

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 18th July 2019

Pennine Lancashire unitary authority update

Last month, I joined my Pennine Lancashire Leader colleagues for a meeting with MP Rishi Sunak, Minister at MHCLG who has responsibility for Local Government. We discussed the process for establishing a Pennine Lancashire Unitary authority and had positive feedback from the Government that they are open to receiving an expression of interest for consideration before potentially inviting councils to submit a detailed business case, which would need to include evidence of public consultation and local support. At this stage I am discussing our options further with Pennine Lancashire Leaders and will keep you updated on progress.

Corporate Plan 2019-2023

Members will recall that we agreed our new Corporate Plan 2019-2023 at Council Forum in March 2019, which sets out our eight priorities for the four years. The Plan is for everyone, councillors, employees, partners, residents and businesses, who can support the Council in being the best it can possibly be, in enabling all of our residents to achieve a good quality of life in a vibrant and thriving place, with strong community values and an inclusive society.

The Plan is now available on our website: <https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/about-council/corporate-plan> and I would encourage colleagues to view it and share with residents and partners. Over the coming months we will be promoting the Plan through our communications channels. A new performance framework is also being developed which will provide an opportunity for scrutiny and challenge of how the Council is performing against our eight new corporate priorities.

Health and care integration update

The Council continues to work closely with our NHS partners and other organisation to bring together health and care services closer together. This is to help ensure that they are delivered in people's communities and designed around their needs.

As such, our Local Integrated Care Partnership is developing well and the Primary Care Neighbourhoods (PCN) are already making progress and delivering projects which are improving people's health and wellbeing.

East PCN is working with Healthwatch to identify and support up to 20 families to support Diabetes awareness and prevention. North PCN has reported an increase in the attendances for cervical smears. West PCN has produced a new loneliness toolkit to support quick access into the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and the Care Network Hub and Darwen PCN has arranged a second annual health day for Saturday 14th September after the success of the first. Darwen also continues to implement their joint Department for Work and Pensions project. The four PCNs have now been operating for 12 months so now is a timely opportunity to review the progress and achievements and plan the next steps for development.

This is a big agenda for this Council and I want to place on record my thanks to all staff and councillors who are working hard to make sure it continues to develop well and improve health and wellbeing for our residents.

Work on developing innovative solutions to get more people physically active through the Sport England funded Together an Active Future programme continues at pace.

An important part of developing those solutions is working with people and partners to understand why not enough people access the wide range of activity opportunities Blackburn with Darwen already has to offer and change ways of working to better support people through physical inactivity and poor mental wellbeing.

I'm pleased to report that the programme team has engaged with more than 1,000 people in Blackburn with Darwen. It has encouraged people to think differently about what they could do to become more physically active and the positive steps they could take to be happier and healthier in the future. This creative approach to engagement was well received with comments such as "I haven't been out of the house or spoken to anyone for a while, it was good to meet friendly people" and "it was nice to be asked what I think".

Listening to people, giving them opportunities to share their ideas and learning more about what matters most to people will be useful to help shape the planning of pilot projects over the Summer, for Sport England's approval and looking towards delivery starting in the Autumn.

Social Integration update

A number of social integration projects we've commissioned partners to deliver as part of the *Our Community, Our Future* programme have started:

The Strategic Youth Alliance has launched its first Youth Ambassadors programme for 12 to 18 year olds. They will work together over 10 weeks on a programme designed to foster their leadership qualities and empower them to work with others to set up positive social action projects in their neighbourhoods.

The Families Health & Wellbeing Consortium is recruiting to their first Community Ambassadors programme, a similar programme for adults, starting in September.

Blackburn College has recruited employers to the Workforce Integration Ambassadors project. A total of 20 Ambassadors will complete training sessions focused on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, with the first session scheduled for mid July.

The Peace Foundation has set dates for the first three Community Voices events during July and August in both Blackburn and Darwen. They have also run some taster sessions with young people, and dates for the first Youth Voices events will soon be set.

Potential partners in the ESOL Hub have met for the first time to discuss how ESOL language provision can be better co-ordinated across the borough. Plans are being drawn up for the next steps.

A team of Engagement & Integration Officers is now in place. These staff will work out in communities to help connect people to the wide variety of social integration activities and projects.

Community Volunteer Awards

The inaugural Community Volunteer Awards was hugely successful.

The Council partnered with Community Voluntary Services to deliver a celebration of individuals and groups who go the extra mile to support others and help make their neighbourhoods better places to live.

21 awards were given out in total and the feedback from the event has been superb.

I have always said that Blackburn with Darwen is one of the friendliest, kindest and caring places you can find and that is in large part down to the many volunteers that we're blessed with. They touch every part of local services and support people in a variety of ways, making such a huge difference to people's lives.

It was wonderful to give them the recognition they deserve through the awards. The presentation evening was such a positive, uplifting event and I feel proud to have been in the room with so many dedicated and selfless individuals. Without them, Blackburn with Darwen would not be the great place that it is, and I put on record my sincere thanks to them.

National Festival of Making 2019

The third National Festival of Making took place in Blackburn town centre on 15th and 16th June. The weather failed to dampen the festivities, with thousands of people attending the national event. Visitors came from all over the UK and all over the world, including a couple from Miami in Florida, USA, who were on holiday in the UK and stopped by the festival especially after reading about it. A woman from Australia also made time to visit as part of her trip to the UK.

Indoor activities proved the most popular, unsurprisingly, as festival-goers moved inside to get away from the rain, including arts and crafts events, dance workshops, cooking classes, demonstrations, shows, presentations and music.

There were lots of free activities at the Festival of Making and there was also a wide variety of food and drinks from all over the world.

To support effective delivery and visitor experience over 120 volunteers of all ages and from all backgrounds helped ensure the festival ran smoothly by acting as visitor guides and welcoming people to the town. As recognition of their hard work, the volunteers who signed up to help throughout the weekend attended a special reception at Blackburn Museum on Wednesday 3rd July.

Further economic and visitor evaluation is currently being undertaken and I will update members at the next meeting (3rd October).

Dates for 2020 have already been announced, with the Festival of Making taking place on 6th and 7th June 2020.