

## REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021

### COVID-19

Residents and businesses in Blackburn with Darwen have been under some form of restrictions since March 2020. The Prime Minister's announcement on 12<sup>th</sup> July around the lifting of all legal restrictions on 19<sup>th</sup> July helps us look forward to a more normal way of life in how we live, work and socialise. However, rates in Blackburn with Darwen and across Lancashire continue to be higher than the England average therefore I would like to urge residents to continue to participate in rapid testing programmes and to book a PCR test if they feel unwell with covid symptoms.

We all need to learn to live with the virus, but we must use our common sense and I ask you all that you continue to take personal responsibility, as you have done throughout the pandemic. Whilst face masks and social distancing are no longer required from 19<sup>th</sup> July, I would like to ask residents to continue to wear face masks in enclosed public spaces, including on public transport.

For anyone who tests positive, information about self-isolation support, including financial support, is available online at [www.blackburn.gov.uk/coronavirus/support-residents](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/coronavirus/support-residents). We have revised our local scheme to support more people who cannot work from home while they self-isolate or parents/carers of children who are self-isolating.

I would also like to ask all residents over the age of 18 to take up the offer of a covid vaccination as soon as possible and to make sure that they attend their appointment for a second dose after 8 weeks. It is only through a successful vaccination programme that we can return to a normal way of life in Blackburn with Darwen and across the country.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to everybody who has been involved in the Covid response to date. Numerous residents, charities, volunteers, staff and business owners have selflessly done everything they can to support our borough and communities in its fight against Covid-19. I would also like to thank the Army and the Neighbourhood teams for their efforts during the surge testing and surge vaccinations. Please continue to stay safe and look after each other.

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

#### **Our Community, Our Future social integration programme**

Following a recommissioning exercise earlier this year, the following social integration projects are now underway:

- **Youth Ambassadors** – the Strategic Youth Alliance is leading the project, working with seven local organisations on a variety of programmes that bring together 12 to 18 year olds through shared interests, including music, art and outdoor pursuits. The BANNED Cohesion project, which involves some Youth Ambassadors from One Voice Blackburn, was recently featured on BBC North West Tonight as a good example of young people from different cultures working together creatively.
- **Community Ambassadors** – Spring North are once again leading this project and have recruited 29 local people who are meeting online each week on the 12 week course. Ambassadors who took part during Year 1 are also being encouraged to get involved and support this year's project.
- **Workforce Integration Ambassadors** – Earlier this month, Blackburn College launched the first cohort of Workforce Integration Ambassadors gathered from 16 local businesses. This year's programme is supported by Ambassadors who completed the programme in 2019/20, to share how they implemented their learning in their own work environments to help create and retain more diverse workforces.

Thousands of pounds in Our Community, Our Future grants is about to be awarded to a number of local groups and organisations for projects with social integration at their core. More details about projects will be released following conclusion of the grant award process.

The Learning English Together website is currently undergoing improvements and a PR and marketing campaign is planned to recruit more learners onto ESOL courses starting in September.

## **Community Volunteer Awards 2021**

I would like to give everyone a reminder that nominations are open for this year's Community Volunteer Awards to celebrate the heroic work and achievements of our borough's volunteers.

The Community Volunteer Awards ceremony will take place on Wednesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> at King George's Hall. The awards unfortunately had to be postponed last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the last year as we tackled the pandemic, our borough's volunteers and helpers rose to the challenge more than ever in response and this is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the amazing work they did.

The awards celebrate all the dedicated and hardworking people and groups who make a difference in Blackburn and Darwen and help to make it a better place.

Nominations are now open at [Community Volunteer Awards – Community CVS](#). The closing date for nominations is Friday, August 27<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

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

### **Together an Active Future (TaAF) - Sport England**

I am pleased to report that Sport England have confirmed that they will be continuing and expanding their partnership with Pennine Lancashire, giving approval to move forward into the Accelerator phase of the Local Delivery Programme. This is an excellent endorsement of the approach and progress achieved so far and means that over the next four years there will be continued investment of time, energy and resources into Blackburn with Darwen as part of the wider work, securing additional capacity for local partners, organisations and residents to shape local change, develop activities and influence delivery.

Throughout the difficult last 12 months we know that walking and cycling are things that people have enjoyed and want to do more of. As part of the (TaAF) investment in Blackburn with Darwen a new Walking and Cycling Partnership Coordinator role has been appointed, seconded from a local, partner organisation to support this and move opportunities forward more quickly. The role will aim to provide cross-sector and cross-organisational leadership and coordination across Blackburn with Darwen and bring together all the great work that's already taking place in a more aligned and joined up way to encourage more people to choose walking and cycling as part of their everyday activities.

Thank you on behalf of everyone involved with TaAF for the time, energy and ideas you have offered so far. We're really looking forward to building upon everything we've done and learnt from so far and maximising the difference we can make for people and partners across Pennine Lancashire and beyond.

### **Health and Care Integration**

We are delighted to share the news that two new Integrated Neighbourhood Team Clinical Co-ordinators have recently been recruited and are now in post. Working as part of the East, North, Darwen and West Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs), their role is to ensure local people and patients who are in need of integrated care service provision the most, are identified as effectively as possible whilst ensuring services are person centred and provided in a co-ordinated way. Over the next few months the Clinical Co-ordinators will be focusing on the completion of a robust induction plan, building relationships with Primary Care and promoting the work of the INTs.

The Social Prescribing Alliance which meets on a monthly basis continues to expand and has now reached a membership of over 45 community based partners. The focus of the Alliance is to complement existing services and pathways to help improve the physical and mental well-being of local people. Membership includes a team of Social Prescribing Link Workers, the new Integrated Neighbourhood Team Clinical Co-ordinators and two Trainee Associate Psychological Practitioners. The Alliance is an important partnership which forms part of a community based early intervention and prevention offer within the four neighbourhoods of Blackburn with Darwen.

Following the last report a service supporting the health needs of homeless people across Pennine Lancashire continues to expand. Since the service commenced, over 250 homeless people residing in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) across Pennine Lancashire have been supported to improve their health and wellbeing. Each person has had a health needs assessment completed by a Clinical Occupational Therapist and been offered a range of health, care and community services and support through a partnership consisting of Transforming Lives, the BwD Complex Case Panel, Probation Service, Police, Inspire and Local Primary Care.

### **Health and Wellbeing Board**

On 12<sup>th</sup> July, the Health and Wellbeing Board held its fifth meeting since the introduction of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The agenda included a range of non COVID-19 specific items including; Live Well Annual Update, Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment Update and the Better Care Fund Update. In addition to the items above, the COVID Situational Awareness report was presented and a report on the Community Wellbeing Pathway for Long Covid. This meeting was held in person, following a change in guidance for Public Meetings.

### **Council: Delivered by a strong and resilient Council**

#### **Srebrenica anniversary**

The Mayor Cllr Derek Hardman took part in an online commemorative event to mark Srebrenica Memorial Day which takes place on 11<sup>th</sup> July each year. The event marks the anniversary of a massacre that resulted in the deaths of more than 8,000 Muslim Bosnians and is the only holocaust committed in Europe since World War Two. It has been over 25 years since the massacre took place but we can still learn lessons from it. Reflecting on such events provides us with the impetus to work harder to create safer and more tolerant communities. Our borough is made up of diverse and vibrant communities and we are proud of how different backgrounds, nationalities, cultures, faiths, ages and genders come together to support and look after each other. Blackburn with Darwen always has been and always will be against hatred and intolerance of any kind. We passed a Council motion in July 2016 condemning racism, xenophobia and hate crime unequivocally and the motion was reconfirmed in October 2019 to incorporate Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. The events of Srebrenica are a stark reminder of what can happen if we allow hatred and intolerance to go unchallenged.

#### **Communications & Media**

The team continues to deliver both COVID and non-COVID content and messages supporting Council priorities across multiple channels including local media such as the Lancashire Telegraph, social media, digital screens and bus stops. On average the team is dealing with around 40 media queries a week from international, national, regional and local media on a variety of topics. A major focus is supporting the NHS delivery of the vaccination programme by promoting the benefits of getting the jab through local people sharing their experiences. Members are encouraged to take part and share why they wanted to get vaccinated. They can get involved in the campaign by contacting Ben Greenwood at [ben.greenwood@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:ben.greenwood@blackburn.gov.uk)

#### **MJ Award**

The Council's Senior Leadership Team has been nominated for a 'Best in Senior Leadership' award at the MJ Local Government Achievement Awards 2021. The nomination is testament to the hard work and dedication of the whole workforce and it is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the work that the Senior Leadership Task has undertaken through the 'One Council, One Team' approach.

#### **Media Award Shortlist**

Our *Picture This* campaign was shortlisted for an award in the Public Relations and Communications Association DARE Awards. This campaign was developed using behaviour change communications principles to help share public health information about advice about following restrictions through engaging stories from local people sharing the things they were looking forward to in a post-Covid world. Sadly, we did not win the award, but it was an honour to be shortlisted alongside some large corporate PR and marketing agencies from across the North West.