

There was great news recently with planning permission granted for the full rebuild of Longton Lane Primary School in Rainhill. The Council is contributing over £150k towards the project, which follows on from recent rebuilds at Ashurst in Blackbrook and Willow Bank in Newton.

Children deserve the best possible facilities, and we're doing all we can to make sure every single child in our borough has the best possible start in life is our Council's top priority.

All councillors are trained in their role as corporate parents, and myself, Cllr Nova Charlton and Cabinet are fully committed to improving children's services and supporting council staff in doing what needs to be done.

For example, we're continuing to invest record amounts in children's services, increasing spending from £43m in 2019 to £64m this year; we're supporting new ways of attracting permanent staff and investing in the workforce; modernising and improving our Early Help offer; investing £2.5m in our own new children's homes; working with partners including Saints to promote fostering, and much more.

Our children's social care services are of course focused on supporting the most vulnerable – and as a Labour council we can say hand on heart we are committed to that fight.

And all the work we're doing to attract jobs, investment and growth, raise aspiration and increase opportunity – it's work that we hope will reap benefits for future generations as well as the here and now. Just last week I was invited to speak at the Festival of Place at Boxpark Wembley along with our regeneration partners Muse, part of ECF. We were a finalist in the Future Places award category for our St Helens town centre plans and we spoke about how children are at the heart of our thinking along with heritage, sustainability and social value.

From the new Inclusive Growth Strategy we've just agreed at Cabinet to building much-needed new homes and new infrastructure, not to mention doing as much of this as possible in sustainable and innovative ways to help us tackle climate change and leave a planet children can enjoy – it's all for children and young people.

Find out how you could help change a child's life for the better by becoming a foster carer – visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/fostering or call the team on 01744 671146 for more information.

Best wishes to all Star readers.