

Public Document Pack

Council Forum

Thursday, 26th January, 2023

6.00 pm

Council Chamber, Blackburn Town Hall

[Link to Webcast](#)

AGENDA

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4. Mayoral Communications
5. Council Forum
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6. Motions
To consider any Motions received under Procedure Rule 10.
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9. Updates from other Committees
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Committees

- a. To receive an update from the Chair of the Standards Committee.
- b. To receive a joint update report from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

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12.	Year Planner 2023/24	
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	Following submission of the draft Year Planner for 2023/24 to the Policy Council Meeting, the final version is now attached for approval.	

Date Published: Wednesday, 18 January 2023
Denise Park, Chief Executive

POLICY COUNCIL **Thursday 1st December 2022**

PRESENT – *The Mayor, Councillor Suleman Khonat, Councillors P. Akhtar, H. Akhtar, Baldwin, Casey, Connor, M. Desai, S. Desai, Fazal, Fielding, Floyd, Gee, Gunn, Harling, Hardman, Humphrys, I. Hussain, M. Hussain, S. Hussain, Irfan, Imtiaz, Jackson, Z. Khan, Liddle, Marrow, McCaughran, McGurk, Ab. Patel, Al. Patel, Raja, Rigby, Riley, Russell, Salton, Shorrock, Sidat, Jacq. Slater, Jo. Slater, Ju. Slater, N. Slater, D. Smith, J. Smith, Talbot, and Whittingham.*

RESOLUTIONS

40 Welcome and Apologies

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting.

There then followed Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain.

A minute's silence was then held in memory of former Councillor Don Rishton.

Apologies were received from Councillors Ali, Brookfield, Browne, Imtiaz, S. Khan, Rawat and Taylor.

41 Minutes Of The Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Council Forum meeting held on 6th October 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

42 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

43 Mayoral Communications

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Matthew Jackson following his election to the Council and highlighted some recent events he attended.

The Mayor brought attention to a number of compliments from partners that had thanked the hard work of Officers and the Council.

The Mayor also thanked Councillors for their work, and hoped that this would continue.

44 By-Election – Darwen South Ward

Before moving the report, Councillor Riley congratulated Councillor Zamir Khan on his MBE. He also welcomed Councillor Matthew Jackson to the Council.

The report detailed the new political composition of the Council, following the 17th November 2022 by-election. This was as follows:

- Labour Group - 37 (72.55%)
- Conservative Group - 13 (25.49%)
- Liberal Democrat - 1 (1.96%)
- Total - 51 (100%)

Councillor Riley drew attention to the Charitable Funds Committee becoming a formal committee of the Council.

Members were notified of the appointments to serve on the Charitable Funds Committee. These were:

- Councillor Damian Talbot (Labour) - Chair
- Councillor Dave Smith (Labour)
- Councillor Stephanie Brookfield (Labour)
- Councillor Matthew Jackson (Labour)
- Councillor Jean Rigby (Conservative)
- Councillor Julie Slater (Conservative)

RESOLVED – That Policy Council:

1. Note the result of the by-election for a seat in the Darwen South Ward, held on Thursday 17th November 2022, and the current political composition of the Council;
2. Note the appointment of six Members to serve on the Charitable Funds Committee for 2022/23.

45 Council Response to Covid-19 Pandemic 20-22

Members received a report and a video, which outlined the key response highlights throughout the Covid-19 pandemic from various perspectives.

RESOLVED – That Policy Council:

1. Note the video and supporting report.
2. Recognise that Covid-19 continues to remain a threat to public health and that eligible residents should utilise the offer of an Autumn Booster vaccination.
3. Acknowledge the Covid-19 response activities undertaken by BwDBC staff; residents; private and public sector partners and VCFS organisations and thanks them for their efforts in such a challenging period.

46 Corporate Plan 2023-2027

Members received a report which set the Council's strategic priorities for the next four years.

Members were asked to reflect on the Council's current performance.

Each portfolio had been asked to provide a red, amber or green forecast for their performance measures. Information relating to the 69 KPIs for the first half-year of 2022/23 (April 2022 to September 2022) was as follows:

- 61% (42 actual) forecast "green" or on track
- 25% (17 actual) forecast "amber" where delivery is on track and currently being managed
- 3% (2 actual) forecast "red" where performance is, or is likely to be off track
- 11% (8 actual) of the measures' data and/or a RAG rating is currently unavailable

A key focus of the document was the ambitious growth plans. The Corporate plan also highlighted the Council's focus on climate change, as well as providing a focus on young people. Furthermore, the plan drew attention to the aim of building healthier, happier and safer communities.

It was highlighted that this would be done in a financial sustainable way, with the Council continuing to be innovative and forward thinking.

RESOLVED – That Policy Council:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Note the draft corporate plan for 2023-27.
3. Agree the final text of the Corporate Plan will be signed off by the Leader and Chief Executive.
4. Note the current performance of the Council.

47 Year Planner 2023-24

The draft Year Planner 2023/24 was submitted, ahead of submission of the final version to the Council Forum Meeting in January 2023 for approval.

RESOLVED – That the draft Year Planner 2023/24 be noted.

Signed at a meeting of the Council Form

On 26th January 2023

(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: **26TH JANUARY 2023**

AGENDA ITEM NO.:

DESCRIPTION (BRIEF):

NATURE OF INTEREST:

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY/OTHER (delete as appropriate)

SIGNED :

PRINT NAME:

(Paragraphs 8 to 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council refer)



REPORT OF:	Leader of the Council
TO:	COUNCIL FORUM
DATE:	26 January 2023

SUBJECT: BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN PEOPLE'S JURY ON THE CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform the Council Forum of the outcome of the Blackburn with Darwen People's Jury on the Climate Change Crisis.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council Forum is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the report on the People's Jury on the Climate Change Crisis (**Appendix 1**);
- 2.2 Note that a progress report and updated Climate Emergency Action Plan, taking account of the Jury's recommendations, will be submitted to the March meeting of the Executive Board.

3. BACKGROUND

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and pledged, in its Climate Emergency Action Plan, to open a dialogue on climate change with partners and residents, beginning with a People's Jury to help to inform the priorities for the borough as a whole.

A People's Jury brings together a diverse group of people who represent the demography and geography of an area to work through an issue, share ideas and come up with a set of informed recommendations.

The Blackburn with Darwen People's Jury on the Climate Change Crisis met between September and December 2022 and drew up 15 recommendations on the themes of communication and education, transport and housing and building in response to the question:

'What do we need to do in our homes, in business and our local area to respond to the climate change crisis?'

The Jury's recommendations are to be launched at an event on 23rd January 2023 in King Georges Hall and will inform future iterations of the Climate Emergency Action Plan for the Borough.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no Legal implications arising from this report.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no new implications for policy. The People's Jury report supports the Council's ambition for the Borough to be carbon neutral by 2030.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. CONSULTATIONS

None

Chief Officer/Member

Contact Officers: Martin Eden, Strategic Director of Environment & Operations

Date: 17th January 2023

Background Papers: None

APPENDIX 1: Blackburn with Darwen People’s Jury on the Climate Change Crisis

Introduction

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and pledged, in its Climate Emergency Action Plan, to open a dialogue on climate change with partners and residents, beginning with a People’s Jury to help to inform the priorities for the borough as a whole.

In June 2022, following an Invitation to Quote on the Chest, the Council commissioned Shared Future CIC, to establish and facilitate a People’s Jury on climate change in Blackburn with Darwen.

The Blackburn with Darwen Borough Climate Change People’s Jury was established in September 2022 to put citizens at the centre of designing a response to the climate emergency. Thirty two residents from across the Borough were recruited to answer the question ‘*What do we need to do in our homes, in business and our local area to respond to the climate change crisis?*’

People’s Jury

These 32 residents were recruited through the delivery of six thousand letters signed by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, to randomly selected households across the Borough. The profile of the jury membership reflected the diversity of our population and can be seen as a mini version of the borough. Of the 32 people initially recruited, 27 stayed on board throughout the process, with no fewer than 25 people attending each session.

The People’s Jury met eight times between late September and early December 2022. To help them with their task, the jury received presentations from 19 commentators (similar to expert witnesses), these commentators were from academia, the private sector, third sector and public bodies, they covered the topics listed in the schedule below:

Session	Date & Time	Content
1	Monday 26 th September 6:30pm – 9.00pm	Welcome and setting the scene. Introduction to each other, facilitators and the process.
2	Saturday 8 th October 10.00am – 4.00pm	Commentators: What is climate change and what are its impacts at a local/regional/global level? Digging deeper: what are the root causes?
3	Monday 10 th October 6:30pm – 9.00pm	How does change happen? Which themes would you like to look at in more depth in the next sessions (4-6)?
4	Monday 31 st October 6:30pm – 9.00pm	Themed session: Communication & Education
5	Monday 7 th November 6:30pm – 9.00pm	Themed session: Transport
6	Monday 14 th November 6:30pm – 9.00pm	Themed session: Housing & Building
7	Saturday 18 th November 10.00am – 4.00pm	Writing of Jury Members draft recommendations

8	Monday 5 th December 6:30pm – 9.00pm	Discussing concerns in small groups to improve recommendations. Finalising recommendations for voting after the session.
Voting on recommendations		

The format was the same at each session. After the presentations the speakers were asked to leave the room whilst the Jury broke into groups with a facilitator to talk with each other about their learning and to think about any questions they would like to ask. The speakers returned to the room for a question and answer session lasting around 30 minutes. There was more detailed group discussion after the speakers had left the session. The jury members had the opportunity to deliberate, challenge each other and ultimately reach a set of recommendations on how Blackburn with Darwen Borough can best address the climate emergency.

The process was led by a team of independent facilitators with extensive experience in People’s Jury facilitation from the social enterprise Shared Future CIC.

Oversight panel

In order to ensure the process was robust, fair and unbiased, an Oversight Panel was formed to agree the recruitment methodology, the overarching question and the identity of the commentators. This panel met parallel to the jury and was made up of 21 members from the public, private and third sectors. Representatives of the Council were Councillor Zainab Rawat, Councillor Katrina Fielding, Abdul Razaq, Director of Public Health and Martin Eden, Strategic Director of Environment & Operations, who chaired Panel meetings.

The Jury’s Recommendations

Using the information it had received over the preceding weeks, the Jury spent its penultimate session formulating its recommendations on its key themes of:

- Communication & Education
- Transport
- Housing & Building

The draft recommendations were submitted to the Oversight Panel, which was given the opportunity to provide feedback in terms of what jury members might want to consider when finalising these recommendations, for example, was the proposal already underway or out of the control of any of the stakeholders. The Jury could choose whether to take account of the feedback or not.

At its last session, the Jury discussed the feedback and finalised their recommendations. These recommendations are not only for the Council, there are also asks of other public sector bodies and organisations and companies in the private sector and third sector.

The Jury has made clear what the priorities for Blackburn with Darwen should be from the residents' perspective. Their recommendations will inform the next iteration of the Climate Emergency Action Plan for Blackburn with Darwen.

The Report of the Jury

The whole of the Jury process and the outcomes were written up as a report by Shared Future. The report and recommendations are to be launched on Monday 23rd January 2023 at an event in King George's Hall for elected members, officers of the Council and stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors.

Jury members will present the recommendations and tell the story of why they got involved and what they have gained from the experience. The recommendations will only be made public at the launch, which is why they are not detailed in this report. The report and recommendations will be emailed to all Elected Members of the Council on 24th January 2023

Members of the Oversight Panel will continue to meet twice-yearly to review progress, in liaison with members of the Jury, many of whom are keen to work with the Council and others on the climate emergency.

At the outset of this process, the Council Leader committed to presenting the recommendations to this Council Forum. It is proposed that the People's Jury recommendations inform the Council's Climate emergency action plan for 2023/2024.

Each stakeholder organisation on the Oversight Panel has also agreed to take the recommendations to a governance and/or decision making body and to take action to help deliver on the recommendations.



REPORT OF: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
TO: COUNCIL FORUM
DATE: 26 January 2023

SUBJECT: MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2022/23

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform the Council Forum of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, who met recently to discuss the Members Allowances Scheme for 2022/23 following the recent staff pay award.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council Forum is asked to:

- 2.1 Consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (**Appendix 1**);
- 2.2 Approve the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel set out in section 5 of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

Following a review by the Panel in January 2022 and making recommendations to Council, the current Members' Allowance Scheme ('the Scheme') was adopted by Finance Council on 28 February 2022 and implemented in May 2022 - ([Report 28.02.22. MembersAllowances Scheme 2022-23. IRP.pdf \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](#); [REPORT \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](#); [Part 6 Members Scheme 2022.pdf \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](#)). Paragraph 5.2 of the Scheme provides for the allowances to be "*rated annually in line with the pay award for local authority NJC staff with each annual increase being reported to a Council meeting for information at the earliest opportunity*". The Scheme also states that any other amendments to it will be determined by the Council following receipt of recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Whilst in most years the NJC pay award has been determined as a percentage increase on each pay point, the pay agreement for 2022-23 reached in November 2022 was that all local government staff receive a pay award of £1925 (pro-rata for part-time employees). This equates to a 10.5% rise for the lowest paid staff and 2.72% for the highest paid on the Council's staff grading structure (for the majority of staff on 'Green Book' NJC terms and conditions).

The offer also includes a permanent extra day's leave per year for all staff from 1 April 2023, and an uprating of 4.04% on allowances (such as travel, accommodation, overtime etc).

As the main increase has been agreed as a flat rate, it became necessary to convene a meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the Members Allowances Scheme 2022-23 for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

4. REVIEW OF THE SCHEME

As outlined in the attached report from the IRP, the Panel met on 12th January 2023 to consider the Members Allowances Scheme, looking at a number of options, taking into consideration the approach taken by some comparator local authorities.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The legislative framework for members' allowances is contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ('the Regulations'). Local authorities must also have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State when setting up or operating their scheme.

Under the Regulations, local authorities are required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations on the level of basic and special responsibility allowances, and other related expenses that are paid to Councillors.

It is a function of the Council to have regard to the report and recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Scheme, and to adopt and amend the Member's Allowances Scheme.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Local authorities have discretion as to the form and amount of their scheme of allowances (save for travel allowances), subject to a minimum basic allowance for every member. Local authorities are therefore free to set their members' allowances at levels that reflect the level of responsibility and the amount of time they devote to council affairs. An up to date Member's Allowance Scheme would help encourage more diversity and representation from residents to devote time for public roles.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Panel's recommendations would be contained within existing budgets.

8. CONSULTATIONS

Officers consulted with the Panel and provided information as requested. Officers also consulted with colleagues at other local authorities on the work of their respective IRP's.

Chief Officer/Member

Contact Officers: Asad Laher, Deputy Director – Legal & Governance.
Phil Llewellyn, Corporate & Democratic Lead

Date: 16th January 2023

Background Papers: None

Report of: The Independent Remuneration Panel

To: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Forum on 26th January 2023

Members Allowances 2022/23

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in January 2022 to advise the Council on the adoption of a Scheme of Members' Allowances from May 2022. The appointments to the Panel are for a term of 4 years.
- 1.2 The Panel was convened under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021). These regulations, which arise out of the relevant provisions in the Local Government Act 2000, require all local authorities to set up and maintain an advisory Independent Remuneration Panel to review and provide advice on Members' allowances. All Councils are required to convene their Allowances Panel and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their allowances scheme and they must 'pay regard' to the Panel's recommendations before setting a new or amended Members' Allowances Scheme.
- 1.3 The Members of the Panel are Ian Woolley (Chair) who has chaired the Panel for a number of years and was also formerly Chair of a Local Health Authority and is a retired Managing Director of a local pharmaceutical business, Miranda Carruthers-Watt, Solicitor and retired Local Government Senior Executive, and David Swift, retired Audit Professional from an NHS background.
- 1.4 It has been necessary to convene a meeting of the Panel to consider the options for Members Allowances in 2022/23 following the recent staff pay award.

2. Methodology

1. The Panel were supplied with the following information to assist its work:
 - A briefing note together with a copy of the existing Members' Allowance Scheme
 - Some comparator information from other local authorities on how their approach to the matter
 - The information and advice of officers on possible increases to Members' Allowances and the financial context.
2. The Deputy Director of Service Legal and Governance and the Corporate and Democratic Lead attended a meeting on 12th January 2023 to answer questions and support the Panel.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Following a review by the Panel in January 2022 and making recommendations to Council, the current Members' Allowance Scheme ('the Scheme') was adopted by

Finance Council on 28 February 2022 and implemented in May 2022 - ([Report 28.02.22. Members Allowances Scheme 2022-23. IRP.pdf \(blackburn.gov.uk\); REPORT \(blackburn.gov.uk\); Part 6 Members Scheme 2022.pdf \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](#)). Paragraph 5.2 of the Scheme provides for the allowances to be *“rated annually in line with the pay award for local authority NJC staff with each annual increase being reported to a Council meeting for information at the earliest opportunity”*. The Scheme also states that any other amendments to it will be determined by the Council following receipt of recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Whilst in most years the NJC pay award has been determined as a percentage increase on each pay point, the pay agreement for 2022-23 reached in November 2022 was that all local government staff receive a pay award of £1925 (pro-rata for part-time employees). This equates to a 10.5% rise for the lowest paid staff and 2.72% for the highest paid on the Council’s staff grading structure (for the majority of staff on ‘Green Book’ NJC terms and conditions). The offer also includes a permanent extra day’s leave per year for all staff from 1 April 2023, and an uprating of 4.04% on allowances (such as travel, accommodation, overtime etc).

As the main increase has been agreed as a flat rate, it became necessary to convene a meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the Members Allowances Scheme 2022-23 for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

4.0 Members Allowances 2022/23

- 4.1** At the meeting, Panel Members considered the various options available, and also considered the approach taken by some comparator local authorities. The main options considered were:
- No increase to allowances.
 - Increase Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances by 4.04% back-dated to 1st April 2022.
 - Increase Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances by some other amount.

The Panel also considered deletion of paragraph 5.2 so that the annual review during the period of the Scheme was no longer linked to the NJC staff pay award.

- 4.2** Following discussion the Panel felt that the best solution would be to recommend that in years where a flat rate was paid to staff, that a lowest percentage increase on the Council’s staff grading structure (which for 2022/23 is 2.72%) should be applied to Members Allowances. In years where a single percentage increase only was awarded to staff, the same rate of increase should also apply to Members Allowances. Mileage and subsistence rates were recommended to remain in line with those paid to staff.
- 4.3** The Panel also noted that as highlighted in its last report to Council in February 2022, that Blackburn with Darwen paid significantly less to its Members than many of its neighbours, and also of the importance of appropriate remuneration to attract potential Councillors.

- 4.4** Although it was not on the original agenda, discussion led under ‘Any Other

Business' onto appropriate remuneration for Independent Members of the Standards Committee which had not been reviewed since 2012. It was considered appropriate for the equivalent of 50% of the Vice Chair SRA payment (around £400 p.a) to be paid to the Independent Members, and that this be considered by Full Council for approval.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1** The Panel recommend to Full Council that paragraph 5.2 of the Members' Allowances Scheme (May 2022) so that in years where a flat rate is paid to staff, that a lowest percentage increase on the Council's grading structure should be applied to Members Allowances. In years where a singlepercentage increase only is awarded to staff, the same rate of increase should also apply to Members Allowances. Mileage and subsistence rates are recommended to remain in line with those paid to staff.
- 5.2** Accordingly for 2022/23, Member Allowances be increased at the rate of 2.72%.

**Ian Woolley,
Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel
January 2023**

REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE.

Councillors Parwaiz Akhtar

PORTFOLIO COORDINATING

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR – LEGAL &
GOVERNANCE: Asad Laher**

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

Register of Members' Interests - New Process

The Committee on 21 December 2022 considered the legal framework applicable to the registration and declaration of member interests, and the new digital process for submitting and updating the Register of Members' Interests. The Committee also received a presentation of the digital system for submitting and updating the Register of Members' Interests.

There is a requirement under the Localism Act 2011 and the Member's Code of Conduct to register and declare pecuniary and other interests. There are implications (including criminal penalties) for failure to register and declare interests. It is therefore important for Members to register their interests in accordance with the Code, and ensure that it is kept up to date. It is also important for Members to consider and declare interests at meetings and when taking decisions, seeking necessary advice from Legal officers.

In order to assist Members, the Governance team have set a new process for Members to register their interests. This is through Council's Mod.Gov system, which has a facility for registering interests for each Member. This is then populated and published in a table format. Many councils are already using the Mod.Gov system to register and publish their Member interests. This system has now been set up by the Governance team and is accessible for Members to complete and update their interests without requesting a paper form.

The report to the Standards Committee on 21 December 2022 can be viewed from the link:
[Report - Member Interests Dec 2022.pdf \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](#)

Recommendation: The Council formally notes the requirement to register interests and approves the digital process for submitting and updating the Register of Members' Interests.

New Council Values & Behaviours.

The Committee on 21 December 2022 also considered the new Council values and behaviours, and in conjunction with possible review of the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations. The Protocol is contained in Part 5, Section 3 of the Council's Constitution, and its purpose is "...to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another". Although the Members' Code of Conduct has been subject to some amendments since its formal adoption in 2012 following recommendations by the Committee, the Protocol has not been reviewed for some time.

At the previous meeting of the Committee, it was presented with the work undertaken in relation to the Council's organisational values: *Trust, Respect, Ambition, Collaboration, Kindness (TRACK)*. A special Member Training session was also held on 12 October 2022 to present these organisational values and behaviours, which has been cascaded to all staff.

The Committee considered the adoption of Council's Values and Behaviours as a reciprocal understanding in their engagement with officers and their incorporation in the Protocol as part of the review.

The report to the Standards Committee on 21 December 2022 can be viewed from the link: [Report - New Values Behaviours.pdf \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](#) ; [App A Protocol on MemberOfficer Relations.pdf \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](#)

Recommendation: The Council:

- approves the review of the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations and the incorporation on the Council's organisational values: *Trust, Respect, Ambition, Collaboration, Kindness (TRACK)*.
- notes that the revised draft Protocol on Member/Officer Relations will be reported to Council for consideration and adoption.

Councillor Parwaiz Akhtar
Chair of Standards Committee

January 2023

Report to Council Forum

26th January 2023

Progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Purpose of the Report

To update the Council Forum on the progress of the Policy and Corporate Resources, Health and Social Care, Children and Young People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21st November 2022.

The Committee met on 21st November and continued to progress its work programme.

1. Terms of Reference for the Committee

Members received draft terms of reference for the Committee for consideration. The terms of reference had been drawn up to assist members in their work and give a greater understanding of the issues that were to be scrutinised and how this could be done. The Committee noted the terms of reference.

2. Quality Care Homes in the Borough

The Committee looked at the issue of Quality Care Homes in the Borough and the issues that they would raise with the Strategic Director as a task Group in January and agreed a focus for the meeting.

The Committee will focus on the following –

a typical person going in to care, a person with specific needs and a person discharged from hospital?

The current situation within the borough regarding care homes?

How do we ensure we have and then maintain quality in the boroughs care home provision?

Where do we stand legally on the provision of care homes in the borough the duty to provide care homes?

What happens if we have not got enough provision in the borough to meet need?

How would we deal with a provider withdrawing services at short notice?

Is the care market in the borough sustainable?

How does the Health and Wellbeing Boards Ageing Well Strategy tie in with care provision?

If a care home in the borough suddenly closed how would we as an authority deal with this?

The Committee agreed that a meeting of a task group be set up to meet in January to look at the issue of care homes and discuss the scope as outlined above with the strategic Director.

3. Progress of the Task Group looking at Leisure, Leisure Centre Usage and Re:refresh.

The Task Group met on 1st November at Blackburn Leisure Centre and discussed with officers from the Public Health and Operational Services Department a number of issues that the Committee had included in its scope of the topic.

- The scope of the refresh offer and who it was targeted to benefit
- The current offer and how this has developed historically
- The funding for the initiative both historically, now and in the near future.
- How users access the programme
- Booking arrangements for sessions
- Availability issues
- How leisure centres were dealing with the issues caused by the economic situation
- How leisure centres sought to attract people to centres and the methods used.

The Executive Member will now be requested to report to the Committee on how the changes in the future funding for Re refresh will be managed, how this will impact on service provision and the impact on Leisure Centres and to look at how accessibility to the re: refresh Programme is managed with particular regard to issues relating to digital bookings which may exclude some sections of the community. The Executive Member will also be requested to report back to the Committee on how reductions of funding will impact on the health of the borough and how the work on going in partnerships that could help mitigate this.

Jacqueline Slater,

Chair of the Health and Adult Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5th December 2022.

The Committee met on 5th December and continued to progress its work programme.

4. Update from the Youth MP and the Youth Forum.

The Committee received an update on the work of the Youth Forum and the Youth MP. The Committee were informed of progress on the Takeover challenge that had been held in November and focused on Child Poverty. The day had included work on issues such as resilience, food poverty and children's mental health. Over 80 schools had taken part from across the borough and great feedback had been received.

The Committee were informed that the youth forum/ youth MP would now share the findings with schools and youth organisations and ask for their feedback. They would collaborate with schools, colleges and stakeholders on the issues raised and look at presenting the findings at various strategic bodies.

The Committee were updated on the recent visit to the House of Parliament to take part in the national youth debate. The debates had focused on the issues affecting young people and reflected the main issues being considered by the youth forum.

The Committee were keen to continue with the work of the Youth Forum being reported to them and would support their campaigns and work where possible

5. Achieving Excellence Update and the Improvement Board.

The Committee received an update on the work following the OFSTED review and were informed that the Achieving Excellence Board had been replaced with the Improvement Board which would support a board made up of partners. The Board would look inward at what we do and how we do it and focus on deep routed reviews of the services that were provided for children of the borough. The Committee were informed that even though the process had now been streamlined it would still focus on the inspection report. The establishment of a monthly 'Improvement Board' to oversee the ILACS framework priority areas for development and wider departmental strategic actions, will comprise of Council Officers and be supported by LGA Advisor Linda Clegg.

The revised governance arrangements will also include the establishment of a 'Quarterly Partnership Improvement' meeting for the Local Authority, Health & Police to share intelligence to influence the direction of the improvement strategy and maximise shared learning opportunities.

The Committee noted the revised arrangements for the delivery of the improvement plan following the OFSTED inspection and that the Achieving Excellence Board would now be replaced with an Improvement Board. Regular reports on the progress on the post inspection plan and the areas of recommendations would be submitted to this Committee.

6. Self-Evaluation Framework.

The Committee received a presentation from the Interim Director Children and Education on the Self-Evaluation Framework. The frame work was a requirement that focused on what we did and how this made a difference to the lives of children in the borough. The Committee were reminded of the challenges we faced as a borough together with the contextual information. The Committee looked at the areas that the Authority needed to address as part of its self-evaluation and the difference that it made to the lives of children in education and early years and special educational needs. The Committee were informed that part of the issues that we still needed to address needed a national lead such as the appointment and retention of social workers. The Interim Director undertook to provide information to members on the workloads of social workers in the Borough and work that we undertook to retain them in the Borough. Members drew attention to the improved provision of data which helped assess progress of service delivery and need. It was pointed out that data was useful however this still needed to be interrogated to ensure that it was understood properly. The Committee noted the progress on the Self-Evaluation Framework and that detailed information be provided to the Committee at their next meeting on progress and issues that needed to be addressed following the self- evaluation process.

Councillor Sylvia Liddle,

Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee met on 12th December and looked at a key issue relating to their work programme.

7. The New Approach to Procurement and Leveraging of Social Value

The Committee received a presentation on the lessons learned since the introduction of the Council's Social Value Policy (SVP), approved by Council in March 2022.

The SVP had three main elements:

- Set minimum commitments expected from providers
- A local first approach where possible on low value spend
- For high value contracts setting 15% of the evaluation criteria on social value priorities

The Council's Social Value priorities were outlined, and bidders for contracts were now asked for commitments about delivery of social value priorities and the impact they would make. The delivery of social value commitments were closely monitored and outputs tracked, and examples were given of positive examples from the first six months. The lessons learned and next steps were outlined and specific examples of social value outputs relating to the Growth Deal 3 South East Blackburn were highlighted, including employment by contractors of apprentices and work placements and work with local communities. The social value outputs relating to the Fishmoor Housing Development were also outlined, particularly relating to job creation.

Members discussed the presentation and indicated that they felt that some contracts should be broken down into lots to enable smaller firms to get on the Council's frameworks, and the need for penalties where possible for those companies who had promised social value benefits but not delivered them. The Committee requested that the Executive Member report back to them on how the Council can address this issue.

8. Work Programme for the Committee

The next meeting of the committee will look at Section 106 (s106) funding, focussing on:

- How is s106 funding spent?
- Where is it spent?
- The decision making process
- Involvement of Ward Councillors/Consultation
- How could s106 funding be spread/shared by wards where there was unlikely to be any development that would lead to a s106 agreement?

The Committee also discussed infrastructure as part of the discussions on s106 funding, but decided that the scope was already large enough for the next meeting, so requested that a report be presented to the subsequent meeting on infrastructure considerations in the Borough, covering s106 aspects, but also the issues and ongoing actions relating to school places, highways, transport, NHS services etc.

Brian Taylor, Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Salim Sidat, Vice Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee met on 19th December and continued to look at issues that had been highlighted for consideration as part of their work programme.

9. Digital Strategy.

The Committee received an update and presentation on the progress of the Council's Digital Strategy. Progress made on the Strategy 2021-2024 the 4 outlined work streams was outlined. These streams were:

- Digital First for our Services
- Enable Transformation for our Staff
- Data Driven Organisation
- Secure and Resilient Technology

The Strategic Director highlighted how Blackburn with Darwen had invested in the people, skills and infrastructure to provide 21st century public services, that enabled the Council and its services to work in new ways. He also told the group that as the Council embarked on its latest vision for digital and technology it had done so with strong foundations, albeit after a prolonged crisis with the Covid-19 pandemic in which the pace of technological change rapidly increased. The next steps for the Digital Strategy within the Council were highlighted that they will continue to deliver planned work with existing investment across the four work streams and work in accordance with the six principles set out in the strategy. These were:

- Customer Centred Design
- Secure by Design
- Cost and Quality Effective
- Digital First and Inclusive
- Data driven
- Open, flexible and Cloud First

Going forward, the Strategic Director discussed the potential risk to delivery in the medium term if existing revenue and programme funding is limited or scaled back. The seriousness of the risk of Cyber Attacks was also highlighted if the Council does not continue to invest in work stream 4 of the Digital Strategy.

The Committee discussed issues with the director including the risk of leaving behind those who are technologically illiterate, the cost effectiveness and value for money of the Digital Strategy project, and the safety of the Council from cyber-attacks. The Committee noted the progress on the delivery and supported the way the digital strategy being implemented.

10. Update on the Accommodation Strategy

The Committee were updated on the Council's Accommodation Strategy. The Strategy followed a number of principles which were:

- To adopt a planned and structured approach to determining our future office accommodation needs
- To manage office buildings as a corporate resource to drive down cost, and maintain safety and security.
- To invest in the repair and maintenance our key office buildings to reduce maintenance backlog.

- To maximise use of fewer assets, through smarter working 'work is what we do, not a place we go'
- To achieve carbon reduction through environmental improvements and adaptations. (BEIS)
- To promote joint working and explore opportunities for shared use of assets with partner organisations to improve collaboration and reduce costs.

The Committee were informed of a number of options to raise finances from the Council's accommodation. This included the potential for shared use of office spaces, or the selling of Council land/ accommodation. The Committee noted the strategy and requested to be kept informed of the development and implementation of the strategy in the coming months.

11. Revenue Monitoring

The Committee were updated on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2022/23 on the basis of a budget monitoring exercise undertaken at the end of September 2022. The Executive Member for Finance and Growth highlighted the request to the Executive Board to:

- a. give approval to the Portfolio Cash Limit Adjustments as outlined;
- b. note the General Fund Budget Summary position as at 30th September 2022;
- c. in view of the forecast overspend to request Portfolio Holders to review their budgets for the remainder of 2022/23 with a view to addressing the issues identified and limiting the amount of monies that would be required to be taken from reserves at financial year end;
- d. note the Earmarked Reserves and General Fund Balance position.

The Executive Member summarised that with the predicted overspend, work must be done to improve the efficiency in all portfolios.

Members of the Committee questioned the Executive Member included how the Council was dealing with the Cost of Living crisis, and the possibility of using other streams of income to balance the overspend. The Committee agreed to closely monitor the budget situation and the work of portfolio to review expenditure.

Councillor Tony Humphrys.

Chair, Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

Date: 26.1.23

Christmas 2022

Events

I hope everyone at Council Forum and across the borough had a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year. Our council teams and partners worked hard to put on another fantastic programme of events across the festive period. Crowds well into their thousands gathered in Darwen Market Square for the lights switch-on and Blackburn town centre also came alive with thousands of people filling King William Street.

The 2022 Blackburn Festival of Light annual light parade made its way through the town centre on Saturday, December 17th featuring amazing community-created lanterns, performers, musicians and light art sculptures. This year there was also a light-up shop window trail and light installations around the town centre.

Spend Christmas

We knew this Christmas was going to be tough for some of our residents and businesses with the cost of living crisis nationally so we teamed with partners to launch our new 'Spend Christmas...' campaign.

We worked really hard to pull together a campaign filled with free events and giveaways and to encourage people into our town centres to have fun with their family and friends – spending their time there and doing their Christmas shopping locally. It was also designed to show people just how much Blackburn with Darwen has to offer – including our fantastic selection of high street and independent shops, events and places to eat, drink and visit.

Feedback from the Mall and Blackburn BID has suggested this joined-up partnership approach was effective in driving more people into the town centre and raising the profile of what we have to offer. The response from the public on social media was also excellent and almost 4,000 people entered the competition to win the top prize. What's special about Blackburn with Darwen is the huge sense of community spirit; we all pull together when times are tough to support each other and I'm really pleased to say, as this campaign shows, that spirit is as strong as ever.

BBC

I was also delighted to see Blackburn Cathedral chosen by the BBC to host its Christmas services. The BBC have never done live broadcasts of both Christmas services from the same location before so it was a real coup for the town and the cathedral and something to be proud of. The investment in the Cathedral Quarter has turned the grounds into something spectacular and we were proud to show off this remarkable work with the rest of the country on live television.

Christmas 2022 was also a time to reflect how far we've come since the Covid-concerns of the previous year but it was another year where we've worked incredibly hard to keep delivering services for our residents, protect the most vulnerable and support our communities and businesses. We know the challenges we face but, at the same time, there is a lot to be excited about as we head towards 2023 and we have a real determination to keep moving ahead with our ambitious plans.

Local Government Finance settlement

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published the latest Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement just before Christmas. More detail can be found in the Executive Member for Finance and Governance's council forum report but the settlement is largely in line with what we were expecting. The figures are for a year with broader policy principles for two years which provides some limited assistance towards planning for the future.

But while we welcome the overall increase, including additional funding for adult social care, the public services that our residents want and need are still struggling with the impact of ten years of government-driven austerity. Demand is massive and growing, costs are rising, inflation is at its highest level for nearly 40 years and these factors result in pressure on all of our council services.

It's important to recognise that the Government is asking Councils to raise Council tax by the full allowed amount as a means to help solve the crisis in adult social care. This assumes an increase of 4.99 per cent. This crisis has been developing for years and needs a national government-led solution but, instead, the government are expecting our residents to pay additional money to prevent this social care crisis from getting worse. Given the other financial demands on our residents in terms of the cost of living crisis, we are considering this new demand in the context of the impact on them as well as the council's financial position. The final decision on council tax rates will be taken by Finance Council on February 27.

Cost of Living

Our campaign to support our residents with the cost of living continues, with signposting to all available help through our dedicated webpages and regular social media updates pointing people to the most appropriate support, both local and national. This has included a specially produced animation explaining the Household Support Scheme, featuring a voiceover from Community Connector Tracy Davies, to make sure as many people as possible are aware of the scheme.

Since the Household Support Scheme re-launched in October, we have been able to give support to more than 500 people and families, and where anyone is not eligible we have been able to signpost towards additional help via our partners in the voluntary, community and faith sector. The eligibility for the scheme has now been expanded so that it is able to help more people, especially those who are in work but may not meet the threshold for benefits, but who are still struggling.

This will continue in this new year and further work continues to be carried out to make people aware of the scheme via our Community Champions and neighbourhood Teams and communications across all our available channels.

This is an incredibly challenging time but we are confident that with the support and help available, we can weather this crisis, while making sure we continue to steer the borough on its upward course.

Business Growth

We know the challenges we face around budgets and the cost of living but, at the same time, there is a lot to be excited about as we head towards 2023 and we have a real determination to keep moving ahead with our ambitious plans for the borough. There is a real buzz around our towns as shown just recently by The Mall having a record day with shoppers nearly returning to pre-covid numbers.

We are pleased that our plans for almost £7m from the Shared Prosperity Fund, which will leverage around £20m of wider investment, have been agreed by Government. The Council is also working really hard with partners on delivering an ambitious £100m Town Deal Investment Plan for Darwen.

Also key to our future plans is our growth strategy and a vital part of that is being able to progress with the two Levelling Up bids we have submitted to Government which are key to driving forward our growth plans. The delay of many months in making any formal announcements is disappointing but we hope to hear more by the end of January.

We've also recently had news of a £2m boost for the boroughs arts, culture and creative industries via Arts Council England announcing the funding allocation for its prestigious National Portfolio Organisations. This has been the culmination of a series of consistent decisions over the past half a decade to fund arts projects and build culture at heart of what we do. Council officers have been key to building that momentum and this Arts Council funding is all part of our reward for that.

There are many more exciting plans for 2023 and beyond linked to our £1bn vision for the future, including our Blackburn Growth Axis framework, which will seek to capitalise on our reputation for enterprise while leveraging the economic benefit of major new developments within and adjacent to the Borough, but all within our functional economic area – which we will update on in due course but my main message is this: our towns are doing well, despite challenging economic conditions, and we are determined to re-establish the borough as one of the most important economic centres in the North West.

Elections

For reasons that are not entirely clear, election changes have been introduced by the Government that mean voters will be asked to provide photographic ID if voting in person at a polling station. These changes will happen for the first time at the local elections in May. We will be providing more information for electors in the coming weeks but would anticipate the majority of people having an acceptable form of ID. It would be a tragedy however if these changes prohibit anyone from exercising their democratic right to vote.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group is now established and has already discussed a number of topics, including the refresh of the Equality Strategy and Equality Objectives, the use of data in making evidence-based policies and the creation of staff networks. The Council is also in the process of updating and refreshing its response to legal duties including the Equality Watch Report and Equality Impact Assessments.

Going forward, there will be a focus on improving the current data on the workforce and using this to inform internal policies and strategies. There will also be a closer connection to the Organisational Development programme to ensure that EDI is fully embedded within the culture of our organisation. There will also be an EDI training for Members on the 2nd & 8th February, from 6-8pm in Meeting Room A. Meeting invitations have been sent out, and could you all please attend one of these.

These activities will enable staff to work better together, create a more inclusive workforce and ensure all aspects of EDI are incorporated into service delivery. They will also allow us to meet our obligations as a local authority under the Equality Act 2010 whilst supporting our priorities under the refreshed Corporate Plan.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

COUNCILLOR JULIE GUNN

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: Acting Director
Children's Services and Education
Thursday, 26 January 2023

PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents;

Children's Social Care

- **Help & Protection**

In the run up to Christmas there has been(charitable generosity with the giving of Christmas gifts for those families in need. Family Support Workers and Social Workers co-ordinated the delivery of these gifts ensuring that children did not go without at Christmas. In response to fuel poverty and the cost of living crisis, Early Help practitioners have been proactive in identifying sources and accessing energy support for families in need. The need for this was particularly acute during the very cold spell in December and this will continue to be invaluable for the remainder of the winter.

Staff engagement sessions were held with teams in Early Help and Safeguarding and areas we can improve on to support our workforce have been identified. It came across strongly that our workforce enjoy working for the department and have positive experience as employees.

There has been a focus on the recruitment of Social Workers within our Safeguarding Teams. With the support of our HR colleagues there is a new recruitment drive incorporating our TRACK values, to attract Social Workers in what is a very competitive market. Along with renewed job adverts there is a recruitment event planned for Saturday 21st January.

- **Placements and Permanence**

There have been a number of events that have taken place over recent months within the Fostering Service for the carers and children and young people - all organised via the Foster Carer Association (FCA) and the Fostering Team.

A Halloween Party was enjoyed by looked after children and young people and their foster carer families on the 27th of October at Kaleidoscope Youth Centre. This was followed by a Christmas Fair on 10th December with stalls, tombola and raffles, all of which raised money to subsidise Christmas Panto tickets for 2023. The Christmas Panto this year was Cinderella which families enjoyed on the 3rd December.

Monthly Fostering recruitment open evenings have continued to take place at Blackburn Leisure Centres hosted by the Marketing and Recruitment Officer and a Fostering Social Worker. In addition, there has been a collaboration with Blackpool Borough Council to undertake a recruitment campaign for specialist carers for Pace Remand Beds / Complex Needs carers and Parent and Child Placements. This event led to one prospective carer moving forward with an application. There is ongoing advertising at Blackburn Rovers, Burnley Football Club and the local Ice Skating Rink and the Hawks. A re-launch of communications for recruitment will take place in the New Year with a closer working relationship with the corporate Communications Team.

- **Children with Disability (CWD)**

The Children with a Disability Team have been joint working with Newfield School and Children and Families (CAF) Leads to support parents of younger children in a preventative approach. The aim going forward is to deliver specific parenting support and programmes to parents in school aimed at supporting behaviour that parents find challenging. This is in addition to

responding to common concerns of parents such as diet, sensory seeking behaviours and sleep, and to follow up individually with any parent who would like support but are still at the lower level of the continuum of need.

The CWD team is attending the monthly coffee morning at Newfield to talk directly to parents about the role of children's social care and try and change the narrative around social care assessment. The aim of this is to be able to support parents at a much earlier stage to improve outcomes for children and families and also reduce the likelihood of families approaching the team when at crisis point, or with children needing to be cared for away from home.

The CWD Team Manager has formed new links with the Service Manager and Team Manager from Kirklees Council, which has enabled the service to begin to consider how they can support those children and young people with a package of outreach more effectively. This is in line with consultation with parents and young people. We envisage a new model would also allow more capacity in the team for preventative approaches.

The team are introducing the concepts of 'brilliant at the basics'. This means offering Family Group Conferencing to all families coming for assessment, ensuring that we gather the views of absent parents, ensuring visits and meetings are held in a timely manner and in a way that is accessible for children with complex needs. We are focussing on the importance of play, stimulation and education as we have identified that these are common areas of concern that we identify through assessments. This will help shift the narrative from a medical model approach to a social model approach.

We are looking to bring the Occupational Therapy contract in house which should mean a better service for families in terms of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). We plan to refresh our processes around this and ensure that our communication with families is clear around the processes and decision making involved.

Youth Justice Service (YJS), Young Peoples Services (YPS) and Engage

- **Youth Justice Services (YJS)**

During October 2022 the Youth Justice Service was inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), incorporating several weeks of preparation prior to a full week of fieldwork where four inspectors were on site in Duke Street. All aspects of the service were scrutinised with specific focus given to governance and leadership arrangements and the service provided to children and young people that enter the service via the Police and Courts, as well as the experience of those that go on to enter the secure youth estate.

Although formally embargoed until 16th January 2023 when the final report is published, we have received notification that the YJS has been graded 'Good'. Details contained within the draft report received highlights that there were several individual areas rated as 'Outstanding', including governance and leadership and staffing arrangements. Through the points scoring system used during the inspection process, it can be seen that the service was a matter of two points from being graded as 'Outstanding'.

As with any inspection process, there are recommendations for further development of the service. Several of these are already being implemented, however, they will be formally captured in an 'Improvement Plan' to be submitted to HMIP following the report being published.

- **Young Inspectors Programme**

Young Inspectors is a National Quality Assurance process that puts Young People at the heart of scrutinising and improving local services.

The Blackburn with Darwen Youth Forum have re shaped national guidance to better reflect the local area and have had two young leaders qualified nationally in the programme.

Blackburn with Darwen has developed a local training programme, recruited a pool of over 10 trained young inspectors and are now close to finalising the second pilot inspection with SEEDS. Young Peoples Services (Targeted Youth Support) has already been inspected, with the programme evaluated and tweaked as a result. Nightsafe will be inspected in the New Year, to ensure we test with Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector (VCFS) partners. The first full inspection is in the planning for the Youth Justice Service in late January.

- **SEEDS**

The SEEDS held an annual Christmas party on 19th December 2022 and 23 young people attended with their families and brother and sisters. Cllr Julie Gunn and the Jo Siddle, Acting Director of Children's Services attended the event and spoke with the young people and their families. All young people who attended the event received a Christmas gift and their brothers and sisters also received a gift.

The SEEDS currently has 21 young people accessing short breaks which is an increase from previous months.

- **Leaving Care**

The Leaving Care end of year party was held on 15th December and 30 young people attended in addition to the Council Leader Cllr Phil Riley, Cllr Julie Gunn. One young person provided the DJ entertainment for which got all our young people up dancing including young people from Apple House supported living. The young people all received a gift and had a wonderful buffet.

A total of 235 gifts for our young people in leaving care were donated, alongside monetary donations to support purchasing additional gifts, ensuring every care leaver has received a Christmas gift.

Education and Vulnerable learners

This term, Ofsted have been carrying out both graded (Section 8) and ungraded (Section 5) inspections in our local area using the updated Education Inspection Framework (EIF). Overall, the majority of all schools in Blackburn with Darwen are judged good or better with no schools judged as inadequate. As an Education Team we continue to support and challenge schools to help them secure the best possible outcomes for all children across our borough.

Update on our area wide improvement focus - Developing Speech, Language and Communication

At the beginning of September we launched a borough wide initiative linked to improving speech, language and communication outcomes for all children in all settings including; Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI's), Nurseries and Early Years settings. The initiative is based on;

1. Carrying out audits in all provisions through a speech, language and communication scrutiny lens.
2. Each setting using a comprehensive speech, language and communication screening assessment toolkit that will provide borough wide data at three points across the year.

The key achievements of the initiative so far have been;

- There is a 100% take up from all schools, nurseries and children centres.
- Schools and settings have submitted baseline data and this will now be used to inform practice in the settings and across the borough.
- We are beginning to build up a strong evidence base of what strategies work best in improving children's language and vocabulary development in Blackburn with Darwen.

As an Education Department we have also refined and improved the monitoring of part-time timetables in schools, particularly for vulnerable pupils.

We ask all our schools (including Multi-Academy Trusts) to complete an electronic monthly part-time timetable return. The data is then collected, quality assured and scrutinised each month. School returns have improved since their introduction at the beginning of the year and all schools now return information. Through monitoring the use of part-time timetables we are able to ensure that children and young people have access to a broad and balanced curriculum alongside a full range of support services if needed, for example SEND support.

As a result of monitoring, the use of part-time timetables the following actions have been completed this term:

- More collaboration between schools and the SEND service resulting in the right support for children and young people at the right time.
- Greater sharing of data with the EY and SEND teachers
- A more joined-up approach across education teams with more effective data sharing with schools

- **Holiday Activities & Food Programme (HAF)**

Children's Centres

HAF Christmas delivery took place 19th-23rd December. There were lots of positive activities during the week including multi-sports, cinema trips, pantomime and lots of Christmas parties. The strength of our partnership working and the enthusiasm for HAF across the borough is a fantastic achievement.

Children centres were very busy taking orders for the lunches we provided for families who don't always want to access an activity. All eight children centres delivered activities and a free meal.

Blackburn Rovers Community Trust – this is the 3rd year that the Trust has supported our families in need. This year they provided 600 x £15 vouchers for Asda for families. These are all families who are on a CAF, Child in Need, Child Protection - and also all our Leaving Care young people receive a voucher.

Young Peoples Services (YPS)

YPS delivered two HAF programmes this Christmas. Targeted Youth Support delivered a programme which included a residential, trips to museums, activity centres, cinemas and bowling alleys and all participants received food and drinks. The programme engaged with the majority of the current cohort which is 110 children and young people.

The SEND Inclusion team delivered a programme for those children and young people identified as having a Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND). Working closely with the Disability Team – the most vulnerable children and young people and their families are offered a range of indoor activities supplemented with trips including to Smithhills Farm.

Free School Meals Eligibility

This month, the Chief Executive, Denise Park, received a letter from the Minister for Schools, The Rt Hon Nick Gibb, in response to the Motion agreed at the October Council Forum Meeting requesting the extension of Free School Meals eligibility for the benefit of families. The Minister confirmed that the government does not have any plans to extend universal provision but will continue to keep all free school meal eligibility under review, to ensure that these meals are supporting those who need them most. The National School Breakfast Programme has been extended until July 2024 to support up to 2500 schools in disadvantaged areas.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & OPERATIONS

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: Strategic Director
of Environment & Operations
Thursday, 26 January 2023**

PLACE: Community pride in a vibrant place to live and visit;

Waste and Recycling

The period of snow and ice in December tested the resilience and planning of the refuse and recycling service, which saw the teams working hard to complete services in at times, treacherous conditions. The services hard work and dedication saw the service complete the majority of collections on time, with just a small number of properties not serviced on their collection day, but collected when the weather allowed access to be available.

Collections during Christmas and New Year have been maintained, with all properties serviced as per scheduled collections.

The Government and their regulatory body, the Environment Agency, issued a directive on Monday 19th December 2022, that from 1st January 2023, persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are poisonous chemical substances that break down slowly and get into food chains and can no longer be sent to landfill. The Environment Agency issued guidance, on 19th December 2022, regarding the disposal of Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDs) containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). From 1st January 2023 this waste will no longer be accepted at landfill and must be destroyed through incineration. To comply with the guidance, Councils need to make changes to how this waste is collected and disposed/treated.

The overwhelming majority of Blackburn with Darwen BC waste is sent to energy from waste outlets and not to landfill, with waste only sent to landfill as and when the energy from waste outlets are offline for scheduled servicing. The Council is working with its disposal contractor Suez UK on how it can collect this type of waste and transport it to comply with the new guidance. Once a decision has been made, the Council's Bulky Waste Service web pages will be updated.

Waste Education and Enforcement

In November and December, nine schools were visited, with each school receiving the Recycling Heroes session delivered by Sally Booth. In these sessions, the children learn about reduce, reuse and recycle, what each bin is for and where the rubbish and recycling goes. The children play an interactive board game where they match different materials with the correct bin and get to take home a pack full of resources to carry on at home. This includes a bin sticker for children to write their house number on and stick on their bins at home. In December, we also took a year 4 class to the SUEZ depot in Darwen to see the big piles of rubbish and recycling, to enable the class to gain a better understanding of waste management.

We are also working closely with DACA who have set up a food group, after school. This food group made up of students who are concentrating on food waste and how we can help educate about reducing food waste. In the next few months, we're planning on

working together with the food group to create some videos or resources to educate other students and parents of the school.

With our New Environmental Education Officer, we have been working closely with the Envirocrime team to look at working with the back street cleaning team to provide education alongside removing waste to prevent more waste being created.

We have also been working with Red Rose Recovery to create a litter picking group in the Galligreaves area. They litter pick the area once a week and educate if they speak to any residents. Over the last few weeks, the amount of rubbish they are seeing and collecting has reduced, which is a great sign.

The team has also produced what we intend to be our final hard copy Christmas waste leaflet, before we go online with the information, and delivered the leaflet to every address in the borough (end of November/beginning of December) concentrating on reducing waste and recycling at Christmas. A new web page was also created on www.recyclebwd.org to expand on the messages in the leaflet as well as a leftover recipe section and food storage hints and tips.

Parks and Open Spaces

The Council is looking to improve play facilities at a number of parks during 2023, using section 106 and grant funding sources. Improvements are planned for the Whits at Witton Park, Queens Park play area and also Roe Lee Park. These improvements come shortly after the newly refurbished play area at Blacksnape play area in Darwen.

Public Protection and Environmental Health

Air Quality Update

The Environmental Protection Team has successfully bid to maintain its status as Local Site Operator for a DEFRA real time air quality monitor within the Borough.

The real time air quality monitor, which is located in the grounds of Accrington Road Community Centre, is funded by DEFRA and provides background air quality data as part of the Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN).

The Team also monitors air quality using Diffusion Tube technology at 47 locations around the Borough. The scope of the monitoring program in the Borough has assisted the Team in producing a robust Annual Air Quality Status Report for DEFRA.

DEFRA has accepted the findings of the report, and in particular has supported the proposed revocation of Air Quality Management Areas at Intack, Bastwell and Four Lane Ends. Work will now commence on a consultation process prior to any revocation taking place.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PREVENTION AND WELLBEING

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS:
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Thursday, 26 January 2023

PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents;

Men in Sheds - Blackburn Rover's Community Trust: This winter, Men in Sheds were shortlisted as a finalist for the Community Volunteer Awards 2022. The programme won the Health and Wellbeing Group Award in acknowledgement of the input and direction the 'men' have taken the project in and the support they provide each other. Men in Sheds meets every Thursday morning and is very welcoming to new members.

Changing Futures making a real difference: Changing Futures, the Lancashire wide programme supporting some of our most vulnerable and complex adults led by Blackburn with Darwen continues to make a significant progress as it reaches the mid-point of its funding period. In Blackburn with Darwen over 100 individuals have or are being worked with to address a range of disadvantage, including; homelessness, substance misuse, mental health issues, domestic abuse, and contact with the criminal justice system.

We have significant numbers of people entering recovery, remaining abstinent from drugs/alcohol, engaging with the help they need for poor mental health as well as the by-product of reduced offending and reducing entrenched homelessness, often for the first time in many years for a sustained period. We are now looking at how we sustain our delivery model when the Changing Futures programme ends in March 2024 and have co-produced a comprehensive sustainability and legacy plan with people with lived experience that highlights the work we need to do to ensure public services continue working collaboratively in a trauma informed and holistic way.

Emergency Winter Provision for Rough Sleepers (SWEP): The SWEP provision commenced on 14 November 2022 this winter making an instant impact on the borough's rough sleeper numbers which for the first time this year reached two or less consistently for the remainder of November and into December. Our offer includes emergency accommodation at our PODS site in Shadsworth, which comes with a package of support through the housing needs team supported by Changing Futures, maximising our opportunity to sustainably improve people's circumstance by getting to the core of what has resulted in them having to rough sleep.

The pods are self-contained and therefore Covid-secure, they have en-suite facilities, which includes a power shower, storage space, a TV and are fully insulated and heated. Two diner pods are also on site and contain cooking facilities, kettles etc. Tea and coffee are being provided along with weekly food parcels supplied through the food bank. Combined with our housing first model and wider prevention work, over winter there is always an alternative to homelessness for any resident of Blackburn with Darwen no matter their circumstances.

Covid-19 Response Update

The Covid-19 case rate has continued to decline in recent months, however, we continue to support high risk settings and communities through the winter period. The Stay Well Pledge was launched in November 2022, which businesses and organisations can sign

up to promote that work they are doing to keep their customers, staff and volunteers safe. The pledge forms part of the Council's wider 'Stay Well' winter campaign, and 36 organisations have signed up to date. The pledge promotes best practice while providing reassurance to staff and customers. By signing up to the Pledge, businesses and venues will demonstrate a continued commitment to follow public health guidance and promote;

- staff to access vaccinations
- adequate ventilation
- support for customers and staff who wish to wear face coverings
- hygiene facilities for staff and customers
- encourage staff and volunteers to try and stay at home if they feel unwell
- support for staff with health and wellbeing needs
- safe working practices according to HSE guidance

Through autumn, we have been supporting our NHS colleagues with the roll out of the autumn booster vaccine campaign. We have worked collaboratively with the NHS to set-up a comprehensive outreach programme including a pop-up vaccine clinic in the Bus Station, which, due to its success ran from Monday 12 September until 5 November 2022 and delivered over 3000 vaccines. Since the pop-up clinic closed, we have visited numerous sites within Blackburn with Darwen including HMOs, children's centres and community centres, taking the vaccine to the heart of our communities.

The Covid-19 de-brief reports have been finalised and shared with relevant departments. This exercise assisted us in collectively reviewing our local response, to highlight what worked well and identify learning for the future. The Covid-19 Public Inquiry team have been holding their preliminary hearings in advance of the public hearings due to begin in spring 2023. As a Core Participant of the Inquiry, the Local Government Association (LGA) have formally requested Councils to support them. We have and will continue to work with the LGA and the Inquiry team and respond accordingly.

Affordable Warmth Forum: as the residents of Blackburn with Darwen prepare themselves for further energy industry price increases the support mechanism put in place by third and statutory sector partners as well as Central Government needs to be coordinated for the residents to benefit its full potential. In response to this, on 5 December 2022 the Blackburn with Darwen Affordable Warmth Forum was launched. The Forum is being led by Blackburn with Darwen Healthy Living, who has been successful in securing three years of funding from the National Lottery, working in partnership with the Council. The main aim of the Affordable Warmth Forum is to raise awareness of fuel poverty and fuel debt in the borough whilst working collaboratively to make best use of resources across all partners. The Forum will meet regularly and will have input from residents with lived experience of fuel poverty and fuel debt to guide and inform the work.

Health and Wellbeing Board: The Health and Wellbeing Board met on 6 December 2022 and received items relating to the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Better Care Fund, as well as a summary of the latest national guidance for Health and Wellbeing Boards. The Board reviewed and commented on a revised terms of reference and received an annual update from the Age Well Partnership, which is a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Road Safety: The Public Health team commissioned Social Sense to consult with schools in the borough and aid them in designing a road safety campaign. In the first phase of the consultation, Social Sense visited three schools consulting with 670 year 9

students in assemblies. The three schools were St Wilfrid's, Darwen Aldridge Community Academy and Pleckgate. This generated a report detailing the barriers pupils have to active travel, what would encourage them to consider active travel and if they feel safe on the roads.

In the second phase of the consultation, schools and youth groups were invited to design a road safety campaign. The West End Girls group participated in the consultation and won the design competition with 'Be Aware, Stay Aware'. A representative from this group had a photoshoot with members from the road safety group, Social Sense and councilors outside the Town Hall for a Shuttle article to promote the campaign. The campaign ran through November on bus stops, digital screens and physical posters to include coverage of Road Safety Awareness Week.

Healthy Hearts Campaign: The Blackburn with Darwen Healthy Hearts campaign launched in October and ran until December 2022. The campaign intends to raise awareness of heart health and self-care, particularly amongst men. Working with the Wellbeing Service, re:refresh, the HARRI Bus and our Communications team we used national campaigns to magnify the messages locally including the 'Know Your Numbers' blood pressure campaign, National Fitness Day and Stoptober. We also promoted the NHS Health Checks during this time and have partnered with Blackburn Hawks to deliver NHS Health Checks through the Wellbeing Service at two ice hockey games in November and used this event to target men aged 40-50 in particular as this group does not tend to visit their GP for their NHS Health Check. Thousands of napkins with an NHS Health Check information QR code and Healthy Heart logo embossed on have also been distributed to a wide variety of food venues across the borough, including the Blackburn Ice Arena, mobile food vans and cafés.

The Recipe 4 Health (R4H) award: The Recipe 4 Health (R4H) award promotes businesses, including schools, which focus on healthy eating, environmental issues, and social responsibility. R4H is awarded by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and is a Lancashire Trading Standards scheme for caterers. We recently held a celebration event at King George's Hall to recognise the efforts and commitments of primary schools in the borough, with 99% of primary schools now signed up to the award.

CCTV Hub receives ISO9001 and British Standard accreditation: Between 23 and 25 November the council's CCTV hub was audited by the Security Systems and Alarm Inspections Board (SSAIB). The control room and CCTV operation as a whole passed both the British Standard (BS 7958) and ISO9001 accreditation with flying colours. In the feedback, it was noted that "Blackburn with Darwen has one of the most technologically advanced local authority owned CCTV control rooms in the UK" and provides a "...professional and highly valued services to its partners". Over the last 12 months through the integrated police systems and police staff now within the control room the use of CCTV in supporting crime detections and prosecutions has increased 40% with a doubling of incidents recording and forwarded for investigations.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULTS SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH

COUNCILLOR MUSTAFA DESAI

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: Strategic Director
of Adults and Health
Thursday, 26 January 2023

PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents;

Winter Planning and Resilience

Winter planning has been a necessary and critical part of our business planning in recent months. This includes setting out our business continuity arrangements to support the management of major areas of risk during what is typically a pressured season of the year. This year's planning has taken into consideration the continued challenges and pressures across the health and social care sector in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and seasonal Flu. It has been further complicated by the challenges brought about by workforce shortages, cost of living crisis and national strike activity, all of which have impacted upon the health and social care sector. This significant planning and the measures put in place has enabled business as usual activity to continue within adult social care whilst supporting unprecedented hospital pressures.

Measures to support winter resilience have included identifying and securing resources to enable additional discharge from hospital settings, for example, block purchasing residential and nursing provision and increasing capacity to provide domiciliary care within people's own homes. This activity has been further aided by facilitating additional capacity within homelessness accommodation and opportunities via the household support grant.

Adult Social Care Reforms

With respect to Adult Social Care Reform, preparation for the CQC Inspection of Adult Services, continues. Key officers are linked into national and regional networks and forums, sharing assurance preparation activity and best practice. Recruitment activity continues as a means to identify a dedicated project team, although this has been highly challenging, alongside exploring and commissioning digital solutions and benchmarking our current offer. Early in the New Year, assurance activity will focus on self-assessment and informal peer review, as a means to evidence our strengths and identify areas for consideration.

Some other aspects of Adult Social Care Reforms, have been paused by Central Government, specifically Charging Reforms. The associated funding for these aspects of the Reforms has been included within the broader social care grant allocations to Local Authorities. These are currently being worked through locally.

Service Developments

A recent analysis of our statutory Safeguarding Adults Board partnership arrangements has identified opportunities for improvement with respect to accountability and business planning. An interim Independent Chair, Dr Henri Giller has since been appointed to ensure that the Board drives forward areas for improvement. Similarly the Local Government Association (LGA) has agreed to facilitate a focussed review of the operation of the Board and the effectiveness of operational safeguarding arrangements.

We are pleased to welcome Claire Richardson as Director of Health and Care Integration and Place Leader for Blackburn with Darwen. Claire will help drive forward

our plans for the Placed Based Integration of health, care and community services and is a key link into ICB governance arrangements.

We have recently secured agreement to upgrade our electronic client record system, Mosiac to the latest version and to move system operations into the Cloud to enhance functionality and resilience. We also have agreement to introduce a Provider market management system, PAMMS, and a Provider fee negotiation toolkit, Care Cubed. All of this will help us manage the Care Market and meet our duties with respect to Social Care Reforms. These digital improvements will also help us improve and modernise our interactions and communications with both Providers and residents of the Borough.

Staff Engagement

Our staff engagement and communication strategies continue to develop. Mark Warren, Strategic Director, now completes a weekly video blog which is circulated to all staff members and which details significant departmental matters from across the last 7 days. The leadership team have also committed to quarterly face to face engagement sessions, open to all. These will include key messages, Question and Answer sessions and specific themes relevant to the department and all of our teams. The next face to face engagement session is scheduled for Wednesday 25th January at King Georges Hall.

Adult Learning

The Multiply initiative was launched in the Borough at our 'Games Fest' event at King George's Hall in November. This event brought together all delivery partners to showcase and demonstrate their offer using a wide range of interactive and engaging activities. The focus of Games Fest was to show how we use numbers in our everyday life, but also how games can be a fun way of learning more about numbers.

Games Fest included a whole range of activities, such as UNO, bingo, dominoes, Play Your Cards Right and a Virtual Reality Carnival game as well as many other number related games. The aim being to encourage families to develop and improve their numeracy skills together. As part of the event, attendees were given a variety of goodies that can support them on their maths journey, including a tape measure, calculator, times tables fridge magnet, pen and notepad, as well as a travel mug to bring to classes.

Transport was offered to people attending from Darwen, although this offer was not taken up. However, a second event, Games Fest 2, will take place at Darwen Leisure Centre on Wednesday, 1st February 2023.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

COUNCILLOR MAHFOOZ HUSSAIN

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: DIRECTOR OF
FINANCE AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
CHIEF EXEC

Thursday, 26 January 2023

COUNCIL: Delivered by a strong and resilient council;

Civil Contingencies, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity

Civil Contingencies Service

The Civil Contingencies Service (CCS) has had another busy period with a lot of positive work undertaken. We have a new Emergency Planning Consultant who started employment with us on the 1st December and will initially be supporting on the SLA delivery. Some key activities are highlighted below:

Emergency Planning / Preparedness

- The current Severe Weather Plan is being reviewed and simplified to support Duty Officers when sharing information and responding to severe weather events.
- New procedures have been implemented for activation processes for Human Aspects and the Media emergency planning arrangements. In addition to this, the Authority is looking at the vulnerable people data in order to identify those in need during a potential power outage.
- A mailshot to vulnerable people to encourage them to sign up to the priority user services provided by the utility companies was completed.
- Civil Contingencies Service support/response/notification procedures to support Public Protection and Environmental Health when dealing with an Avian Flu (H5N1) outbreak has been developed and shared with Duty Officers.
- The Albion Mill emergency response/business continuity plan is under review. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and will incorporate any lessons identified following the business continuity exercise early this year. It will also address health and safety issues that have been raised to ensure that they are captured within the planning.
- The mandatory Civil Contingencies e-learning package is currently being reviewed and will be live again in the New Year.
- Elected Members training took place on 16th January 2023 combining a the session with media and health and safety teams.
- The Team continues to support Schools that have signed up to a SLA for Emergency Planning and Preparedness.

Business Continuity / Business Continuity Promotion (BCP)

We have taken the opportunity to promote and share our business continuity guidance/plan template with businesses within the borough. This has been facilitated via BID and Staywell partners, which has reached over 3,000 businesses.

Community Resilience / Volunteers

We are planning a workshop in January 2023 for all internal and external volunteers – Emergency Response Group (ERG); Loggists; Community Emergency Response Group (CERV) and Community Champions. This has been promoted at the Community

Champions Network meeting where we asked for expressions of interest. The intention is to promote the wider resilience and encourage / maintain the support that these volunteers can offer.

The service submitted a bid for the Lancashire Resilience Forum Innovation Fund, which, unfortunately, was not successful, but all the suggestions will be adopted through current project streams within the LRF. A scoping meeting with partners has taken place and with a view to focussing on the Schools Community Resilience Project (SCRP), Community Emergency Response Volunteers (CERV), Young People's Resilience and Business Resilience.

The team is currently working on the Power Bi data dashboard looking at how we report our statistical information. Below is the Quarter 3 statistics up until 15th December 2022 so not quite a full quarter:-

Duty Officer Statistics – Quarter 3 2022/23	
Information received	100
Warnings	113
TOTAL	213
Strategic Officer Activations	1
Duty Officer Activations	8

Digital Services and Transformation

This quarter saw the launch of the new dual application for taxi drivers on the Digital Customer Portal (DCP) along with the DBS Registration process. This allows customers to apply online and upload all their relevant documentation in one place. Drivers have been involved in the process and we will continue to work with them to get more feedback, and alongside this the team will work on digitising the Renewals process. There are now a total of 9 online forms available for Taxi Drivers to assist them to communicate effectively with the BwD Licensing Department

The DCP portal has also been utilised for people to sign up to the Stay Well Pledge for Business which is part of a national campaign. This again shows the versatility of the portal to be used for many different services.

Digital Inclusion Strategy (DIS)

The stakeholders met in early December to discuss user research regarding reasons why residents are presenting at BwD buildings. The purpose of this was to identify if those residents were doing so due to a lack of digital skills or devices. This was true with around 50 % of cases.

The DIS will be written by the Digital Designer in Adults (supported by other Colleagues) due to the existing relationships and knowledge already held with BwD partners and third-party agencies.

Web site and Intranet

The new website went live on the 3rd November, which has a more 'GOV.UK like' feel to it. The team has worked closely with a partnership of Local Authorities who develop code for websites that can be shared easily – in essence we have been able to use something that was already built but adapt it to our local needs. The new website introduces new features like step by step processes and guides you through sections with 'Next' buttons, again following GOV.UK design. A lot of work has been done on the search function, which is front and central to the homepage now

We will continue to develop our digital front door, by listening to customer feedback to ensure that people can find what they need easily negating the need for other more costly contact methods.

Customer Services

In quarter 3, Customer services handled:

- 30,473 calls, with 82% of calls answered in 60 seconds. 85% of customers were very satisfied with the service they received.
- 7,069 chats, with 99% of chats answered within 60 seconds. 68% of customers were very satisfied with the service they received.
- 4,838 emails, with 100% of emails answered within one working day. 63% of customers were very satisfied with the service they received
- 879 blue badge applications, with an average processing time of 7 working days. 96% of applicants 'self-served' via our website.

In October, in partnership with Lancashire County Council, we launched a new online portal for NOW card applications and renewals (concessionary bus travel). This will significantly speed up the application process, as we have seen with Blue Badges, and will allow applicants to submit everything digitally – paper applications will no longer be provided, however as we do with the Blue Badge service, we will offer assisted digital appointments to complete applications over the phone/in person, for residents that do not have access to the internet. This change will reduce the amount of 'paper handling' for evidences/applications and will contribute to the council's agenda for digital first and carbon neutral.

In December, the garden waste subscription was launched for 2023, with Customer Services providing digital support for residents that do not have access to the internet, as well as dealing with any enquiries about the scheme. This always falls at a good time of year for Customer Services as we tend to be quiet in the build up to Christmas and can handle this additional demand.

Information and Communications Technology

During the quarter, there have been significant enhancements in the technical currency of the IT infrastructure. This is focussed on ensuring that the Council benefits from the most up to date, reliable and secure technology to support our digital ambitions. Improvements include the decommissioning of over 50 servers to simplify the architecture and the creation of plans to upgrade over 50 more to current operating environments.

Given the growing cyber security threats that all councils are presented with there has been an investment in time and resources to further enhance our security facilities. This will form the foundation for further investments over the next year. The detailed design work that will underpin our migration to cloud services is now well underway as is the detailed design work underpinning our move to a new council wide Unified Communications environment. The design work has been completed for the new Core Network that supports all of the council's digital services, this will be deployed during 2023. Further network services have been made available to a range of clients inside Schools and Blackburn Markets.

New external funding exceeding £150,000 has been secured from a range of sources to support these efforts.

Data Strategy and Business Intelligence

The team are working on implementing the new Performance Management Framework for the Council. This will see more automated collection of performance data thus enabling more frequent reporting. A new suite of performance measures is being developed which will form the basis for the new Corporate Plan and departmental business plans. These will be produced over the coming months with monitoring to begin in April.

New reporting dashboards are being built using Microsoft's reporting solution, Power BI, to facilitate this; along with a digital solution for tracking our business plan progress. We presented our approach at a recent round table with the Local Government Association and colleagues from other North West Councils.

Information Governance and Security (inc GDPR)

There were 47 information assurance incidents during the 1st half year 2022/23. All incidents are monitored as part of the breach reporting process. None have been of a significant enough nature to warrant referral to the ICO. We have achieved the minimum requirement for compliance (90%) with requests for information under the FOIA for the 1st half year 2022/23 recording an overall compliance rate of 96.9% and with requests under EIR with a compliance rate of 98.1%. In addition, we have achieved the minimum requirement for compliance with GDPR/DPA2018 subject access requests (90%) in the 1st half year 2022/23 with a compliance rate of 92.3%. At the end of Qtr2 there remained a backlog of 6 historical subject access requests, reduced from 20 in Qtr 1.

Compliance with mandatory IG Training 2022/23 course stands at 82.05% and the DOJO Cyber Security Training 2022/23 course compliance rate stands at 79.12%. The target is 95%. This will be escalated to department leads during Qtr 3.

Complaints & Compliments

During the Quarter 3 period, the Complaints/Feedback team in Legal & Governance have received and dealt with: 92 MP enquiries, 221 informal complaints, 48 'Stage 1' complaints, 9 'stage 2' complaints, 6 Ombudsman enquiries.

A total of 51 compliments have also been recorded during Quarter 3. The majority of compliments received were in relation to Adults Social Care (26). The Feedback Team have been working together with the managers in Adults Services to capture positive feedback.

The team have also been working closely with Digital Transformation to set up a complaints dashboard on Power BI to enable for managers and Directors to access up to the minute feedback data for their service area/departments. This piece of work has been prioritised to allow early access to data in readiness for external Adults Services inspections.

RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act)

The Investigatory Powers Commissioner conducted an inspection of the Council's RIPA processes on 3 November 2022 (they are every three years). The Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Inspector examined the documentation, including the new Procedure and Guidance, Data Protection and Retention Policies, and some of the Group Meeting minutes. The result of the inspection was that the IPCO was pleased with the Council's current processes. Some recommendations were made which involved some minor additions to those processes and some amendments to the Procedural Guidance.

Those recommendations are currently being examined with a view to adoption as soon as possible.

Health and Safety

There were 217 Incidents reported in Qtr2 – compared with 196 in Qtr 1. The team also received 56 incidents reported by schools, albeit this included the summer holiday period.

Reports made to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrence Regulation (RIDDOR) were:

- 0 Council reports in Quarter 2 (though 2 in October 2022 which were fully investigated and remedial actions taken)
- 4 School reports (3 slips and trips involving staff members and 1 child trapped their fingers in a door)

There were 72 near misses reported, similar to the last quarter.

Some key activity highlighted below:

- The Terms of Reference and membership of the Health and Safety Committee have been reviewed and revised to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- A Violence & Aggression Focus Group has been established with representatives in attendance from all areas. The next meeting in January 2023 will review progress on the work plan, including the approval of a new Violence and Aggression policy, an update on a lone worker device trial, a detailed explanation of how the Caution List operates and any personal safety/de-escalation training requirements for Council teams.
- Reminders about mandatory H&S e-learning training have been issued and include Fire Safety Training, H&S in the Workplace and Manual Handling. In addition, Working with DSE for those categorised as “DSE users” under the legislation. These are to be completed every 3 years and are now due to be completed between November 2022 and February 2023.
- Health Surveillance clinics have recently taken place for employees exposed to noise and vibration during the course of their work.
- The Team continues to support Schools that have signed up to a SLA for Health and Safety.

PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents;

Registrars

The online appointment module for births and deaths registrations has been fully tested and is waiting to be deployed by the software company. This new module will check that the death certificate has been received from the hospital or GP prior to an appointment being offered. It is hoped that this service improvement will take pressure off the telephone lines and provide the 24 / 7 access customers have previously requested.

All attendees of registration appointments can now register their arrival at the town hall using their own mobile phones. This enhancement allows registration staff to be notified immediately that the attendee has arrived. It is expected that this new facility will assist with the more efficient throughput of customers and appointments.

School admission appeals

The Governance team also manages and administers independent school appeals hearings relating to admissions and exclusions. Between 1st October and 31st December 2022, the team have successfully administrated 119 appeals, which is an increase for the same period in 2021.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

COUNCILLOR VICKY MCGURK

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: Director of Finance
Thursday, 26 January 2023**

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

Business Rates

As at the end of November 2022, the collection of business rates was broadly in line with target.

At the Autumn Statement on 17th November 2022, the Chancellor announced that the Government would provide a package of measures to support businesses in England, For the 2023/24 financial year the Chancellor announced the following measure:

- A Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) rate relief scheme which increased the current relief from 50% to 75%;
- A freezing of the business rates multipliers at 49.9p (small business multiplier) and 51.2p (standard multiplier), and;
- A new Supporting Small Business relief scheme to ensure no small business faces a bill increase greater than £50 per month for 2023-24.

It is also worth noting that the revaluation of all business rateable values has been completed and the initial list has been shared with the Council. As with all revaluations, some businesses will see their rateable value increase, whilst others will see it decrease. The Government's Transitional Relief Scheme will cap increases in business rates due to revaluations (in the same way as previous revaluations but without an adjustment for inflation). However, unlike previous Transitional Relief Schemes, the cost of capping increases will be met directly by Government rather than by capping the reduction in business rates where property rateable values have reduced. All rateable values will be confirmed in December with annual bills being issued in March 2023 reflecting the changes.

Council Tax

As at the end of the November 2022, the collection of Council Tax is 1.3pp above target.

The Government have announced that councils will be asked to administer an Alternative Fuel Payment scheme for households that use fuel other than gas to heat their homes. It is envisaged that residents will make the application via Gov.UK which will centralise as much of the data gathering and validation as possible. The Government will then share applications with Local Authorities whose primary role will be to verify applicants' addresses and to transfer the relevant support to successful applicants. Further details will be shared as they become available.

Also, the Government has provided funding (£406k) towards a scheme for additional Council Tax Support payments (of up to £25) in 2023/24. This scheme is currently being developed and will feature on Council Tax Bills for next year.

Benefits

The Benefits Service continues to perform well with both speed of processing new claims (for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support) in line with target.

Building on the Supported Housing pilot undertaken in 2020, the Benefits service has now commenced a longer term review and improvement programme that will run for two

and a half years. Working alongside other departments in the council, the programme will target the quality of accommodation, the support offered to residents, and the cost to the public purse.

Progress on the programme will be reported through EMB's.

COUNCIL: Delivered by a strong and resilient council;

Financial Services

External Audit are currently on site reviewing the draft Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and the supporting detail held in the Council's financial systems. At the same time, following the introduction of legislation from the Government to deal with the accounting practice for infrastructure assets (which has affected most local authorities in England), the External Auditors are due imminently to give an unqualified opinion on the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2020/21.

The Finance Team are working with Directors and Budget Holders developing the detail behind the Medium Term Financial Plan for the 2023/24 financial year budget. The provisional Local Government Finance was released on 19th December 2022 and details of this were reported to the Executive Board earlier this month.

Running alongside this piece of work is the revenue and capital budget monitoring for quarter 3 which will be taken to February Executive Board.

Audit & Assurance

The Audit & Assurance team have continued with the delivery of the 2022/23 Annual Audit Plan. A report on progress against the approved plan was presented to the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 29 November for consideration. This provided the members with details of the outcomes of the internal audit reviews completed to the end of October, and a commentary on the counter fraud work undertaken in the period since the last report. A further update will be presented to the March Committee meeting.

The Committee also received a report updating the members on the progress to August of the actions being taken to address the significant issues identified in the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement and the timetable for the production of the 2022/23 Statement. The report noted that whilst the steps taken were appropriate, it was early in the year to be able to fully assess the impact that these would have on the key issues noted in some cases. It also noted that there were still demand and budget pressures which are being monitored and managed by senior managers in the areas concerned. There was also a level of uncertainty with regards to the impact of the planned social care reforms and on-going impact of the cost of living crisis on services and Council budgets.

The Committee also received a report on the risk management activity for the year to 30 September. This provided details of changes in the residual risk scores for three of the strategic risks and noted that three new risks had been added in the period.

The Insurance team is also in the processes of finalising the evaluation of tenders received for the Council insurance long term arrangements which will be in place from 1 April 2023. Support and advice for this exercise is being provided by the Council's insurance broker.

Corporate Procurement and Contracts

The Contracts and Procurement team have been supporting a range of procurement activity across the Council including:

- working with the Insurance team on the tendering of the long term insurance arrangements
- two frameworks to help delivery of highways works – one for minor works and another for surfacing works
- the tender for renovations to the Blackburn Museum has been issued in December
- advising the commissioning team on the Domiciliary Care tender
- tender for Debt, Housing and Welfare advice services

The team has also been working to brief officers on the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act.

HR Services

Organisational Development (OD)

The Organisational Development programme is progressing well and reporting into the OD Board. In Q3, progress has been around the launch of the new values and developing the branding of these values to be used in recruitment and across the organisation. This has been supported by embedding these values through team engagement sessions to develop their own plans. A further pulse survey will be conducted in March 2023 to monitor our progress and with the objective of encouraging more employees to complete this survey.

The 'Listen, Learn, Act' approach has been undertaken to enable our employees to clearly see where feedback has been considered and what actions will take place as a result. In addition to the annual briefing sessions, quarterly briefings will take place online to continue regular engagement and feedback.

There has been a strong focus over the last 3 months on recruitment & retention, with exit and stay interviews taking place. This has helped to plan our approaches to recruitment and has also presented an opportunity to review policies and flexible working arrangements to support retention. We are looking at new and innovative ways to attract people to Blackburn with Darwen, updating our recruitment pages on the website and maximising opportunities with social media.

Four leadership programmes were completed over this period, with a new programme also starting in Environment & Operations. We are evaluating the impact of the different programmes and looking to develop our own internal leadership pathway to ensure all our leaders and managers have the required skills for their roles.

Furthermore, we are also incorporating Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the OD programme and will be publishing the annual Equality Watch report on 31st January, 2023. We have also embarked on a campaign to encourage all our workforce to provide their personal EDI information, to ensure all our workforce practices are fully inclusive by monitoring the impact of any actions taken.

We continue to improve our workforce data to assist in all aspects of workforce planning.

HR and Payroll

In this last quarter, the Team have continued to focus on phase one of the HR & Payroll system.

Following a very successful apprenticeship recruitment campaign, 23 apprentices joined BwD on Monday, 5th September 2022 along with 2 graduates under the LGA Graduate

Scheme. Since the last report, managers at all levels have attended workshops relating to absence management as driving absence figures continues to be a key focus for the organisation. Further workshops are scheduled to take place in autumn to upskill investigating officers for employee relation cases.

Additionally, we continue to monitor the pay negotiations and are planning for any implications for the Council and Schools.

Legal & Governance Services

The Legal Adults Social Care & Education continues to receive increasing number of cases in relating to Care of Protection (COP) and Deprivation of Liberty (DOL) cases. By the end of Quarter 2 the team were dealing with 164 'live' court matters, which included a number of contentious applications.

Similarly, the Legal Children's Social Care legal team had received an increase in the number of cases. During Quarter 2, care proceedings were initiated in respect of 28 families and the pre-proceedings process was commenced in respect of 21 families. By the end of Quarter 2 the team were dealing with 73 'live' cases before the family court in relation to children.

The Litigation team continue to focus on prosecutions in relation to waste, public protection and school non-attendance. By the end of Quarter 2 the team had dealt with 189 waste prosecution cases. The team has also dealt with a noise nuisance prosecution, which resulted in a fine of £5,000 and £3,000 costs. In addition, the team have been dealing with 4 Taxi Driver appeals against the Licensing Panel's decisions lodged at the Magistrates Court. One appeal has been concluded and the Magistrates agreed with the decision made by the Licensing Sub-Committee, and awarded costs of £300 against the driver.

In relation to the Bus Station High Court case, the trial for the longstanding and complex construction dispute was heard over 10 days at the High Court in July 2022. The Council were defending a claim brought by the initial contractor (Thomas Barnes & Sons) for wrongful termination and monies owed. Various staff from Legal covered the trial. It was a high profile matter which had been reported previously in the media a number of times. After considering expert evidence from a number of construction specialists and submissions from Counsel **the Judge ruled in favour of the Council** – that it was entitled to terminate the contract with the initial contractor and thus no monies were owned by the Council.

The judgement was received in October 2022 and received coverage in a number of publications, including Place North West: [Blackburn wins contractor court battle - Place North West](#). The Council is now seeking to recover its legal costs in defending the matter and also pursue its claim for monies secured under a performance bond provided by the initial contractor.

Governance

The Governance team managed and administered the Annual Canvass for electoral registration. This included data matching 81% of 61,000 properties in BwD with the data held with the National DWP database, Local Council Tax and Housing Benefit records. This indicates a high level of accuracy for the information and records we hold on our Electoral Register. New Canvassers were engaged at the second stage to go out and door-knock for the non-responding properties (around 8,900). The new electoral register was published on 1 December 2022, in accordance with legislation.

The team also assisted with the planning and delivering the Darwen South Ward By-Elections on 17th November 2022. The team is currently working on the implementation of changes introduced by the Elections Act 2022, which includes the requirement for voter IDs at polling stations. The DLUHC Voter ID Portal goes live on 16th January and the team are working closely with the systems providers and DLUHC to test the new system in readiness for the 'go live' date. In addition, the team has started early planning and organisation for the May 2023 local elections in order to prepare for the Voter ID and 'Accessibility in Polling Stations' requirements.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING

STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY

DATE: 20th January 2023

ALL PRIORITIES:

New Local Plan to 2037

The ambitious new Local Plan for the Borough (2021-2037) proposes the creation of around 7,000 new homes and 5,000 net new jobs to 2037 through a number of committed and proposed new development sites. It also aims to help drive the Borough's Covid-19 recovery by supporting housing and employment growth, improvements to social and physical infrastructure, and helping to combat climate change in all future planning decisions. The Plan was formally submitted to the Secretary of State on Friday 5th August 2022 for independent examination and the Planning Inspectorate appointed two Planning Inspectors to conduct the Examination in Public (EiP) process.

The appointed inspectors reviewed all the Local Plan submission documents and raised a series of Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) with the Council, which is standard practice, and these were published in November. Public hearings will take place in the Town Hall from 31st Jan – 9th Feb and from 28th Feb – 9th March. Any updates, and all documents relating to the EiP process are available on the Council's Local Plan webpage at www.blackburn.gov.uk/localplan.

Local Transport Plan

The 2022/23 Local Transport Plan was approved at March Executive Board and includes improvements to 4.9km of roads, 14 bridges / structures and various projects across traffic signals, drainage and street lighting assets. Delivery of the programme is on track and to date schemes completed include:

- All carriageway resurfacing schemes which were undertaken in August and September, delivering 4.9km of improvements to our network with three additional sites, including Stones Bank Road, Griffin Street and Whalley New Road, planned for completion by the end of February.
- Four bridges schemes, including Lithermans Culvert, Walk Mill Bridge, Ellenshaw Street footway and Wainwright Way lighting scheme along with the assessment of High Street Bridge. Works to repair highway retaining walls at Ryal Fold and Redearth Road are planned for delivery early this year.
- Two drainage schemes including Aqueduct Road, Blackburn and Jack's Key Drive, Darwen.

Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

Work is underway to review the Council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP). The HIAMP is a key requirement for ensuring the Council is well placed to secure future highway maintenance funding that may become available.

In mid-December, the Borough experienced prolonged adverse weather events, with Highways Service's working 24/7 and undertaking 106 planned gritting operations, covering 1,230 miles of roads.

The Network Management Team also responded to over 200 additional customer service requests. The gritting effort was supplemented by our Community Grit Squads which were introduced to enhance the resilience of our existing gritting operations. A digital map of all designated grit bin locations and gritting routes has also been produced. The map will shortly be placed on the BwD website to enable the public to identify their nearest grit bin.

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Levelling Up Fund 2 – Blackburn Growth Axis Transport Package (South East)

A bid for £20m has been submitted to round 2 of the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF 2) to help bring forward improvements to Junction 5 of the M65, and to deliver a comprehensive, high-quality walking and cycling network in south east Blackburn. Together these significant transport interventions (totalling £30.8m) will help tackle congestion, address safety concerns and promote active travel between key origins and destinations (including links to the town centre). This will support the Council's Local Plan and Blackburn Growth Axis ambitions, help drive prosperity across East Lancashire, and reduce emissions and improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the area. The outcome of submissions has been delayed for sometime with Government scheduled to make announcements by the end of January 2023.

Cultural Services

The Christmas performances at King George's Hall and Darwen Library Theatre were a huge success. Darwen's Dear Santa, aimed at younger children attracted increased audiences compared to last year. Whilst the traditional pantomime at King George's Hall saw audiences of all ages flooding in to watch Jack and the Beanstalk, enjoying the vibrant show, music and slap stick comedy; 2022's pantomime was the second highest grossing in the last ten years.

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery - Arts Council England's awarding BMaG one of its prestigious National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) recognises the importance and value of telling the Borough's vibrant story. The additional funding over the next three years will help to grow engagement activities, reshape how our rich history and collections are displayed and shared and expand the collaborative work with partners and our communities going forward. It is a huge and exciting opportunity, harnessing the cultural creativity that the Council and the borough has worked hard to be establish. The NPO starts in April 2023 and will go through to 2026.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE & CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Climate Emergency Action Plan

Work continues on the delivery of a number of actions set out in the Council's latest Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), including: planting of 10,000 trees in the 2022/23 season; the preparation of decarbonisation plans for the Council's largest emitting buildings (this will assist the Council to be bid-ready for future rounds

of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding); and conclusion of the People's Climate Jury. This process is being managed independently by Shared Futures CIC, and will be reporting its recommendations to the Council and other key stakeholders by the end of January.

PLACE, PRIORITY 6: STRONG, GROWING ECONOMY TO ENABLE SOCIAL MOBILITY

Housing Developments

Further to the Council's agreed Growth Programme, the following major housing projects involving Council land are continuing to progress:

- Haslingden Road Housing Site - Keepmoat Homes have secured planning permission to develop 300 new homes to include 160 family homes for sale and up to 50 keyworker affordable homes in the first phase. Legal agreements are being finalised.
- Whalley Old Road Housing Site - Vistry Partnerships confirmed as Preferred Bidder for the site to deliver 165 high quality family homes. Planning permission was granted at the November committee for the scheme of new homes which will include Vistry's flagship 'Bovis Homes' brand to the site. Blackburn will be the first site to offer Bovis Homes in Lancashire.
- Holden Fold Housing Site - The December Executive Board approved the appointment of Vistry partnerships as preferred bidder for the site following a successful two stage tender exercise. Vistry plan to build around 477 new homes of mixed tenure to include 2, 3 and 4 bed family homes including 170 affordable homes for rent and home ownership. Vistry plan to build new homes under their 'Bovis' and 'Linden Homes' brands.

Progress on selected other developments on Council land:

- Countryside Homes and Together Housing are making good progress at their development of 390 new homes of mixed tenure on two sites on Fishmoor Drive and one site on Roman Road. Countryside have completed sale of 6 new homes by October 2022 which are now occupied by the new owners. More completions are planned for early 2023.
- McDermott Homes at Ellison Fold Way, Darwen, are making good progress at their development which will deliver a combined total of around 340 new family dwellings which include 70 affordable homes plus contributions towards more school places, roads and have improved the Blacksnake Play Area. Part of the site was Council-owned.
- McDermott Homes continue with a successful build programme at Lomond Gardens, Blackburn, where residents have started to move in.
- Elan Homes, Milking Lane, Lower Darwen – which the Council owns as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture – have started works on site to build 76 new family homes.

Employment Developments

Further to the Council's agreed Growth Programme, the following major commercial projects involving Council land are continuing to progress:

- Barnfield Construction has progressed construction at Dock St / Eden St, where new employment units are to be provided.
- At Carl Fogarty Way, construction of new commercial units has commenced clearance works at Plot 1, with a revised project being considered through planning. The planning application for commercial units at Plot 4 was determined in the Autumn of 2022, and works are expected to commence on site in February. A commercial development at Plot 6 is also being assessed in planning, and is expected to commence in 2023. The preferred bidder for Plot 3, Autolab, was selected at Executive Board in October, and a planning application for the site development is expected to be received in the Spring.
- Development of new industrial / commercial units at Millbank Business Park in Lower Darwen, which is owned by the Council's Joint Venture Company with Barnfield Construction, is well under-way.

PLACE, PRIORITY 7: SUPPORTING OUR TOWN CENTRES AND BUSINESSES

Townscape Heritage Project - Blakey Moor/Northgate/Lord Street West

Revised designs have been approved for Blakey Moor Terrace. The scheme will now see the external restoration of unit 2 and a curved new-build extension to replace unit 1 that had to be demolished as a result of major structural failures.

The groundworks were completed before Christmas and building work will commence in January for approx. 10-12 months. Talks are on-going with potential F&B operators. The former Ribblesdale Hotel at 35 Northgate is currently being marketed and a number of potential F&B operators have viewed the property.

Works to 34 (Baileys Jewellers) and 36-40 (former Wellcome pound shop) Northgate are complete and new signage is due to be installed in the next few weeks.

We are working with Uncultured Creatives based at Lord Street West to commission a new piece of public art for Northgate. This will highlight the historical significance of Victorian film pioneers Mitchell and Kenyon and reflect Blackburn's newly recognised status as the location of the world's first Western film.

Morrisons Relocation

Maple Grove Blackburn (Joint Venture Partnership between the Council and Maple Grove) has agreed heads of terms with Morrisons for purchase of the former Thwaites brewery site for the construction of a new store. The contract is being prepared and design progressed with a planning application scheduled to be submitted in early 2023.

St Johns Refurbishment Project

A full design team including OMI Architects have been appointed to prepare the design for the refurbishment of the former St John's Church. Design proposals for an innovation hub are progressing with the aim to provide a range of flexible work spaces to support individuals and help businesses to thrive in Blackburn. A planning application for the refurbishment project is scheduled to be submitted in early 2023.

Government has recently confirmed the Council's 3-year Shared Prosperity Investment Plan submitted at the end of July last year for a total of almost £7 million. The detailed Plan for the Borough, overseen by the Shared Prosperity Board, focusses activity on improving the quality of life and outcomes for our residents focussing on cultural regeneration, improving community facilities, supporting young people, supporting local businesses and improving skills. It will provide revenue support to add value to the Council's ambitious growth plans and supports the delivery of the £100 million Darwen Town Deal and the planned £250 million Blackburn Town Centre Masterplan.

The funding, already in year 1 of the programme, although significantly less than previously received through European Union funding will work hard to contribute to the Council's Corporate Plans both current and emerging, supporting stronger, more vibrant communities and increasing pride in place.

Levelling Up Fund 2 - Blackburn Business Innovation District (Phase One)

As above, the Council is expecting to hear whether their £20 million bid for Levelling Up Funds (LUF 2) has been successful by the end of January. This will support the first phase development of a new Business Innovation District (BID) in Blackburn. LUF 2 funding, if approved, will unlock the first phase of the town centre masterplan with a new £60m skills and education campus of national significance. This scheme is part of a £250m investment framework for the town centre – the largest town centre development of its kind in the North West. The BID is essential to the ambitious plan by delivering 1,200 new jobs, 400 new homes and £1bn of new economic activity over the next decade, outcomes critical to levelling-up the Borough.

Year Planner 2023-24

Please note that all meeting dates are subject to change

As submitted to Council Forum on 26th January 2023

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YEAR PLANNER 2023

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

YEAR PLANNER 2023/2024

	November	December	January	February	March	April
Monday			1 New Year's Day			1 Easter Monday
Tuesday			2			2 L DTC
Wednesday	1		3			3
Thursday	2		4	1		4
Friday	3	1	5	2	1	5
Saturday	4	2	6	3	2	6
Sunday	5	3	7	4	3	7
Monday	6 CYP OSC	4	8 RESOURCES OSC Schools re-open	5 HSC OSC	4 PLACE OSC	8 Ramadan Ends
Tuesday	7 DTC	5 HWB DTC	9	6 LASC DTC	5 HWB DTC	9 Eid al-Fitr begins GLSC
Wednesday	8	6 CFC	10 CPSAG	7	6 CFC	10 Eid al-Fitr ends
Thursday	9 EB	7 EB	11 EB	8 EB	7 EB	11 EB
Friday	10	8	12	9 Schools close	8	12
Saturday	11 Armistice Day	9	13	10	9	13
Sunday	12 Remembrance Sunday	10	14	11	10 Ramadan Begins	14
Monday	13 PLACE OSC	11	15	12 CYP OSC	11 RESOURCES OSC	15 Schools re-open
Tuesday	14 GLSC	12 GLSC	16 GLSC	13 GLSC	12 GLSC	16 LASC
Wednesday	15	13	17	14	13	17
Thursday	16 PH	14 PH	18 PH	15 PH	14 PH	18 PH
Friday	17	15	19	16	15	19
Saturday	18	16	20	17	16	20
Sunday	19	17	21	18	17	21
Monday	20	18	22	19 Schools re-open	18	22
Tuesday	21	19 LASC	23 L	20	19	23
Wednesday	22	20 SC	24 CI/T	21	20	24
Thursday	23 CI/T	21	25 CF	22 CI/T	21 CF	25 CI/T
Friday	24	22 Schools close	26	23	22	26
Saturday	25	23	27	24	23	27
Sunday	26	24	28	25	24	28
Monday	27	25 Christmas Day	29	26 FC	25	29
Tuesday	28 AUD	26 Boxing Day	30	27	26 CPSAG	30
Wednesday	29	27	31	28	27 SC	
Thursday	30 PC	28 CI/T		29 AUD	28 CI/T Schools Close	
Friday		29			29 Good Friday	
Saturday		30			30	
Sunday		31			31	
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						

YEAR PLANNER 2024

	May	June	KEY
Monday			Council & Committee Meetings
Tuesday			AC – Annual Council 6.00 pm
Wednesday	1		FC – Finance Council 6.00 pm
Thursday	2 Elections		CF – Council Forum 6.00 pm
Friday	3 Elections Count		PC – Policy Council 6.00 pm
Saturday	4	1	EB – Executive Board 6.00 pm
Sunday	5	2	PH – Planning & Highways Committee 6.30 pm
Monday	6 Early May Day Bank Holiday	3 Schools re-open	AUD – Audit and Governance Committee 6.30 pm (when training held first – some meetings commence at 6pm, see agenda each time for start time).
Tuesday	7	4 HWB DTC	SC – Standards Committee 6.00 pm
Wednesday	8	5	LASC – Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee & GLSC General Licensing Sub Committee 6.00 pm
Thursday	9	6 EB	L – Licensing Committee 6.00 pm
Friday	10	7	CFC – Charitable Funds Committee Time 5:30pm
Saturday	11	8	
Sunday	12	9	
Monday	13 New Member Induction	10	
Tuesday	14 GLSC DTC	11 GLSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committees
Wednesday	15	12	HSC OSC – Health and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee 6.00 pm
Thursday	16 AC	13 PH	PLACE OSC – Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee 6.00 pm
Friday	17	14	RESOURCES OSC – Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee 6.00 pm
Saturday	18	15	CYP OSC – Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee 6.00pm
Sunday	19 Civic Sunday	16 Eid al-Adha begins	CI/T – provisional dates assigned for Call Ins or Member Training
Monday	20	17 Eid al-Adha ends	
Tuesday	21	18 LASC	
Wednesday	22	19	Partnership Meetings:
Thursday	23 PH CI/T	20 AUD	HWB – Health & Wellbeing Board 5.30 pm
Friday	24 Schools close	21	CPSAG – Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group 6.00 pm
Saturday	25	22	
Sunday	26	23	
Monday	27 Late May Bank Holiday	24	
Tuesday	28	25	Other Meetings:
Wednesday	29	26 SC	DTC Darwen Town Council 7.00 pm
Thursday	30	27 CI/T	
Friday	31	28	
Saturday		29	
Sunday		30	
Monday			
Tuesday			