

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 28th January 2021

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

Together an Active Future (TaAF) - Sport England

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

Health and Wellbeing

On 2nd December 2020, the Health and Wellbeing Board held its third meeting since the introduction of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams and enabled supportive and constructive dialogue with community partners.

The agenda included significant discussion of the Borough's response to the COVID-19 pandemic locally and plans for managing the next phase of the pandemic, including the NHS vaccination programme.

Health and Care Integration

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

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

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

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

Our Community, Our Future social integration programme

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

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

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

Council: Delivered by a strong and resilient Council

COVID-19

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

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

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

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

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

Census 2021

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

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

Elections 2021

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

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