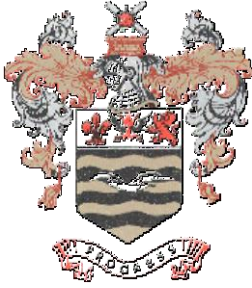


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BLACKPOOL COUNCIL

Tuesday, 23 January 2018

To: The Members of Blackpool Council

Mr Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of **Blackpool Council** to be held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Blackpool on Wednesday, 31 January 2018 commencing at 6.00 pm for the transaction of the business specified below.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Lewis'.

Director of Governance and Partnerships

Business

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests in the items under consideration and in doing so state:

(1) the type of interest concerned either a

- (a) personal interest
- (b) prejudicial interest
- (c) disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI)

and

(2) the nature of the interest concerned

If any member requires advice on declarations of interests, they are advised to contact the Head of Democratic Governance in advance of the meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2017 (Pages 1 - 6)

To agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 22 November 2017 as a true and correct record.

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive official announcements from the Mayor.

4 RESOLUTION OF CONDOLENCE - FREEMAN OF THE BOROUGH OF BLACKPOOL MR JIMMY ARMFIELD CBE

Councillors will be asked to observe a minute's silence as a mark of respect to Freeman of the Borough, Mr Jimmy Armfield CBE who sadly died on 22 January 2018.

Group Leaders and/ or representatives will be invited to pay tribute to Mr Armfield CBE and to pass a resolution of condolence.

A formal resolution of condolence will be forwarded under separate cover, prior to the meeting.

5 EXECUTIVE REPORTS (Pages 7 - 22)

To consider the attached reports to Council from the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council (Tourism, Economic Growth and Jobs) and the Cabinet Secretary (Resilient Communities).

Members are reminded that:

- Each Senior Executive Member has up to three minutes to present their report, after which there will be a period of no longer than 25 minutes per report for questions/comments (a green card will give a one minute warning, red for the end of the debate).
- There will be three minutes per question/ comment from any Councillor on anything within the portfolio and no limit to the number of times a Councillor can ask a question.
- There will be a period of up to 25 Minutes for a response from the Senior Executive Member (or relevant Cabinet Member) at the end of the questions/ comments for each report.

6 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2018/ 2019 (Pages 23 - 38)

To consider the recommendation of the Executive from its meeting on 11 December 2017 relating to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

7 MAYOR ELECT 2018/ 2019

To determine who should be invited to offer themselves for election as Mayor at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 14 May 2018 and agree that the meeting commence at 2.00pm, as it has in previous years.

Venue information:

First floor meeting room (lift available), accessible toilets (ground floor), no-smoking building.

Other information:

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Yvonne Burnett, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser, Tel: (01253) 477034, e-mail yvonne.burnett@blackpool.gov.uk

Copies of agendas and minutes of Council and committee meetings are available on the Council's website at www.blackpool.gov.uk.

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Present:

Councillor I Coleman (in the Chair)

Councillors

Benson	Cross	Maycock	Singleton
Blackburn	Elmes	Mitchell	Smith
Cain	Galley	O'Hara	Stansfield
Callow	Mrs Henderson MBE	Owen	I Taylor
Mrs Callow JP	Hobson	Robertson BEM	L Taylor
Campbell	Humphreys	Roberts	L Williams
Clapham	Hunter	Rowson	T Williams
G Coleman	Hutton	Ryan	Mrs Wright
Collett	Kirkland	D Scott	
Critchley	Matthews	Mrs Scott	

In Attendance:

Neil Jack, Chief Executive

John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Alan Cavill, Director of Place

Diane Booth, Director Children's Services

Antony Lockley, Director of Strategy and Assistant Chief Executive

Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health

Steve Thompson, Director of Resources

Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Partnerships/Monitoring Officer

Lorraine Hurst, Head of Democratic Governance

Yvonne Burnett, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser

Sally Shaw, Head of the Corporate Delivery Unit

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors D Coleman and Jackson who were on official Council business.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2017

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 September 2017 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced the news that former councillor Michael Jebson had sadly passed away since the last Council meeting. As a mark of respect, a minute's silence was held.

4 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Secretary presented reports to the Council on work undertaken in their own portfolio area and those portfolios under their responsibility. The reports covered corporate, strategic and policy issues, together with work being undertaken in transforming services and with partners.

Questions, comments and debate were invited from all councillors on each of the report areas.

Notes:

- (1) Councillor Campbell agreed to send a written response to Councillor Mrs Scott on the number of Council owned properties with cavity wall insulation that was unsuitable for coastal properties and the number of complaints that had been received from tenants.
- (2) On presentation of the report from the Cabinet Secretary, Councillors Mitchell and Smith declared personal interests as governors of Layton Primary School.
- (3) Councillor Mrs Henderson left the meeting following consideration of the item.

5 PROPOSAL TO DISSOLVE THE BLACKPOOL, FYLDE AND WYRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMPANY AND FORM AN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD

Members considered the recommendation of the Executive regarding the governance of the economic development agenda across the Fylde Coast.

The Council noted that a governance review had been undertaken in respect of the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Development Company (EDC) with a view to reflecting the responsibility for managing the delivery of the Enterprise Zone programme. It was reported that the review had identified that a joint committee between the three councils would present a more efficient delivery model.

The report to members outlined that the joint committee would be known as an Economic Prosperity Board to reflect the proposed three co-opted private sector representatives in addition to the three Leaders of the constituent Councils.

Members noted that all three Councils were being asked to give approval to dissolve the current EDC and form the joint committee as set out in the report.

Motion: Councillor Blackburn proposed (and Councillor Campbell seconded):

‘To authorise the Leader of the Council, in his role as ‘member’ of the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Development Company (EDC) to dissolve the aforementioned Company. (This will require a special resolution of the ‘members’ of the company. In effect this will be the three Leaders of the three Councils signing a resolution to disestablish the Company).’

Motion carried: The motion was submitted to the Council and carried.

6 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

Members considered the recommendations of the Executive to approve an extension to the period for the current Local Transport Plan.

The Council noted that a Local Transport Plan was required to be in place and that the current Local Transport Plan had expired on 31 March 2016. In order to meet statutory requirements and to enable a full review of the plan for the future, it was proposed to extend life of the current document for a further year.

The report from the Executive outlined that in March 2011, the Council had identified six key issues which remained valid: highway maintenance, road safety, congestion, visitor economy, parking and accessibility. A new plan would enable the emerging regeneration position to be considered from the transport needs perspective, including the new conference centre, leisure quarter development and possible employment hub.

Discussion took place on the importance of having a fully refreshed plan in place and the tramway extension that formed part of the proposals.

Motion: Councillor Campbell proposed (and Councillor Blackburn seconded):

- ‘1. To approve the extension of the Local Transport Plan, 2011 to 2016, until April 2018.
2. To delegate authority to the Director of Place to make minor amendments to the Local Transport Plan document as necessary and publish the plan.’

Prior to voting, five members of the Council requested that the vote on the motion should be recorded. The voting was as follows:

For the motion: Councillors Benson, Blackburn, Cain, Campbell, G Coleman, Collett, Critchley, Cross, Elmes, Hobson, Humphreys, Hunter, Hutton, Kirkland, Matthews, Maycock, Mitchell, O’Hara, Owen, Rowson, Ryan, Singleton, Smith, I Taylor, L Taylor, L Williams, Mrs Wright - **total 27**.

Against the motion: Councillors Mrs Callow, Callow, Clapham, Galley, Roberts, Robertson, Scott, Mrs Scott, Stansfield, T Williams - **total 10**.

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2017

Abstentions: Councillor I Coleman - **total 1.**

Motion carried: The motion was therefore carried.

7 ALLEYGATES

Motion: Having submitted notice, Councillor Humphreys proposed (and Councillor Hobson seconded):

‘The Council notes that it is at present not legally possible to apply for gating orders where the highway to be gated represents the only access to a property. The Council expresses its concern that this can on occasion thwart the settled wish of all local residents and impair the fight against anti-social behaviour including fly tipping. The Council therefore asks the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary to ask the Government to amend legislation to allow greater flexibility in these circumstances.’

Members went on to debate the motion.

Motion carried: The motion was submitted to the Council and carried.

Note: Councillor Mitchell left the meeting following consideration of the above item.

8 WAIVING OF CAR PARK CHARGES - FESTIVE PERIOD

Members were informed that since submitting due notice, Councillor T Williams sought the meeting’s consent to alter the published motion, changing the date referred to from 18 December to 1 December

Following a vote, the Council did not agree to accept the altered motion.

Original motion: Councillor T Williams then proposed (and Councillor Galley seconded):

‘The current planned and emergency construction work that is happening all over Blackpool especially around and to access roads, will no doubt cause a great deal of congestion and traffic delays for regular shoppers, local visitors and also the extra potential shoppers leading up to Christmas.

Retailers and other associated trades are already expressing concern about the affect the road closures and construction will have on their businesses especially if shoppers decide not to travel into the town centre to avoid the disruption.

This Council should show its understanding and address these concerns by improving the already offered parking discount by offering totally free car parking in all council owned town centre car parks from the 1 December up until Christmas Eve.

This Council is proud to support local businesses and the waiving of fees for this set period will not only prove and endorse that statement, but also demonstrate that the Council is willing to forgo its own income to protect that of others.

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2017

Accordingly, the Council asks the Director of Place to put in place the necessary arrangements and approvals to allow free car parking in all council owned town centre car parks from the 1 December up until Christmas Eve.'

Members went on to debate the motion.

Motion lost: The motion was submitted to the Council and lost.

Note: Councillor Mrs Rowson left the meeting during debate on the above item.

Mayor

(The meeting ended at 9.17 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
Lorraine Hurst, Head of Democratic Governance
Tel: 01253 477127
E-mail: lorraine.hurst@blackpool.gov.uk

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Executive Member Report to the Council
31 January 2018

AGENDA ITEM 5(a)

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL –‘CORPORATE’ PORTFOLIO AREA COUNCILLOR SIMON BLACKBURN

The Corporate area covers my portfolio and those of:

- Councillor Ivan Taylor (Cabinet Member for Projects and Partnerships)

The full details of the portfolio areas can be found on the Council’s website at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Your-councillors/Executive-members.aspx>

Corporate Issues

Financial Monitoring 2017/ 2018 and Budget 2018/ 2019

I can report to Members that as at month 7, the Council was forecasting an overspend by year-end of £4.0m. The principal financial pressures are presenting in Children’s Social Care, Strategic Leisure Assets, Business Loans Fund and Parking Services. However, in the context of £34m of Earmarked Revenue Reserves and with five months of the financial year remaining, officers are working diligently and expeditiously to improve the position such that working balances of at least £3.0m are reached by year-end. Revised service and financial plans are underway, including the review of non-essential spend and delays to filling non-front line vacancies.

The Council’s Provisional Settlement for 2018/ 2019 was published on 19 December 2017. The specific details and implications of this announcement will be contained within the Council’s Revenue Budget 2018/ 2019 report.

Treasury Management

As at the end of November 2017, I can confirm that Council Tax collection was 68.3% compared to 68.1% at the same month in 2016/ 2017. The total amount collected has risen by £1.8m, mainly due to increases in both the Council Tax rate and base.

I am pleased to report that Business Rates collection is improving, standing at 68.0% at the end of November, compared to 66.2% the previous year. This increase in collection of 1.8% equates to £1.3m, a not inconsiderable amount.

Although the amount borrowed over the last five years has increased by nearly 52%, total interest payable has reduced by 6.6%. This reflects prudent financial management, borrowing when appropriate to do so and reviewing the restructuring of debt whenever the opportunity becomes available.

In addition to our prudent borrowing approach, we also ensure that experts manage any business and activities in which we have a significant interest. For example, experienced operators such as Merlin Attractions continue to successfully develop Blackpool Tower's offer, while the team running Blackpool Transport Services Limited has already delivered better buses and a much improved service offer to users. These operators also provide financial dividends to the Council that are used to fund and invest in front-line services.

I have received a number of queries recently about the approach the Council takes to making loans and investments. I continue to be clear on this, potential loans and investments made by the Council are always considered carefully and in great detail. We approach these matters in much the same way as any serious commercial lender or investor. Indeed, if there is not a strong business case, proposals are rejected.

Policy Issues

Universal Credit

The Autumn Budget announced a number of changes to Universal Credit delivery. The main changes affecting Blackpool residents are:

- Full service rollout for Blackpool Job Centre Plus has been moved back from September 2018 to December 2018;
- In the meantime, there will be no new claims to Universal Credit in Blackpool with effect from 31 December 2017. This means that customers will continue to claim Housing Benefit from 1 January 2018 to December 2018; and
- Existing Universal Credit customers will still continue to receive this benefit.

Strategic Issues

Blackpool Museum Project

As I detailed in my previous report, in July 2017 Blackpool Council, very reluctantly, made the decision not to proceed with the scheme to develop a museum within the Pavilion and Horseshoe at the Winter Gardens. Since this decision, the Blackpool Museum Team has been working hard to create a new scheme, which would retain the key benefits, whilst reducing overall capital costs, thereby assisting with the overall viability of the project.

The new proposed site for the museum is the Palatine site (currently known as the Sands Venue). The site is the subject of a major redevelopment into a five-star hotel and spa complex. The museum would occupy the first floor of the site, with its own dedicated entrance and on-street presence. It is an ideal location on the Promenade in terms of visibility and visitor footfall, at the same time, its position on the famous Golden Mile fits perfectly with the museum's popular entertainment theme.

Funding applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund were submitted for this new scheme in December 2017. Decisions for both these funds are expected in March/ April 2018.

Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone

The Enterprise Zone Masterplan public consultation closed on 21 December. Officers are currently assessing responses, which are likely to result in minor revisions to the Masterplan. The Masterplan will then be presented to Blackpool and Fylde Councils for adoption in February 2018.

We are formally required by the Government to produce a delivery plan for the Enterprise Zone, based upon the Masterplan. The delivery plan will identify the increased potential for retained business rates growth funding on the site. This retained business rates growth will be used to deliver enabling infrastructure to create development sites and the consequent employment generation, which we now believe is likely to exceed the original projections of 3,000 jobs over the 25-year life of the Enterprise Zone. We will be submitting the delivery plan to Government later this year for approval.

I can confirm that an independent report has been commissioned to consider the future operational strategy for Blackpool Airport and identify new business opportunities to maximise its potential. It is pleasing that we continue to receive an encouraging level of business enquiries because of the airport purchase and the appropriate teams follow these up.

Working with Partners

Blackpool Housing Company Progress and Raising the Profile of our Unique Housing Challenges

As Members will be aware, the Council established the Blackpool Housing Company (now My Blackpool Home) in 2015/ 2016 to begin to acquire a foothold within our problematic private rented sector in inner Blackpool. This is a bold intervention, in tune with our entrepreneurial approach. We are almost unique as a local authority in using local housing companies in such an innovative way to address market failure, the vast majority of local housing companies set up by Councils in recent years are designed to deliver new homes on surplus public sector land, a necessary, but much less complicated exercise than the task here.

Blackpool Housing Company has been pushing forward with a wide range of refurbishment schemes across inner Blackpool. The programme in 2017/ 2018 has exceeded original targets and is set to deliver 125 new homes in the year to the end of March 2018, with a total of over 200 homes owned and managed by the Housing Company overall. Recent highlights include the recent completion of the Company's largest project to date of 20 flats in the former Malibu and Astoria Hotels on Albert Road. All new homes are high quality and rented to local people. The Company also provides a growing management service for good quality properties owned by other landlords. This intervention, alongside other measures such as our licensing schemes, is making a positive difference to the quality of homes and lives in inner Blackpool.

Notwithstanding our wide range of activity, we know need to go much further if we are to create the housing offer in inner Blackpool necessary to stabilise lives, grow healthy communities and support the continued regeneration of the town. It is for this reason that I took the opportunity to discuss Blackpool's unique housing challenges and our long-held ambition to exercise some control over housing benefit, when I met Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government, toward the end of last year in Whitehall. The Secretary of State took an interest in our challenges and I agreed to submit evidence to him directly on the extent of housing failure in inner Blackpool and our core case for reform of the operation of housing benefit.

Members may be aware that there is an ongoing Department of Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry into standards in the private rented sector. The Council made a strong written submission to this inquiry at the end of last year, alongside submissions from many other local authorities and interested parties. I am pleased to advise Members that the Council has been invited to present oral evidence to the committee on Monday 29 January, alongside the London Borough of Newham and the Local Government Association. Given the importance of the challenges we face in our private rented sector, I have opted to present our evidence to the inquiry in person.

In addition to the above, I am pleased to confirm that thanks to Baroness Valentine (Business in the Community) we have secured a visit from Sir Edward Lister, Chair of Homes England, formerly the Homes and Community Agency, in February. The focus of this visit will again be the unique housing challenges we face here in Blackpool, what we want to achieve and what we need from Government and its agencies to enable us to do it.

**DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (TOURISM, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOBS) –
COUNCILLOR GILLIAN CAMPBELL**

The Places area covers my portfolio and those of:

- Councillor Fred Jackson (Environmental Services and Highways),
- Councillor Mark Smith (Regeneration, Enterprise and Economic Development) and
- Councillor Mrs Christine Wright (Housing).

The full details of the portfolio areas can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Your-councillors/Executive-members.aspx>

Corporate Issues

Blackpool's Bridges Renewal Programme

At the last Council meeting, I highlighted the investment of £11.4m from the Department of Transport (DfT), Lancashire Growth Deal's and Blackpool's Local Transport Plan funding toward essential work to secure the future of our bridges. I fully understand how disruptive this work can be, but I remain pleased with how well the bridges renewal programme is being managed. Members will no doubt be aware of the current work ongoing at Harrowside and Squires Gate bridges. I am very pleased to update Members that we are currently on budget for both these structures and in terms of Harrowside, ahead of schedule. Indeed, we hope to have completed the essential repair at Harrowside by mid-February, ready for half-term week, with Squires Gate completed by Easter 2018 as expected.

Highway Claims

I am delighted to share the good news with Members that highways-related claims have reduced dramatically over recent years. Clearly, the actions of this and the previous administration are now paying dividends, in particular via Project 30 and the subsequent adoption of a robust Road Asset Management Strategy. Claims have reduced by 69.5% from a baseline figure in April 2014 to March 2017. The success story continues this year - from the baseline, the forecast at the end of March 2018 represents a cumulative reduction of 88.6%. This is a terrific achievement and particularly important in the context of the unprecedented corporate budgetary pressure brought about by seven years of unforgiving government cuts to our finances.

Such is our record in this area that we are now cited as an example of national best practice. For example, in terms of our Road Asset Management Strategy, the Head of Highways for the Department for Transport is using Blackpool as good practice in highway management and

supporting the networking group that Blackpool has set up. The group now includes Cumbria, Manchester, Lancashire, Stockport, Hatton, Plymouth, Southend and York, with a number of additional local authorities expressing an interest to join this year.

Highways and Traffic Management Preparations for Key Town Schemes - Conference Centre, Hotels, Tramway and Houndshill Extensions

I am pleased to confirm that what we expect to be the most disruptive phase of town centre works have now been completed. The utility diversion works to the junctions of the promenade and Talbot Road, Abingdon Street and Talbot and Dickson Road have now concluded, with the junctions' re- opened on 23 December as promised.

The next phase of the diversion works is currently underway with the final phase starting in February and expected to cease at the end of March. In terms of the latter, a great deal of work is being done by Highways and Communications to ensure businesses are fully informed and have the opportunity to enter into dialogue with us prior to the onset of the works. Officers will be meeting businesses at a number of events in February, one has been organised by the Blackpool Improvement District (BID) to discuss the programme for the work post April, in particular the future Quality Corridor and Tramway works. On that point, I am pleased to confirm that we are currently preparing to launch and advertise our Quality Corridors shop front improvement grant scheme. This scheme will be of great benefit to our town centre and many small business owners and I will be announcing details shortly.

Public Space Protection Order

The Public Space Protection Order we have adopted relating to the town centre and promenade is undoubtedly delivering benefits. Crucially, it is enabling agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour in more robust and effective ways. As such, officers of the Public Protection and Legal Services Divisions are looking to extend this Order further. Extension of the Order would involve widening the geographical area covered by the Order, or alternatively extending the subjects covered. As such, a 12-week public consultation exercise will be undertaken, including data and statistics provided by the Police Crime Data Analyst. Subject to approval, this consultation will commence in February this year.

Strategic Issues

Talbot Gateway

Our plans for the continued development of Talbot Gateway continue to take shape. The anchor scheme for Phase 2 of Talbot Gateway - the construction of a new four star hotel, tramway extension and transport interchange (connecting the tram to the rail system) - is set to commence late 2018/ early 2019. I can confirm that the hotel forming part of the scheme will be a Holiday Inn (which is four-star equivalent) and I am delighted that the Franchise Agreement has now been signed with the International Hotel Group. As all available independent research has shown, it is essential that we grow our supply of three, four and now five (The Sands) star hotel accommodation in the context of a renewed conference offer,

alongside supporting the quality accommodation we already have across our existing bed, breakfast and hotel base.

As part of this signal scheme at Talbot Gateway, work will commence on the construction of a new access ramp to Blackpool North Station from High Street in January 2018. The underpass that connects the new tram extension to Blackpool North station will be constructed as part of the new hotel development. Also tied to this scheme, we are currently considering the planning application for access to Banks Street Car Park.

Members will be aware that the Planning Committee approved the planning application for a new Wilko's store on Tower Street, together with an IMAX cinema and restaurant on 26 September. Construction is due to commence later this year and once constructed, Wilko's will relocate from its current location.

Central Leisure Quarter (CLQ)

Discussions with the international developer working on the CLQ are progressing well following the signing of the exclusivity agreement in spring 2017. We are expecting to receive the submission of an outline masterplan for the development this spring. This masterplan will then enable discussions to move onto a more detailed design, potential development agreements and long-term land and property arrangements.

Over recent months Council officers have also been in discussion with HMCTS (Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service) regarding the potential relocation of the existing court facilities, which is the key remaining factor to unlocking the potential of the whole CLQ site. Tenders are currently being sought to undertake a feasibility study in respect to the above, with a number of alternative sites being reviewed. This study should be completed by late spring and will form part of the future negotiations with both the Developer and HMCTS, as the scheme progresses.

Former Yates Site

As Members may recall, I have previously reported that work was expected to commence on this site in November 2017 to construct a new Premier Inn hotel. I can confirm that Barnfield Construction has now been appointed to build the new hotel and due to programming issues, the commencement date is now reported to be early 2018. We remain understandably cautious, owing to the history of false starts on this site and will continue to exert pressure wherever and however we can on the site owners to get things going.

Policy Issues

Housing Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

The Council is about to commence consultation on a new Housing Strategy and a new Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Members may be surprised to learn that it is no longer a statutory requirement for a local authority to have a housing strategy. However, it is my firm belief that we should have one for

Blackpool given how important housing issues are to our town, its people and its future. The draft Blackpool Housing Strategy sets out the Council's ambition to improve significantly the town's housing offer, building on recent initiatives like Blackpool Housing Company, Queens Park and the Foxhall Village development. The Strategy looks to build more high quality new homes, address poor quality rented housing and provide services that help people access the homes and support they need.

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy is a statutory requirement. It will help the Council and partners to prevent more cases of homelessness before they arise, resolve crisis situations quickly and help people recover and re-build their lives. The Strategy reflects the new statutory duties placed on local authorities by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Consultation on both strategies will run to March 2018, after which the strategies will be refined, finalised and presented to the Executive for approval.

Transforming Services

Progress at Grange Park

Work is progressing to complete the re-modelling of the City Learning Centre into the new @the Grange facility at Grange Park, with the local library, café, outdoor food growing, local shops and base for community groups. Once the shops have been re-located from Chepstow Road, there will be a major opportunity to re-shape the heart of the Grange Park estate and provide complementary new homes and open space. Initial ideas for this new development will be the subject of public consultation at the end of January and again in April, with work likely to start in 2019.

Working with Partners

Circus 250 Celebrations

Blackpool celebrated the national launch of the Circus 250 celebrations with projections on to the front of The Blackpool Tower building. The resort is one of six "Cities of Circus" in the UK that have been chosen to help commemorate the very first circus in London 250 years ago. Blackpool will develop its own programme of circus-themed events and exhibitions during the coming year, under-pinned by the world-famous Blackpool Tower Circus, which has not missed a season since 1894.

CultureBlackpool

A new campaign aimed at encouraging people to uncover the resort's culture and heritage has been launched. CultureBlackpool has been developed as a partnership between VisitBlackpool, LeftCoast, the Winter Gardens, Grundy Art Gallery and Grand Theatre. The campaign, which is being delivered under the banner of "The B-side at the Seaside", encourages both visitors and residents to explore the resort's rich architecture, heritage and internationally acclaimed installations and events. A range of Blackpool-born celebrities including the award-winning journalist John Robb, music star Little Boots (aka Victoria Hesketh) and artist Michael Trainor

are supporting it. As part of the marketing material, there is a special section within the VisitBlackpool website. The campaign was officially launched at an event in the Blackpool Tower Circus where a new film was unveiled, showcasing some of Blackpool's cultural and heritage assets.

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CABINET SECRETARY (RESILIENT COMMUNITIES) – COUNCILLOR GRAHAM CAIN

The Resilient Communities area covers my portfolio and those of:

- Councillor Kathryn Benson (Schools and Learning)
- Councillor Amy Cross (Adult Services and Health), and
- Councillor Maria Kirkland (Third Sector Engagement and Leisure Services).

The full details of the portfolio areas can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Your-councillors/Executive-members.aspx>

Corporate Issues

Fantastic Success for Stanley Park: Named the Nation's Best!

I am absolutely delighted that Stanley Park was named as best park in the UK at the Fields in Trust national awards ceremony, held at Lords Cricket Ground in London on 30 November 2017. I am sure all Members will agree with me that this is a tremendous accolade for the park and Blackpool. Stanley Park is one of the true jewels in Blackpool's crown with an unrivalled array of facilities, from the Italian, Rose and Remembrance Gardens to the bandstand and lake, to some of the region's finest and most important sports and leisure facilities. Stanley Park faced stiff competition from three other finalists Craigavon City Park in County Armagh, Roath Park in Cardiff and Rouken Glen Park in East Renfrewshire.

I would like to thank and congratulate, in particular, the Friends of Stanley Park and also our Parks Team who under immense pressure are doing a marvelous job. I should also mention that the Friends of Stanley Park won best 'Have a Field Day' category for its re-enactment of the opening of Stanley Park with special guest, Lord Derby.

School Improvement

I am pleased to announce that Ofsted inspectors continue to be positive about progress in Blackpool schools. In recent months, Layton Primary School acquired 'outstanding' status and Our Lady of the Assumption Primary, Moor Park Primary and St Teresa's Catholic Primary Schools all maintained a 'good' rating. In addition to our schools' Ofsted inspection achievements, I am particularly pleased with a developing level of expertise that supports town wide improvement. The recent Ofsted report relating to the Fylde Coast Teaching Alliance, which provides on the job training for university graduates looking to become secondary teachers, received an outstanding status for overall effectiveness. The 'Leaders and managers have a strong vision and a shared moral obligation to train the highest quality teachers for Blackpool', this is very encouraging and exactly what we need for the town and its young people.

St John Vianney RC Primary school has been awarded model school status for the read/ write programme and are now able to work with local schools to spread the expertise they have acquired. This is an example of excellent teaching and learning practice for phonics and early literacy, which can be shared town-wide via our School Improvement Board.

Health Visiting Service Enhancements for Young Children

I would like to draw Members' attention to an important piece of work to transform health-visiting services that is on track to achieve full roll out of in April 2018. The Health Visiting Service is determined to do what they can to ensure that every Blackpool child is happy, healthy and ready to learn when they transfer to school.

The Health Visiting Service is now rolling out a new model that consists of eight universal contacts to all families, six within the first year of life plus two additional health reviews, including a school readiness child health review. This new model is innovative in that it goes further than the nationally mandated requirement for local authorities to commission Health Visiting Services to deliver five health and development reviews. Our enhanced service will enable the identification of additional needs at an earlier stage and interventions provided for families to address current or anticipated issues that will affect positive outcomes for children. A particularly significant new visit for families and children will be an 'integrated child health review' at three/ three and a half years. This visit will ensure that children in Blackpool are better prepared for school entry. The introduction of this assessment in collaboration and undertaken concurrently with early years providers and parents in a nursery setting will ensure that children are better prepared for school in the three domains of Social and Emotional Development, Speech and Language and Physical Development.

This new service offer has attracted significant national interest from other Better Start sites, other Local Authority Commissioners and in particular, the Institute of Health Visiting, who acknowledge the Blackpool model as an exemplar of best practice in England.

Strategic Issues

Blackpool Opportunity Area, 2017/ 2020

Members will recall that in my last report I provided outline detail on the Opportunity Area Delivery Plan that was published in October 2017. Since then some important strands of early activity have started to be implemented and I would like to highlight two. Firstly, action to help improve attainment in secondary schools following the 2017 English GCSE results. The Opportunity Area Board wanted to intervene rapidly in English to secure an improvement in this academic year and in response, an English steering group together with an English review team has been established. The English review team was requested to identify two categories of support rapid interventions, which could have an impact on current Year Ten and even Year 11 students and longer term interventions (which could include Key Stage Three, transition and possibly even earlier). Work on the rapid intervention support is underway and schools participating have received an individual report highlighting strengths and areas for

improvement. Proposals for developing a longer-term English strategy, including a consideration for a Blackpool wide literacy programme, will be identified in due course. Secondly, action to better co-ordinate interventions was an emerging theme from a consultation with stakeholders in July 2017 and the need for a town wide assessment of the root causes of the social mobility issues in Blackpool. A rapid analytical review was commissioned in November 2017 to inform the integrated work of the Blackpool Opportunity Area. The review began with an analysis of the data and evidence on social mobility in Blackpool and of “what works” to inform delivery objectives and plan, it then moved on to an assessment of the data infrastructure and assets in Blackpool, making recommendations about improvements to enable improved targeting, monitoring and evaluation. The final review report, which will be available in draft form at the end of January, will be used to inform activity in Blackpool on the delivery plans for the Opportunity Area activity and support consultation on these issues with the communities involved.

Demand Management

Our demand management plan continues to evolve and I am pleased to report that the numbers of children and young people safely diverted from care continues to increase. The numbers of children in care has recently risen due to the impact of several large families requiring our support and immediate protection and a delay in discharge for others linked to demand impact. Actions are currently being undertaken to rectify this position as quickly as possible. Our newly developing approach to early multi-agency intervention in the emergence of concern or need will be the subject of regional peer challenge in the months ahead, testing out pathways, thresholds and outcomes for children and young people.

As Members will no doubt be aware, Christmas is typically a very busy time for Health and Social Care and this year was no different. We have used additional monies provided to us to invest in enhancing services in key areas that we and our health colleagues predicted would make a difference easing service pressures. It is to the credit of our staff, both in house and external providers that for the first time in memory there were no people waiting for packages of care as we went into the Christmas period. The in-house homecare, Vitaline and ARC rehabilitation services have been particularly instrumental in flexing what they do to squeeze the absolute optimum performance out of the system that supports people to return or remain at home in conjunction with the Adult Social Care teams.

I can confirm that we have begun the fees consultation with our residential and care at home providers, taking into account the impact of the National Living Wage increases, as well as other non-staffing inflationary pressures, quality requirements and delivery pressures within the sector. We are in open dialogue regarding the operational and business pressures facing this sector, which is essential to the delivery of care and support for vulnerable people in Blackpool.

Policy Issues

Fylde Coast Self-Care Strategy

NHS and Local Authority partners across the Fylde Coast have been working together over recent months to develop a Self-Care Strategy. The Strategy aims to put systems and processes in place so that patients and the wider community feel able to self-care, that they have the confidence and knowledge to make it happen and that they know when to ask for help and when to contact services for support. We want all sections of our community to have access to the information, advice, support, tools and resources that they may need to make healthy lifestyle choices. In order that they may maintain and improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing and feel able to manage their own (long-term) conditions and to prevent them escalating from something manageable into a crisis situation.

The Fylde Coast Self-Care Strategy 2017/ 2020 encourages the commitment to empowering people and communities to take greater responsibility for their own health. It is built on the guiding principle of building on the assets/ strengths (e.g. knowledge, skills and experiences) that already exist in the community and recognising that the community is at the heart of the New Models of Care transformation agenda. This Self-Care Strategy is currently out to consultation to encourage any final comments and considerations before launch. Any feedback on the content of the strategy should be emailed to emily.davis@blackpool.gov.uk by Friday 9 March 2018.

Transforming Services and Working with Partners

Supporting the Health and Social Care System to Reduce Delayed Discharges from Hospital

The Council's in-house Care at Home Service has developed a 'Home's Best' offer. The Home's Best service is a 'free at the point of need' provision for up to two weeks during which time the Council's Care at Home Service will liaise with Adult Social Care, Neighbourhood HUBS and other partners to identify the individual's ongoing care and support needs. If ongoing care is required past the two weeks, then this is expected to be commissioned in the normal way and provided by either an alternative care provider or through the Council's Care at Home Reablement Service and/ or Enhanced Homecare if people have particular needs i.e. dementia, challenging support needs and/or complex care arrangements.

'Home's Best' offers a preventative model and can enhance further the discharge pathway from acute settings (Hospitals) including Accident and Emergency. Key service features include:

- 'Free at the point of need' care for up to two weeks, seven days a week, to enable to person to 'get back on track' and for further assessments to determine ongoing needs;
- Support to those people who are motivated to getting back home as soon as possible with minimal delay after a Hospital admission;
- Enhanced Homecare offer to respond to complex care arrangements (Dementia);
- Longer blocks of care;

- Enhanced rapid spring clean service to enable safe discharge and/ or avoid ambulance conveyance to hospital due to environmental risks (ability to commission specialist hazardous clean as required); and
- Additional training for staff to equip them with the skills to meet the needs of the individuals and establish 'specialist provision'.

The Care at Home Team has been raising the profile of this model of service as an alternative to typical care provision since September 2017. So far, the team has successfully supported around 210 Blackpool residents, leading to a significant reduction in unnecessary hospital admissions.

Learning Disabilities Social Crisis Accommodation Development

During the past 18 months, there has been a reduction in private providers offering respite care and short-term placements for clients experiencing a social crisis. I am pleased to confirm that a new unit has been agreed for the ground floor of the Phoenix Centre, an existing facility that is well placed to cater appropriately for these service users. The unit will have its own access and will be separated from the rest of the Phoenix Centre building. The new unit will be created out of an office space that is currently occupied by Mental Health Staff from Blackpool Teaching Hospitals who are currently seeking alternative office space to enable this project to proceed immediately.

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Report to:	COUNCIL
Relevant Officer:	Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Blackburn, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	31 January 2018

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2018/ 2019

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the recommendation of the Executive from its meeting on 11 December 2017 relating to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To agree that the Council continue to operate a Discretionary Discount Policy to be awarded in cases of exceptional hardship.

2.2 To agree that the reduction applied to working age claimants remains the same as the 2017/ 2018 Scheme agreed by Council on 25 January 2017 (27.11%) and that the main elements and method of calculating awards will be the same with the exception of:

- Minor amendments to continue to align the Scheme to Housing Benefit.
- The provision of additional support for low income groups of claimants (in receipt of Income Support, or Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance, or Income-Related Employment Support Allowance) by amending the percentage reduction applied to their award from 27.11% to 13.56%.

2.3 To agree the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/ 2019, as submitted with the Executive report on 11 December 2017.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is approved by 31 January 2018 and in place by 1 April 2018 avoiding the financial risks associated with the Government imposed default scheme.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None, a Council Tax Reduction scheme must be approved by the Council every year.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is: "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

5.0 Background Information

5.1 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefits (CTB); billing authorities were required to adopt a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) to take effect from 1 April 2013. The Government grant for Council Tax Reduction Scheme was less than 90% of the Government forecast funding levels had Council Tax Benefits continued. This was expected to leave a shortfall in funding of £3.22m based on estimates of demand and assumptions regarding the basis of calculation for the central Government grant. The ongoing level of Government support meant the Council adopted a self-funding Scheme under which all working age claimants had to pay at least 27.11% of their Council Tax in 2013/ 2014. This has remained the case in subsequent years.

5.2 The Blackpool Scheme incorporates the national pensioner scheme decided by Government. This ensures that support continues at existing levels for pensioners. In Blackpool, pensioners currently account for 36% of the caseload.

5.3 For working-age claims there is a means-tested assessment, predominantly based upon the former Council Tax Benefit rules, to establish entitlement. A percentage reduction of 27.11% (13.56% for the vulnerable groups) is then applied to the award at the end of the assessment.

5.4 Although the 2018/ 2019 scheme will, as far as is possible, have the same design principles as that currently in operation a small number of changes are proposed to align the scheme with Housing Benefit amendments in order that eligibility criteria are consistent for both schemes. The Housing Benefit changes are:

- The disregard of Bereavement Support payments, which replaced all the previous social security benefits such as Bereavement Allowance, Widow's Pension, Widowed Mother's Allowance, Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Payment.
- The disregard of certain Charitable Fund payments, such as those made following recent incidents in Manchester and London.

- 5.5 These changes will only apply to working age claimants and the impact will mean an increased award of Council Tax Reduction although the number of cases affected is expected to be low.
- 5.6 In addition, the Council is proposing to give additional support to certain vulnerable groups:
- Where the applicant or their partner receives Income Support, or Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance or Income-Related Employment Support Allowance.
- 5.7 It is proposed that the percentage reduction applied to these low income households is reduced from 27.11% to 13.56%. The estimated cost of providing additional support to these low income groups is £400,000 per year (Council share - £340,000). In order to meet this cost there will be a review of bad debt provision and a review of the Council Tax base for 2018/2019.
- 5.8 The value of the percentage reduction is reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose taking account of ongoing changes in legislation, caseload and financial requirements. It is proposed that for 2018/ 2019 the value of the percentage reduction for working age customers, who do not fall into the vulnerable or low income categories, should remain at 27.11%.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices

Appendix 6(a) – Executive Decision Notice EX42/2017

6.0 Legal considerations:

- 6.1 A resolution by the full Council to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme is required by 31 January 2018. The Scheme will take effect from 1 April 2018. The Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy has been updated and was included in the Executive agenda (Appendix 2(a))
<http://democracy.blackpool.gov.uk/documents/s28863/Appendix%202a%20Blackpool-CT-and-BR-Discretionary-Discount-Policy%20Draft.pdf>

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 7.1 Existing staffing resources within the Benefits service are used to administer the Council Tax Reduction Scheme; however, it is apparent that there has been a considerable increase in face-to-face and telephone contact, particularly when Council Tax bills are issued. The administrative and legal processes required to

collect and recover substantial numbers of small amounts place an additional burden on available resources.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

- 8.1 The Equality Analysis that has previously been carried out for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been revisited and updated. This aims to mitigate the impact on protected groups and includes the continued availability of a discretionary hardship fund which has been made available through the adoption of a Discretionary Discount Policy. As part of their consideration of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/ 2019 Members should read the updated Equality Analysis, in the Executive agenda (Appendix 2(b))

<http://democracy.blackpool.gov.uk/documents/s28864/Appendix%202b%20Blackpool%20Equality%20Analysis%202018-19.pdf>

9.0 Financial considerations:

- 9.1 For 2018/ 2019 it is proposed that the percentage reduction made at the end of the assessment for working age claimants shall be 27.11% with the exception of those claimants who fall into the vulnerable or low income categories, who will be subject to a 13.56% reduction.
- 9.2 A review of the Scheme must be carried out annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose taking account of ongoing changes in legislation, caseload and financial requirements. The Council will be required to approve the Scheme each year.
- 9.3 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 provides for a major overhaul of the benefits system. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme was implemented ahead of the commencement of Universal Credit. The new scheme of Council Tax Reduction will run alongside Housing Benefit during the transition to Universal Credit. Housing Benefit administration will then gradually diminish. Wider changes to existing benefits during the next few years will mean customers on benefits will have less money available to pay their Council Tax liability. Whilst there is still an ambition to achieve full collection, this is likely to take longer.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 As part of the overall project management leading to the 2013/ 2014 Scheme, a risk workshop identified a number of risks. Actions required to mitigate those risks have been identified and implemented where possible.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Extensive public consultation was undertaken during 2012 to develop the 2013/ 2014 Blackpool Scheme. The overall response concluded that, whilst most people did not agree with the changes, the options proposed by the Council were, in the main, supported.

12.2 Although the main elements and method of calculating awards will remain the same for 2018/ 2019, further public consultation has taken place in respect of the proposed changes to align with Housing Benefit and the proposed additional support to certain low income groups. A summary of the public consultation and the full consultation response attached at Appendix 2(c) to the Executive agenda. The Council's response to each comment has been considered and is included within the Equality Impact Analysis, which is attached at Appendix 2(b), to the Executive report. The overall response concluded that the majority of the respondents agreed with the proposed changes.

12.3 Consultation has also taken place with the major preceptors as required by the Department for Communities and Local Government guidelines. Both the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire supported the proposed changes to the scheme.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.

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Notice of :	EXECUTIVE
Decision Number:	EX42/2017
Relevant Officer:	Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Simon Blackburn, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	11 December 2017

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2018/2019

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To provide an update on the impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme since the introduction in 2013/14 and to seek approval for the proposals for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 To note the impact of the scheme to date.
- 2.2 To recommend Council to agree the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 2d, to the Executive report.
- 2.3 That the Executive recommends to Council that the reduction applied to working age claimants remains the same as the 2017/18 Scheme agreed by Council on 25th January 2017 and that the main elements and method of calculating awards will be the same with the exception of:
- Minor amendments to continue to align the Scheme to Housing Benefit.
 - The provision of additional support for low income groups of claimants (in receipt of Income Support, or Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance, or Income-Related Employment Support Allowance) by amending the percentage reduction applied to their award from 27.11% to 13.56%.
- 2.4 To recommend that the Council agrees to continue to operate a Discretionary Discount Policy to be awarded in cases of exceptional hardship as set out at Appendix 2a, to the Executive report.
- 2.5 To note at this point in time the Department for Communities and Local Government may still issue changes to the known position for the Pensioner National Scheme. Required changes would be incorporated into the final Scheme presented for adoption at Council on 24 January 2018.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is approved by 31 January 2018 and in place by 1 April 2018 avoiding the financial risks associated with the Government imposed default Scheme.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None, a Council Tax Reduction Scheme must be approved by the Council every year.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is: "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience".

5.0 Background Information

5.1 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit (CTB); billing authorities were required to adopt a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) to take effect from 1st April 2013.

5.2 The Government grant for Council Tax Reduction Scheme was less than 90% of the Government forecast funding levels had Council Tax Benefit continued. This was expected to leave a shortfall in funding of £3.22m based on estimates of demand and assumptions regarding the basis of calculation for the central Government grant. The ongoing level of Government support meant the Council adopted a self-funding Scheme under which all working age claimants had to pay at least 27.11% of their Council Tax in 2013/14. This has remained the case in subsequent years with the exception of the 2017/18 Scheme when it was agreed that additional support was provided to vulnerable groups and they had to pay 13.56%. These vulnerable groups are defined as:

- Where someone in the household receives Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments.
- Where the applicant is a lone parent and who is responsible and resides with a child under 5 years old.
- Where the applicant or their partner receives Carer's Allowance.
- Where the applicant or their partner is in receipt of a war pension, war widows pension, war disablement pension or equivalent.

5.3 The initial 2013/14 funding was separately identifiable but since then the monies have formed part of the overall total Revenue Support Grant. Analysis of the Revenue Support Grant would suggest that the initial £17.58m allocated for the scheme would equate to approximately £8.5m in 2017/18 and £6.8m in 2018/19 due to the continued year on year reductions. This means that in order for the scheme to be self-funding now, the bottom slice would need to be 83.2% for 2017/18 and 97.2% for 2018/19 (based on current Council tax figures).

5.4 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme caseload has decreased since the introduction of the scheme in 2013/14 as shown below.

	2013/14	2014/15	2016/17	2017/18 (as at Nov 17)
Working Age	14,504	13,781	13,385	13,114
Elderly	8,815	8,407	7,589	7,389
Total	23,319	22,188	20,974	20,503

The reduction in caseload is attributed to a number of factors. The Government’s increase in State Pension Age has meant that it is longer before a customer will be classed as “elderly” and there is traditionally a lower take-up of benefits within this age group. The Government’s Welfare Reform Agenda has led to more Working Age claimants moving into work therefore removing households from Council Tax Reduction Scheme entitlement whilst the increased minimum wage coupled with a four-year freeze on allowances have reduced Council Tax Reduction Scheme awards.

5.5 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme has had a very significant impact on in year Council Tax collection rates. In the last year of Council Tax Benefit, 2012/13, in year collection rate was 95.5%. Since Council Tax Reduction Scheme was introduced and 10,000 low income working age households became liable to pay Council Tax, in year collection has dropped each year. In 2016/17 collection had dropped to 90% owing to a 60.5% collection rate for Council Tax Reduction Scheme cases.

5.6 Collection rates are showing no signs of improvement in 2017/18, which will inevitably lead to a drop in ultimate collection and an increase in arrears. This increase in arrears has meant the Council’s bad debt provision for Council Tax Reduction Scheme has increased annually since the introduction of the scheme and is currently £4.8m.

5.7 Court action can be taken against defaulting Council Tax payers. However, the numbers are limited at any hearing by restrictions placed by the court. Following the issue of a liability order at court an attachment of benefits can be requested. The amount that can be attached from benefits is restricted by legislation, currently £3.70. This means that it is not possible to collect the Council Tax amount payable within the year it becomes due which impacts on in year collection rates. The attachment is administered by the Department for Work and Pensions and they can

delay the process significantly.

- 5.8 The Blackpool Scheme incorporates the national pensioner Scheme decided by Government. This ensures that support continues at the same level as existed under Council Tax Benefit. In Blackpool, pensioners currently account for 36% of the caseload.
- 5.9 For working-age claims there is a means-tested assessment, predominantly based upon the former Council Tax Benefit rules, to establish entitlement. A percentage reduction of 27.11% (13.56% for the vulnerable groups shown in 5.2) is then applied to the award at the end of the assessment.
- 5.10 Although the 2018/19 Scheme will, as far as is possible, have the same design principles as that currently in operation a small number of changes are proposed to align the Scheme with Housing Benefit amendments in order that eligibility criteria are consistent for both Schemes. The Housing Benefit changes are:
- The disregard of Bereavement Support payments, which replaced all the previous social security benefits such as Bereavement Allowance, Widow's Pension, Widowed Mother's Allowance, Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Payment
 - The disregard of certain Charitable Fund payments, such as those made following recent incidents in Manchester and London.

These changes will only apply to working age claimants and the impact will mean an increased award of Council Tax Reduction although the number of cases affected is expected to be low.

- 5.11 In addition, the Council is proposing to give additional support to certain low income groups:
- Where the applicant or partner receive Income Support, or Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance or Income-Related Employment Support Allowance.

It is proposed that the percentage reduction applied to these low income households is reduced from 27.11% to 13.56%. The estimated cost of providing additional support to these low income groups is £400,000 per year (Council share - £340,000). In order to meet this cost there will be a review of bad debt provision and a review of the Council Tax base for 2018/19.

The value of the percentage reduction is reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose taking account of ongoing changes in legislation, caseload and financial requirements. It is proposed that for 2018/19 the value of the percentage reduction for other working age customers, who do not fall into the vulnerable or low income categories shown at 5.2 or 5.11, should remain at 27.11%.

- 5.12 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No
- 5.13 Is the Corporate Delivery Unit aware of this report? Yes

The Corporate Delivery Unit has been an integral part of the development of the scheme including the consultation exercise.

5.14 **List of Appendices**

Appendix 2a: Discretionary Discount Policy
Appendix 2b: Equality Impact Analysis
Appendix 2c: Consultation Report
Appendix 2d: Draft Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19

6.0 Legal considerations:

- 6.1 A resolution by the full Council to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme is required by 31 January 2018. The Scheme will take effect from 1 April 2018.
- 6.2 The Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy has been updated and is attached at Appendix 2a, to the Executive report.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 7.1 Existing staffing resources within the Benefits service are used to administer the Council Tax Reduction Scheme; however, it is apparent that there has been a considerable increase in face-to-face and telephone contact, particularly when Council Tax bills are issued. The administrative and legal processes required to collect and recover substantial numbers of small amounts place an additional burden on available resources.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

- 8.1 The Equality Analysis that has previously been carried out for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been revisited and updated. This aims to mitigate the impact on protected groups and includes the continued availability of a discretionary hardship fund which has been made available through the adoption of a Discretionary Discount Policy. As part of their consideration of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19 Members must read the updated Equality Analysis, which is attached at Appendix 2b, to the Executive report.

9.0 Financial considerations:

For 2018/19 it is proposed that the percentage reduction made at the end of the assessment for working age claimants shall be 27.11% with the exception of those

claimants who fall into the vulnerable or low income categories shown at paragraphs 5.2 and 5.11, who will be subject to a 13.56% reduction.

- 9.2 A review of the Scheme must be carried out annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose taking account of ongoing changes in legislation, caseload and financial requirements. The Council will be required to approve the Scheme each year.
- 9.3 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 provided for a major overhaul of the benefits system. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme was implemented ahead of the commencement of Universal Credit. The new Scheme of Council Tax Reduction continues to run alongside Housing Benefit during the transition to Universal Credit. Housing Benefit administration will then gradually diminish. Wider changes to existing benefits over the last few years have meant customers on benefits have less money available to pay their Council Tax liability. Whilst there is still an ambition to achieve full collection, this is likely to take longer.
- 9.4 Providing additional support to the low income groups listed in section 5.11 will increase the cost of the Scheme by £400,000 per year. In order to meet this cost there will be a review of bad debt provision and a review of the Council Tax base for 2018/19. Removing low income households from the requirement to pay 27.11% would allow existing resources to be used for collection from the remaining Council Tax payers.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 As part of the overall project management leading to the 2013/14 Scheme, a risk workshop identified a number of risks. Actions required to mitigate those risks have been identified and implemented where possible.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

- 11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

- 12.1 Extensive public consultation was undertaken during 2012 to develop the 2013/14 Blackpool Scheme. The overall response concluded that, whilst most people did not agree with the changes, the options proposed by the Council were, in the main, supported.
- 12.2 Although the main elements and method of calculating awards will remain the same for 2018/19, further public consultation has taken place in respect of the proposed changes to align with Housing Benefit and the proposed additional support to certain low income groups. A summary of the public consultation response is below with the full consultation response attached at Appendix 2c, to the Executive report. The

Council’s response to each comment has been considered and is included within the Equality Analysis, which is attached at Appendix 2b, to the Executive report.

- 12.3 The public consultation exercise for the proposed changes to the Blackpool Scheme was undertaken from 11th September 2017 to 22nd October 2017. The overall response concluded that the majority of the respondents agreed with the proposed changes.

	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know
To give additional support to low income groups in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme	15	8	2
To disregard Bereavement Support payments in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme	20	1	4
To disregard of certain Charitable Fund payments, such as those made following recent incidents in Manchester and London.	16	5	4

- 12.4 Consultation has also taken place with the major preceptors as required by Department for Communities and Local Government guidelines. Both the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire supported the proposed changes to the scheme.

13.0 Background papers:

- 13.1 None.

14.0 Key decision information:

- 14.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

- 14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 26/2017

- 14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

- 14.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

15.0 Call-in information:

- 15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 1 December 2017 Date approved:

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1 None.

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1 The Executive resolved as follows:

1. To note the impact of the scheme to date.
2. To recommend Council to agree the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 2d, to the Executive report.
3. To recommend to Council that the reduction applied to working age claimants remains the same as the 2017/18 Scheme agreed by Council on 25th January 2017 and that the main elements and method of calculating awards will be the same with the exception of:
 - Minor amendments to continue to align the Scheme to Housing Benefit.
 - The provision of additional support for low income groups of claimants (in receipt of Income Support, or Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance, or Income-Related Employment Support Allowance) by amending the percentage reduction applied to their award from 27.11% to 13.56%.
4. To recommend that the Council agrees to continue to operate a Discretionary Discount Policy to be awarded in cases of exceptional hardship as set out at Appendix 2a, to the Executive report.
5. To note at this point in time the Department for Communities and Local Government may still issue changes to the known position for the Pensioner National Scheme. Required changes would be incorporated into the final Scheme presented for adoption at Council on 24 January 2018.

18.2 **Date of Decision:** 11 December 2017

19.0 **Reason(s) for decision:**

To ensure a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is approved by 31 January 2018 and in place by 1 April 2018 avoiding the financial risks associated with the Government imposed default Scheme.

19.1 **Date Decision published:** 13 December 2017

Executive Members in attendance:

20.1 Councillor Blackburn, in the Chair

Councillors Benson, Cain, Cross, Jackson, Kirkland, Smith, I Taylor and Mrs Wright

21.0 **Call-in:**

21.1

22.0 **Notes:**

22.1

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