	June	KEY
Monday			Council & Committee Meetings
Tuesday			AC – Annual Council 6.00 pm
Wednesday		1	FC – Finance Council 6.00 pm
Thursday		2 Spring Bank Holiday	CF – Council Forum 6.00 pm
Friday		3 Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday	PC – Policy Council 6.00 pm
Saturday		4	EB – Executive Board 6.00 pm
Sunday	1	5	PH – Planning & Highways Committee 6.30 pm
Monday	2 May Day Bank Holiday	6 PEOPLE OSC Schools re-open	AUD – Audit and Governance Committee 6.30 pm
Tuesday	3	7 DTC	SC – Standards Committee 6.00 pm
Wednesday	4	8	LASC – Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee & GLSC General Licensing Sub Committee 6.00 pm
Thursday	5 Elections	9 EB	L – Licensing Committee 6.00 pm
Friday	6 Elections Count	10	
Saturday	7	11	
Sunday	8	12	
Monday	9	13 PLACE OSC	
Tuesday	10 GLSC	14 GLSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committees
Wednesday	11	15	PEOPLE OSC – People Overview & Scrutiny Committee 6.00 pm
Thursday	12	16 PH	PLACE OSC – Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee 6.00 pm
Friday	13	17	RESOURCES OSC – Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee 6.00 pm
Saturday	14	18	CI/T – provisional dates assigned for Call Ins or Member Training
Sunday	15	19	
Monday	16	20 RESOURCES OSC	
Tuesday	17	21 HWB	
Wednesday	18	22 LASC	Partnership Meetings:
Thursday	19 AC	23	HWB – Health & Wellbeing Board 5.30 pm
Friday	20	24	CPSAG – Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group 6.00 pm
Saturday	21	25	
Sunday	22 Civic Sunday	26	
Monday	23	27	
Tuesday	24	28 AUD	Other Meetings:
Wednesday	25 CI/T	29 SC	DTC Darwen Town Council 7.00 pm
Thursday	26 PH	30 CI/T	
Friday	27 Schools close		
Saturday	28		
Sunday	29		
Monday	30		
Tuesday	31		