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| <b>REPORT TITLE:</b>           | <b>Discharge of Roles and Responsibilities since the last meeting of the Council</b> |
| <b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>          | <b>Councillor Jenny Lynn</b>   |
| <b>AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY:</b> | <b>Public Services</b>   |
| <b>DATE:</b>                   | <b>March 2022</b>  |

## INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to introduce this report which gives a snapshot of the wide range of work carried out by this Directorate.

We've already been reminded by the Leader of the worrying situation in Ukraine and our Asylum and Migration team within the directorate are getting ready to respond and support those fleeing Ukraine.

In the meantime, I must thank the local Halifax Ukrainian community for their fantastic efforts. They have been collecting donations at D Mill at Dean Clough and I'm delighted that at least 6 lorry loads have already left and have made it to the Polish border where it is so badly needed. If you want to help, either by volunteering your time or making a donation, please check their Facebook sites to see what's needed *Halifax Ukrainian Club – Uky Club* and *SavingUkraine 2022*.

Special thanks also go to our staff who worked like Trojans to respond to the recent storms, clearing fallen trees, tackling overflowing drains and the rest at all hours of the day and night.

But the crocuses and daffodils now brightening up the place, and the longer days we are enjoying, hopefully mean that Spring is really on its way. So once again, after a two year break because of the pandemic, it's time for Calderdale to get involved in the Great British Spring Clean organised by the Keep Britain Tidy Campaign.

This year's mass campaign, from 25th March to 10th April calls on families, friends, work colleagues and neighbours to join forces and pledge to pick a bag of litter from nearby streets and beauty spots. In Calderdale our Green Spaces and Street Scene team is holding a clean-up event on every day of the Great British Spring Clean, visiting one of the Boroughs 17 wards each day from 10am. Everyone in the community is welcome to join in, especially Councillors! Equipment will be provided.

The list below tells you where and when to join in:

| Date<br>All events<br>start at 10am | Ward           | Location                  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 25/03/2022                          | Luddendenfoot  | Kershaw                   |
| 26/03/2022                          | Sowerby Bridge | Beech Rec, Sowerby Bridge |

|            |                           |                                |
|------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 27/03/2022 | Rastrick                  | Railway Street                 |
| 28/03/2022 | Ryburn                    | St Peter's Church, Sowerby     |
| 29/03/2022 | Town                      | Ackroyd Park                   |
| 30/03/2022 | Elland                    | Morrisons                      |
| 31/03/2022 | Todmorden                 | Centre Vale Play Area          |
| 01/04/2022 | Hipperholme & Lightcliffe | The Stray                      |
| 02/04/2022 | Greetland & Stainland     | West View/Church Lane          |
| 03/04/2022 | Skircoat                  | Arden Road                     |
| 04/04/2022 | Brighouse                 | St Martin's Church             |
| 05/04/2022 | Ovenden                   | Shroggs Park (bottom entrance) |
| 06/04/2022 | Northowram & Shelf        | Shelf Hall Park                |
| 07/04/2022 | Mixenden                  | Library                        |
| 08/04/2022 | Calder                    | Gaddings Dam                   |
| 09/04/2022 | Park                      | Queen's Road Neighbourhood     |
| 10/04/2022 | Warley                    | Sandhall Lane/Gibbet Street    |

## NEIGHBOURHOODS

## BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

As we go into March, the service continues to be extremely busy with both cremations and burials.

### Parkwood Crematorium

We continue to offer the later afternoon appointments and Saturday services as demand is still high for services at Parkwood. For example, w/c 8th March, out of the 51 available service times 49 are booked. Normal service has resumed in the chapel due to the remaining restrictions on numbers having been removed in November for attendees at funerals. Nonetheless, we believe it is sensible to be cautious and so we have retained hand sanitising stations and the cleaning in between each service continues. We are also making available face coverings for those who wish to still wear them whilst in our chapel.

At the end of last year, we received a delivery of 240 mixed varieties of saplings from the Woodland Trust which our two groundsmen worked hard to plant in designated areas to encourage flora and fauna to flourish. Thankfully, they didn't suffer any damage in the recent storms, and we are seeing growth on most of them.

We are eagerly anticipating delivery of our new electric utility vehicle early next week to replace the current diesel-powered all-terrain vehicle used in the grounds of Parkwood, and this will be the first electric powered vehicle in the service

### Cemeteries

The demand for burials has increased quite substantially in February and has had an impact on the amount of seasonal maintenance the team have been able to carry out. We are hopeful that assistance will be available from Community Payback in one of our biggest cemeteries - Brighouse - undertaking tasks such as pathways and boundary maintenance, removal of saplings from graves, and leaf/detritus clearance. We have identified a specific area in that cemetery that we can leave to nature and wildlife through the introduction of wildflower meadows and, as always, we are keen to develop further links with volunteer/Friends' groups, building on the success of the Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery.

The service is currently recruiting seasonal staff to make sure all grounds are well maintained over summer, and, for the first time, an apprentice is being recruited to the service to cover all aspects of Horticulture, both in the cemeteries and at the Crematorium.

## TRANSPORT SERVICES

The Transport Operations Team continues to operate the Home to School Service at full stretch, with 130 road-based staff taking some of Calderdale's most vulnerable children to school and back home each day. We've seen a steady growth in demand for pupils who are eligible for free transport over the last 3 years. In 2019/20, we transported 502 pupils with SEND but by 2021/22 this has risen to a requirement to transport 547 SEND pupils, and so, as this is a statutory service, we have had to increase our staffing and vehicle resources which puts further pressure on budgets.

Health and Safety at Battinson Road Depot has been in the spotlight recently and we had a 3rd visit from the HSE to inspect the COVID measures. The inspection went well, and the inspector was satisfied with the measures in place. The Depot has made a number of improvements to onsite safety with re-marked walkways, broken speed ramps replaced and netting in the workshop to keep the pigeons out, and a re-wire to the fuel pumps is due in April.

The Vehicle Services Team has created an exciting opportunity to recruit an Apprentice Vehicle Technician. This has historically been a difficult trade to which to recruit, not least because there is a shortage nationally in trained vehicle technicians. This is an opportunity to train someone new into the trade and introduce them to work on a variety of vehicles and equipment. Further apprenticeship opportunities are being considered to recruit drivers to the Transport Operations Team. Apprentices will learn to drive a minibus and will undergo the necessary D1 driving test during their apprenticeship. This will help with the necessary supply of drivers longer term.

## PARKING SERVICES

## Parking Permit System

Our upgraded parking permit went live on Monday 28 February 2022 and should improve the application process for the customer and also reduce avoidable contact with the Council. The main changes are as follows:

- **Virtual Permits** - The system now can issue virtual permits for those permits that are assigned to a specific vehicle. This removes the requirement to print and post permits, along with having to display a permit. Once a payment is made, the permit information will be sent directly to the Enforcement teams' handheld computers, which means as soon as it is paid for, it can immediately be used. However, permits that are not vehicle specific, such as a visitor permit for residential zones and those permits that are required to be on display due to being access permits (School Streets), will continue to be issued as a paper permit.
- **Online management** - Permits can now be managed online, through the user's permit account, so customers will have the ability to request a change of vehicle and renew their permits without the need to phone the Contact Centre.
- **Permit Expiry Date Reminders** - these will be sent automatically to permit holders' registered email address 28 days before expiry and again at 14 days prior to expiry.
- **Staff Permit Applications** – All staff permits (Essential User and Salary Sacrifice) can now be applied for online, removing the requirement to call the Contact Centre and these notifications will go straight through to HR for authorisation.
- **Resident Permit Zones** – The new system will remove permit zone renewal dates. All Resident and Visitor permits will be issued for 12 months, with the customer being able to select their own start date.

## Mulcture Hall Road car park and High Street car park

The areas of these two car parks that have been leased/reserved for Lloyds Banking Group since the closure of the former Cow Green multi storey car park in January 2013, are now available for public use once more.

## GREEN SPACES AND STREET SCENE

The winter services team has now handed back the section of North Bridge car park that they had been using as a temporary salt store and the operation has returned to Elland depot. All salt at North Bridge has been used and the service is now using salt from the new barn, which means, when conditions are right, a lower spread rate can be employed, thereby reducing the amount of salt used (and thus the cost to the Council).

As we move towards the grass cutting season, we are upgrading our mowing equipment and new routes are being explored so that we can get optimum efficiency from our resources.

A number of staff have been busy dealing with the effects of the numerous wind events we have had this winter, with many working in very poor conditions on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February to deal with the immediate impacts of the storms and ensure any damage was made safe as quickly as possible.

The service is shortly to introduce tablet devices to the team that deal with day-to-day highways issues, such as potholes and pavement repairs. This will mean a customer services request can be sent to an Area Officer to inspect and they will then be able to raise a job on site that will be tasked out electronically through the Team Leader to the appropriate gang, who will then sign off the job in real time once it is completed – and this will, in turn, update the person who initially reported the defect.

## WASTE & RECYCLING

The position in relation to Waste & Recycling collection is much brighter than it has been over the last two years. Most collections are now being made to schedule, and the only crews working on a Saturday are returning in smaller vehicles to areas where access has been problematic. The jointly funded Driver pay agreement has had a positive effect, with Suez now fully resourced in terms of the number of drivers required contractually to provide the service.

Suez are also building up further resilience for collections at rural properties. An additional 4x4 vehicle has been sourced to help cover the frequent breakdowns the current fleet suffer due to the nature of the terrain they cover. Similarly, a new employee is out learning the routes during March, and it is envisaged that this element of the service will revert to weekly recycling collections after the Easter holiday period.

Ancillary services have also recommenced over recent weeks. Bulky Waste collections are currently restricted to 16 requests per day (112/week), a figure that is currently above the actual demand for the service. Similarly, recycling container requests are restricted to 50 per day (350/week), a figure that should cover the expected demand. Officers will work with Suez to remove the restriction on number of requests permanently in the coming weeks.

The garden waste service restarted on February 28<sup>th</sup>, and there is capacity for around 200 new subscribers, so we are working with colleagues in Customer Services to ensure these are offered to residents on our waiting list before opening them up more widely.

Over the last couple of months, the Government has released the Waste Statistics that cover the first year of the pandemic (2020/21). A key theme of the data is that, nationally, there has been a slight decrease in recycling and a large increase in the amount of refuse collected. This is acknowledged as being an impact of Covid, due in part to the work from home directive but also



the displacement of waste and recycling previously generated at workplaces, pubs and restaurants being created at homes for a prolonged period.

However, in contrast to this national trend, in Calderdale we saw a record amount of recycling collected during the year the figures refer to (over 22,000 tonnes). Obviously, this was not without difficulty as crews struggled to complete rounds due to the amounts of recycling presented, together with access problems, sickness absence and, latterly, driver shortages. On a national level, this meant Calderdale was in the top 50 authorities for recycling, regionally was the second-best performing authority (table below), and the best in West Yorkshire for the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

| Year    | Region               | Authority                        | Recycling % |
|---------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | East Riding of Yorkshire Council | 60.8%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Calderdale MBC                   | 53.5%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | North Lincolnshire Council       | 51.9%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Hambleton District Council       | 49.9%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Kingston-upon-Hull City Council  | 49.2%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Wakefield City MDC               | 49.2%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Ryedale District Council         | 48.3%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Selby District Council           | 44.7%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | York City Council                | 44.1%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | North Yorkshire County Council   | 43.4%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Doncaster MBC                    | 43.4%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Rotherham MBC                    | 43.3%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Barnsley MBC                     | 43.2%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Harrogate Borough Council        | 42.6%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Craven District Council          | 39.9%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Richmondshire District Council   | 39.1%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Bradford City MDC (MBC)          | 37.8%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Scarborough Borough Council      | 37.5%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | North East Lincolnshire Council  | 35.5%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Leeds City Council MBC           | 35.1%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Sheffield City Council           | 32.2%       |
| 2020-21 | Yorkshire and Humber | Kirklees MBC                     | 25.0%       |

## COMMUNITY PROTECTION

**Milestone in mobile technology** - After trialling and tweaking the Uniform Mobile App within the Community Safety Wardens Team, we have extended this method of working into the Neighbourhoods Wardens which enables the teams to access requests for support whilst working

out in the field, update and reassign tasks and attach pictures from site without having to return to the office. This is a big milestone following the Enforcement Review in 2017, allowing the right response from the right team at the right time, with the minimum of delay. We will continue to identify any further tweaks required to ensure a leaner response to volume environmental nuisance affecting our Borough.

### **Responding to Fly-tipping:**

- In February, a Calderdale resident was successfully prosecuted at Bradford Magistrates Court under 'Duty of Care' legislation when personal information was found in dumped waste in Pellon, Halifax. He was ordered to pay £200 costs for the clean-up, a £120 fine, and a surcharge of £34. Normally, in these cases we issue a fixed penalty notice however, the resident refused to accept the notice and chose to take his chances in court. The 'Duty of Care' legislation allows for us to prosecute those who, either knowingly or not, give their waste to be disposed of by unregistered operators who then in turn dispose of it incorrectly. It is important that we get the message out that when using a waste disposal company, whether it be a skip company or a cold caller knocking on your door, to check that they have the right documentation to dispose of waste.
- Similarly, a Bradford man recently appeared at Bradford and Keighley Magistrates Court charged with a fly tipping related offence. The court heard that on July 20th, 2020, a vehicle was caught on a motorist's dashcam leaving a mattress on the side of the road at Chelsea Mansions, Halifax. The video was passed on to Calderdale Council, which eventually found that the driver of the vehicle, which was rented, was the accused. He was fined £538, ordered to pay court costs of £85 and £80 for the cost of removing the mattress. We will continue to take a zero-tolerance approach to anybody that fly tips, seeking evidence to prosecute wherever possible.

**Halifax retains its Purple Flag status for the 12th year!** Halifax leads the way for a safe night out in the region by once again receiving the prestigious Purple Flag award. The Purple Flag accreditation recognises excellence in the eventing, evening, and night-time economy and aims to raise the standard and broaden the appeal of town and city centres. Halifax has been graded by Purple Flag Assessors as being above the national standard for:

- Leadership
- Food and drink offering
- Design
- Identity
- Late night venues
- External partnership
- Perceptions

A key part of Purple Flag accreditation are schemes that ensure those who are, or become, vulnerable are safeguarded, such as Safe Places and the White Ribbon Campaign.

**Animal Welfare** - Environmental Health has two Animal Health and Welfare Officers who inspect farms and who police all manner of welfare, licencing issues and movement controls involving animals in our area. They play an integral part in controlling transmission of disease through herds and flocks, upon which our food industry relies. On 20 January, with help from Legal Services, a warrant was sought from Bradford magistrates as a local farmer was suspected of causing unnecessary suffering to his animals. Officers found cattle without ear tags (some had clearly never had tags) - any disease transmitted on moving such cattle becomes difficult to trace. Other cattle didn't have adequate cover and some sheep had untreated skin ailments. Further visits will now be made to the farm, with enforcement action, including prosecution, against the farmer being considered. Most farmers exercise a high degree of responsibility, but alongside professional farmers are those who operate smallholdings and 'hobby' farms, and we are seeing a growing trend from some within this group, although perhaps well-intentioned, being unaware of the extent of regulation. There are also some who are either unable, or simply unwilling, to comply with the rules that protect the industry, animal welfare, and our food supply, and we will not hesitate to act against such individuals.

## CUSTOMER SERVICES

## WELFARE AND BENEFITS

Just under 12,000 payments from the Household Support Fund were made during week commencing 21 February to households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction and/or Free School Meals. Daily awards continue to be made to new eligible households until the scheme closes on 31 March 2022.

The Test and Trace isolation payment scheme ended on 24 February 2022 and work is continuing on those applications received up to this date – final date for closure is 6 April 2022 to fit in with the 6 weeks allowed by the DHSC for applications to be made.

The service is currently preparing for annual uprating which is due to take place over the weekend of 19/20 March 2022 and all hands to the pump to make sure that all tasks are undertaken to ensure accurate awards from April 2022 are made.

The DWP have also directed that a new scheme called Housing Benefit Award Accuracy has to be implemented from April 2022 and which we will be required to undertake approximately 900 high risk case reviews – whilst optional during the Covid pandemic they have now made this mandatory. Service assurance and IT colleagues are putting the final touches to this so that we are ready to implement from April.



## CUSTOMER ACCESS

Two fixed-term advisers have been recruited specifically to assist customers struggling with Council Tax debt. The aim is to prevent the escalation of debt problems and provide assistance at an early stage. The team identifies appropriate customers and contact is made either by phone, email, or SMS. The advisers proactively offer solutions and signpost to other agencies before the customers situation worsens. We are currently running an 8-week pilot to establish what contact method is most successful and which customers are most likely to engage. So far, the customers we have contacted have been pleased and surprised to be offered additional help. Many have received assistance with prioritising their council tax debt and have set up realistic and manageable payment arrangements.

Refresher training is ongoing to increase the number of advisers able to assist customers with Council Tax queries. They are being coached and supported to become competent and confident when dealing with the massive increase in contact around annual billing where we expect to see a 50% increase in demand. The team are working an additional 100 hours throughout March to ensure they can respond to as many customers as possible.

The Chat function continues to be a key channel for those customers who are online and need some assistance and our Virtual Assistant has been key to us managing demand at peak times.

New webforms have been developed and implemented for customers to ensure easier access for them and to reduce duplication in the back office. Discount forms for Council Tax have been combined and will be presented to customers on one online form which is a much easier and more efficient process – we are hopefully these will be released this month reducing demand on front and back offices and being a much better experience for customers.

More customers than ever have signed up to receive email reminders for their Waste and Recycling Collections – over 37,000 now take advantage of this service. Not only is this the most efficient and effective way for customers to receive reminders, but the same communication can also be used to alert them on disruptions to service.

Homelessness Prevention continues to offer face to face appointments Monday - Friday at number 42 Market Street along with a drop in service. Winter Shelter supported 16 clients during February, and we continue to work with them to find appropriate longer term accommodation. Many customers present with complex needs and an inability to sustain a tenancy. We continue to work closely with our multi-agency partners to provide and develop holistic support to help people who have a history of rough sleeping or have complex needs and to endeavour to keep them in housing.

The team continue to manage on average 200 cases per month delivering a range of services and advice for those at threat of homelessness or sleeping rough. On average 20 new cases per day were entered by clients onto the housing portal as an aside to those referred to the team from the contact centre. Availability of suitable affordable accommodation continues to be a major challenge.

## NEIGHBOURHOODS & COHESION

### Neighbourhood Teams

Teams have been involved in a wide range of environmental improvement activities including localised improvements in Central funded by the Apperley Bridge production company and an increasing number of responses to complaints to environmental health from members of the public.

### Asylum and Migration

There has been significant pressure on the service and the voluntary sector as a result of the new hotel being stood up. The refugee resettlement and the school's admission team have kindly been assisting with support for residents at the hotel. We expect to see an increased churn of residents in hotel contingency population over the summer and beyond as the Borders Bill is finalised and the Home Office have completed their training of a new cohort of asylum claim decision makers. In addition, procurement has increased in HX1 and with the hotel in place we now have 90% of our asylum-seeking population placed in HX1.

### Prevent Team

The 2021/22 project delivery is now drawing to a close and has had a successful uptake from a broad range of partners and agencies.

Channel Panel have successfully closed some cases which has enabled an increased focus on those that remain. Referrals remain mostly for young males and predominantly for extreme right-wing ideologies.

### Cohesion & Equality Team

The Refugee Integration team now has a full team following the recruitment of Sophie Illand as our Refugee Integration Support Worker and along with her co-worker Iona Black they will be supporting new Refugees to integrate into the local community.

## SPORTS SERVICES

Sport Services are working with the Active Calderdale team to evaluate how inclusive and accessible we are for older people. National evaluation by UK Active has shown what older people want and need from leisure facilities (e.g., socialising, specifically trained staff, programming requirements and bespoke marketing/communication). We are using that research as a framework to both self-assess but also gain feedback from our older users and non-users. We will then work with Active Calderdale on an action plan following the feedback.

Sport Services have been working with Rastrick High School on a Community Use Agreement for their newly resurfaced 3G artificial pitch, due to open soon. Funded by the Football Foundation this will provide much needed training and playing facilities for the area.

Since the Government announced the lifting of restrictions, we have made a few changes at our facilities, mainly removing the booking system from lane swimming so members can come for a swim when they want to rather than on the hour for each session, this is going well so far. We are seeing a steady increase in the number of users returning to the facilities. Weekend use is very high currently.

The new Go learn system we have for swimming lessons is proving a great success and has massively reduced the amount of paper we use due to moving onto iPads to record children's progress and attendance.

Memberships are slowly recovering after the last year and we are at 8993 memberships with 258 joining in January.

Work has taken place to look at the layout and functionality of the web pages for the sports Service. New systems have been introduced to enable customers to book activities using an app, which we are currently testing.

Work to replace the filter media in the plant rooms at Sowerby and Brighouse has been completed with little impact on customer usage.

Planning for the introduction of air sourced heat pumps at Todmorden is underway following a successful bid by CAFM to Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The project would deliver a 70% reduction in carbon emissions for the project site (275 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per annum).

North Bridge Leisure Centre closed on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March, customers have been signposted and supported to make best use of our other facilities. The new state of the art facility will be opening in 2024.

## CULTURAL SERVICES

## Cultural Development

### Cultural Strategy

Since the last update, the cultural strategy for Calderdale 'Where Creativity Flows' was approved by the full Council at their meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February.

A summary version of the strategy has now been printed and will be distributed during March. Over 20,000 copies will be available to pick up at various council, cultural and non-council venues throughout Calderdale and West Yorkshire and a further 20,000 to be distributed through a joint mailing with Victoria Theatre. The full PDF, summary and accessible versions will be available for download on an external website [www.whererecreativityflows.co.uk](http://www.whererecreativityflows.co.uk) from mid-March onwards. The next step of communicating the strategy to wider regional and national stakeholders will be implemented. Work continues to support and develop the cultural partnerships in Calderdale in order to position them to be able to delivery plan.

### Cultural Grants

The Calderdale Cultural Fund 2022 – 2025 is currently open for applications, until Wednesday 23 March 2022. Voluntary organisations can apply for between £ 5,000 and £25,000 a year, for up to three years, to deliver their cultural projects. There are currently 3 organisations being funded from this grant pot of £100K at this present time and cultural development anticipate that this fund will be oversubscribed due to the limited resources amount available. The long strategic aim is for both the number of the organisations being funded and the size of the pot to grow to allow for more sustainable development of the sector. Regionally, grants and their administration has become a priority focus for all local authorities to help the sector to get back on its feet after being one of the hardest hit by the pandemic, with a working group established to share best practice.

### Museums

Shibden Hall re-opened for a new season on Tuesday 1st March. Staff have worked very hard getting the Hall ready, cleaning thoroughly, re-displaying the rooms and providing new interpretation. We have converted the "Tented Bedroom" next to Anne Lister's bedroom into an interpretation space where we can better display the objects we have directly relating to Anne Lister and to tell the story of the House and the Families who lived there. Room steward volunteers are supporting our work with visitors, and we are doing a fresh intake of these to supplement those we already have in anticipation of a busy season. We are ready for the Anne Lister Birthday Festival coming in April which will come with a craft market on the lawn for the Birthday weekend.

Shibden 600 is ready at Bankfield Museum to encourage the Shibden visitors to also see Bankfield and discover more about the history of the Hall. On the 26<sup>th</sup> March we will open a major new exhibition "Fashion in Anne Lister's Time" looking at the early nineteenth century fashions that Anne would have been surrounded by but did not entirely conform to. We eagerly await a date for the Second Series of Gentleman Jack so we can display costumes used in the filming. Kate

Lycett's exhibition will be on until 26<sup>th</sup> March and has been a great success. Profits from picture sales are paying for new lighting for the main hall to improve future exhibitions and the visitor experience.

The Friends of the Rydings are now operating again at Brighthouse with a programme of events scheduled for the year and volunteers returning. We have met with representatives and look forward to working with them again.

Todmorden Town Hall tours are re-starting each month guided by volunteers. The first is on 6<sup>th</sup> March then the first Sunday of each month.

## **Libraries**

Over February Half Term we had a successful week of activities for children and families across our libraries. We held 'Story tots' and 'Bounce and Rhyme' sessions for the very young and their parents plus Animal Art, Jewellery Making and 'Love Science' Potions workshops for the older children. To support communities the Library Service is back holding regular events face to face events for both Adults and Children. The majority of the Readers Groups that have been either held in libraries or facilitated by the library service have returned and some new ones are being established.

Library on-line events, activities and information services continue to be well received, recent highlights include episodes from the History Out loud Podcast about the exiting research taking place to piece together Ann Walkers life and "A blast from the Past: Severe Winters from Calderdale's History and Beyond". The team also touch on the subject of winter, in the Local Studies Blog which includes a piece about the four of the most severe winters to hit the UK, and how Yorkshire was impacted. The Local Studies team have recently produced a short film about the Poet and Novelist Sylvia Plath's visits to Yorkshire which is available on YouTube.

The Children's section of Todmorden Library has recently reopened following refurbishment, including the installation of new shelving and furniture, redecoration, and a new carpet and of course a lot of new books. The statue of the Iron Man has been spruced up and some Iron Man activities are currently available for younger children. Teenagers/Young Adults haven't been forgotten as there are lots of new books targeted at them and also comfortable seating for them.