

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 19th July 2018

Local Authority of the year update

I am delighted to share that the Council won the Local Authority of the Year category in The Municipal Journal (MJ) Local Government Achievement Awards on Wednesday 27th June.

The panel of independent judges said that the breadth of Blackburn with Darwen's achievements for its communities is outstanding regardless of the economic and financial challenges. They described the Council as an 'outstanding example of modern local government' which is 'underpinned by strong, consistent and humble leadership and an unwavering mission to put the customer first'.

It was also noted that the Council has taken a brave and positive approach to children's services and that achievements in public health and adult social care were impressive.

This is a great honour, we have a Council to be proud of and it has given everybody a boost after some very difficult times. The only way we can deliver excellent services is with the community and many partner organisations. We share this success with everybody. It is also recognition of the great partnerships we have formed. We could not improve Blackburn with Darwen alone.

The award is testament to the hard work and dedication of staff who work tirelessly to make this borough a better place. Every elected member and council staff at whatever level, whether they are the Chief Executive, a Customer Services Adviser or Refuse Collector, contributed to winning this accolade.

I also want to mention our Your Call volunteers. I think many of the challenges we face as a borough can be solved by the community with support from the Council and its partners. I truly believe Blackburn with Darwen is on the up and residents who actively work with us play a vital part in that.

We have been through tough times but I think the future is bright. Of course, the Council and the borough will continue to face difficult challenges. But together the Council, its partners and the community can overcome the challenges and continue to make Blackburn with Darwen a great place to live, visit and work.

20 year celebration event

As you know twenty years ago the Council became a Unitary Authority. To celebrate this special anniversary all staff were invited to attend one of two informal events on Wednesday 11th July. There was also an additional event for partners and elected members to attend. It was great to meet and see existing staff, partners and elected members as well as catch-up with staff, partners and elected members who have left or retired, who've played a significant role over the past two decades.

We are promoting the role of the Council and celebrating achievements throughout the anniversary year, this will include speaking at events and a special edition of The Shuttle newspaper.

National Festival of Making

The second National Festival of Making took place in Blackburn town centre on 12th and 13th May. It was an even greater success compared to 2017 with early estimates outlining a much greater increase on the 30,000 figure of last year. There were more than 160 attractions, demonstrations, activities and performances this year for people of all ages to enjoy.

The festival which was backed by Arts Council England, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Superslow Way, Blackburn with Darwen Council, private and commercial sponsors and manufactures across Lancashire.

To support effective delivery and visitor experience nearly 200 volunteers helped ensure the festival ran smoothly by acting as visitor guides and welcoming people to the town. As recognition of their hard work, over 80 people of all ages and from all backgrounds, who signed up to help throughout the weekend attended a special reception in the Council Chamber at Blackburn Town Hall on Wednesday 27th, June. The volunteers did a fantastic job and were rightly recognised for their contribution to what was a wonderful weekend. The Festival of Making brought people together from all walks of life and was a great example of what we can achieve when we all work together.

We are working on finalising next year's date to ensure that this now becomes an annual event in Blackburn to ensure we receive the positive local, regional and national media coverage.

LSP Annual summit

We have achieved a lot as a council over the last 20 years and a lot of this has been done in partnership. On Monday 8th October the Council will be hosting the first Local Strategic partnership Annual Summit. This new Local Strategic Partnership Annual Summit is replacing the historic LSP Board meetings and the partnership agreed unanimously that an annual summit which provides the opportunity to reflect on the year's achievements, whilst agreeing on the priorities for the year ahead is the way forward for the boroughs overarching partnership.

Local Government Association (LGA) – Corporate Peer Challenge

Arrangements have been made for the LGA to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council in December 2018. The Peer Challenge team will include a small group of politicians and senior officers from across local government.

The Challenge includes a core component covering five key themes – understanding of place and priority setting; leadership of place; financial planning and viability; organisations leadership and governance; capacity to deliver. The Peer team have also been asked to challenge two additional areas for the Council – community engagement and digital transformation. A further update will be provided at next Council Forum outlining preparations for the Challenge.

Corporate plan review

In 2015 Policy Council adopted the current Corporate Plan which sets out the council's aims and ambitions up to 2019. In 2016 Policy Council agreed the continuation of the six corporate priorities to 2020 which are:

1. Creating more jobs and supporting business growth;
2. Improving housing quality and building more houses;
3. Improving health and well-being;
4. Improving outcomes for our young people;

5. Safeguarding the most vulnerable people;
6. Making your money go further.

Given the structural and governance changes to the council following the ward boundary changes and a number of national policy drivers emerging it feels timely to review the Corporate Plan within this Municipal Year to ensure it is fit for purpose, reflects the current 'state of the Borough', local priorities and national policy context.

In order to ensure that the Corporate Plan is based on robust and independent evidence, we are commissioning external research to undertake an analysis of our current position which will provide a narrative to inform and shape the Plan.

In addition, the Council will also be undertaking a residents' survey to reflect residents' opinion of the Council over recent years and views on Council priorities going forward. The survey will be a mixed postal and online survey using questionnaires posted out to randomly selected addresses. The results of the survey will be used to inform the refreshed Corporate Plan.

The research commission and residents survey will be undertaken over the late summer/early autumn and an update will be reported to next Council Forum. An outline framework for the refreshed Corporate Plan and draft priorities will be discussed at December's Policy Council. Partners and stakeholders will have the opportunity to contribute to the refreshed Corporate Plan throughout the process.

Social integration

Since April's Council Forum, I would like to update you with events which have brought people together to celebrate the community. They include The Fusion Awards on 7th July 2018, where volunteers, professionals, charity workers and entrepreneurs were recognised and awarded for their fantastic work at the annual community recognition awards ceremony. I was delighted to present the Community Cohesion Award to the Wirral Dean Centre of Merseyside.

The council also supported our BwD Community CVS on Monday 11th June through an event saying a "Big Thank You" to local people who give their own time as volunteers and make such a difference to people's lives in this community. This event was planned as a collaborative borough-wide venture to mark National Volunteers Week and I was honoured to present the Volunteer of the year award.

Shadow Local Integrated Care Partnership

As part of delivering the Pennine Plan, we have been developing an all age Integrated Neighbourhood offer. The next stage is the development of a Shadow Integrated Care Partnership. The purpose of this partnership is to enable each organisation to continue to work together more efficiently to achieve better health, wellbeing and quality of life outcomes for our residents.

On the 28th June we enjoyed a successful launch event where all the key partners came together to start the process of creating a shadow Local Integrated Care Partnership. These developments will support the work already taking place to bring our Adult Social Care and Neighbourhood teams closer to colleagues across Health Services and the Voluntary Sector. Our Integrated Neighbourhood Teams will continue to develop alongside the emerging governance arrangements of the Shadow Integrated Care Partnership.