

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 28th March 2019

It is almost a year since we implemented the recommendations of the Electoral review seamlessly reducing our number of councillors and wards. Reflecting over the municipal year we have a lot to be proud of as a Council including MJ Local Authority of the year, successful National Festival of Making, significant investment in our town centres and at our employment sites along the M65, continued housing growth, supporting and celebrating our volunteers through Your Call as well as celebrating 20 years as a unitary authority.

As we begin the new municipal year we will be launching our new Corporate Plan with eight new priorities focussed on creating a good quality of life for all of our residents. We will continue to maximise opportunities for funding through the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and press for funding from the Government, including future High Street Fund which we anticipate our local MPs will support.

Pennine Lancashire unitary authority

As members are aware, the Council Leaders of Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale and myself have sent a letter to James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government seeking to explore options for setting up a new Unitary Authority for Pennine Lancashire.

We have the backing of local MPs and I am sure my fellow elected members will understand the significant opportunity and benefit a Pennine Lancashire unitary would bring, increasing our financial capability and capacity to match neighbouring city regions and further improve local outcomes. Subject to receiving a positive response from the Government, we expect this to be a challenging but exciting opportunity for all concerned and I will ensure that elected members are fully informed on progress.

Social Integration

Our MHCLG funded social integration programme, *Our Community, Our Future*, is picking up pace as we approach the end of Year 1.

The four priorities in Blackburn with Darwen's *Our Community, Our Future* strategy are:

1. To increase economic prosperity for all the borough's communities as an essential prerequisite for social integration
2. To strengthen relationships between the borough's diverse communities (focussed predominantly on adults)
3. To build connections and strengthen relationships between young people who live in the borough's diverse communities
4. To connect the borough's disadvantaged communities to shared spaces – linking people and neighbourhoods to zones of employment, physical assets, community shared spaces and social action.

To help deliver the programme's four priorities a number of projects have been out for tender for Community Voices, Community Ambassadors, Youth Voices, Youth Ambassadors, Workplace Integration Ambassadors and Apprenticeship & Volunteer Work Placements. Evaluation for all the submissions have been completed and there's now further clarification and implementation work to be done over the next few weeks prior to partners' appointments.

To help support the delivery of the programme additional staff have been recruited to the core team. Also, the Local Integration Partnership Board is now known as the Our Community, Our Future Board and work is progressing on a visual identity for the programme.

Solidarity with the people of New Zealand

The community of Blackburn with Darwen came together outside Blackburn Town Hall on Monday 18th March to attend a minute's silence to pay their respects for the victims and everyone affected by the attack.

I would like to thank Abdul Hamid Quereshi, Chief Officer of Lancashire Council of Mosques, Rev Canon Brian McConkey from Blackburn Cathedral, and the Secretary of the Interfaith Forum Derek Estill for their attendance and kind words.

I would also like to thank council staff and the community for coming together and would like to reiterate that the attack will not divide us and we will make sure we are united with one voice and send a message to these individuals - you are not going to win.

Health and care integration update

The North, East, West & Darwen Primary Care Neighbourhood Groups have now reached a six month milestone. Following attendance at the NHS England Time for Care programme the group members continue to work collaboratively to develop their project plans. This includes the identification of milestones and key indicators to help keep the projects moving forwards.

To help share the progress of each of the Primary Care Neighbourhoods across the Integrated Care Partnership, group members have been invited to attend the Local Integrated Care Partnership Board bi-monthly meetings. At January's meeting, Darwen Primary Care Neighbourhood members presented an update on their plans and achievements to date. They also highlighted the main focus for their neighbourhood group which is a joint project with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support people with health and wellbeing needs to return to work.

A development session was held in February to help align the key priorities outlined within the newly released NHS Long Term Plan with the Integrated Care Partnership across Blackburn with Darwen. Representatives included GP Leads, Executives and Senior Officers from across the whole partnership. It is envisaged that the key outcomes from the session will be included in a jointly agreed plan to guide next steps.

National Festival of Making 2019

The National Festival of Making will take place on 15th and 16th June 2019 in Blackburn town centre. Planning and preparations are progressing with our partners with further communication and marketing to be issued next month. Information will also be made available next month around how to volunteer and I encourage you all to give a few hours and support this great family festival.

Community Volunteer Awards

The Council has joined forces this year with Community CVS to organise the Community Volunteers Awards. The awards aim to recognise those individuals, groups and businesses whose efforts have a big impact in their local neighbourhoods. There are 12 categories including the Good Neighbour Award, the Young People's Award and the Community Involvement Award – with a total of 21 awards up for grabs.

Nominations are open until Friday 5th April and I personally want to see lots of nominations for the good neighbour category. This category recognises those who go the extra mile for the people on their street, whether it's popping in to make a brew for an elderly neighbour or it's taking the bins out for everyone.

The Community Volunteer Awards will be presented at a special celebration event in King George's Hall on 10th June.

Sport England update

Working with Sport England, Pennine Lancashire's Together an Active Future is moving forward into the £3m Pathfinder phase. This exciting 'test and learn' period will enable the 6 Local Authority areas, including Blackburn with Darwen to develop their local delivery plans to engage with people who are inactive and have poor mental wellbeing.

A robust investment framework will be submitted to Sport England so that resource for Blackburn with Darwen can be secured and drawn down, in line with clear principles for investment which are based on community involvement, local insight, expertise, passion, co-design and planning. This Pathfinder 'test and learn' phase is an important step to demonstrating effectiveness in order to access a share of a further £7m of Accelerator funding and shouldn't be rushed and needs to be undertaken in the right way.

Gaining an understanding of how local people feel about physical activity and to hear their ideas about how to increase levels of activity is crucial. A Pennine population survey has been launched to enable people to have their say and get involved and details will be published on line shortly. The closing date for the survey is 30th April and I ask you all to encourage Blackburn with Darwen residents to complete it.