

Report to:	TOURISM, RESOURCES AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Place
Date of Meeting	15 December 2016

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To consider an overview of key economic development initiatives aiming to drive the growth and viability of the local economy.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To consider the scope of current Council practice and to identify any further areas for scrutiny where appropriate.

3.0. Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To ensure members are fully informed about the range of economic development projects and programmes, and any headline achievements to date.

- 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: information report only.

4.0 Council Priority:

- 4.1 The relevant Council Priority is "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool".

5.0 Background Information

- 5.1 The Council continues to play a major role in the development of the local economy. As well as being a major employer in its own right, it sets the planning framework by which all development takes place, has lobbied for necessary public regeneration resources, and actively engaged investors to enable developments to take place.

5.2 The Council has been a key driving force for the regeneration and renewal of the town since it gained unitary status, and most visibly in the last decade through the reconstruction of the seafront and tramway network; the acquisition and renewal of key leisure assets in the Tower and Winter Gardens; the development of the Talbot Gateway Business District, as well as key housing and educational developments. It is sometimes easy to forget how much has been achieved in the last decade through public sector intervention.

5.3 Budgetary pressures and emerging national policy over the future funding of local government means it is even more imperative that the Council plays a leading role in enabling economic growth, in turn protecting the Council's revenue base to continue to fund essential public services.

5.4 Economic regeneration and economic development are not single services, but tailored responses. The Council's role in supporting and developing the local economy is incredibly varied and as such no one functional area or department can lay claim to its solution. Several Council services (planning, housing, economic development, asset management, legal and finance) are taking a more integrated approach to key projects where the Council has a role as developer, co-investor or planning authority responding to private sector development. A new Growth and Prosperity team is being formed to lead this new approach, to sharpen business cases for a pipeline of mainly property-based development activity that will be essential to the future prosperity of the town.

5.5 Many flagship property based investments and proposals are already familiar and in the public domain, requiring considerable expertise and investment to come to fruition. A number are listed below, with encouraging signs of private sector led investment and growth in the visitor economy, engineering and food manufacturing sectors.

5.6 **Visitor Economy and Town Centre Development**

- Proposed Hotel development at Sands on the promenade
- New Hampton by Hilton Hotel development in South Beach area
- Site sale and proposed relocation of Wilkos (to enable the tram extension and other development opportunities in support of expansion of the Central Business District)
- £2.5m Harry Ramsden restaurant created 100 new jobs and safeguarded 30 existing jobs housed in the former Tower Lounge
- Ambitious £25m Conference centre, and museum project proposals for the Winter Gardens complex
- Site assembly and market testing of the Central Leisure Quarter site.

5.7 **Transport and Public Infrastructure:**

- Electrification of the train line between Blackpool and Manchester
- Tram extension between North Pier and North Station
- New build Police Headquarters at the Council's former Progress House site
- Town Centre Quality Corridors – a £7m investment in public realm and commercial property improvements commencing in early 2017.

5.8 **Enterprise Zone/Business Growth**

- Designation of Enterprise Zone status for the Blackpool Airport area, attracting significant interest, soaking up existing vacant commercial units, and generating new design and build property proposals. For example, precision industrial springs manufacturer - Force Technology.
- A masterplan is required to steer large-scale development opportunities.
- New build £9.8m Energy HQ (Blackpool and Fylde College) campus is underway set to be open in September 2017. This unique training facility is geared to the needs of a wide range of environmental and renewables sectors.
- Moor Park, Bispham - A new job-creating factory extension at Laila's Fine Foods; aided by the Council over a number of years. Around 300 now employed at this factory.

5.9 These developments will generate significant new job opportunities. The Council is determined to ensure that local residents are equipped to access this employment, many year round opportunities; offering direct support as well as leveraging more effective *Social Value* from its future procurement and partnering arrangements.

5.10 In November 2015, the Tourism, Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee received a report on the scale and track record of employment and enterprise services provided directly by the Council. That report referred to a desire to integrate employment, health and other relevant support available for jobseekers with complex needs (money advice, careers advice, benefits advice, basic skills support, work placements, as well as housing and rehab services).

5.11 At that time it was not certain where to house existing and new initiatives, having outgrown facilities at Market Street. The Council's Economic Development and Public Health Teams joined forces in the last year and together with Asset Management have funded the transformation of a vacant

former Council offices on Clifton Street into a purpose designed complex called 'HealthWorks'. It features modern client facing facilities, confidential therapy rooms, an IT job search suite, and various meeting and training rooms. This will act as a central hub for work-focused services for adults in the future. The Council is working closely with a range of partners including Jobcentre Plus.

- 5.12 The facility will become fully operational in early December 2016 housing a range of employment and health initiatives including Positive Steps into Work, Healthy Lifestyles Coaches, a £2m mental health and employment trailblazer, and a Weight Management service. The facility will be formally launched in early 2017. Partners include Jobcentre Plus, Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group and Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.
- 5.13 The Council has also been instrumental in supporting key visitor economy employers, such as Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Sandcastle Waterpark and Blackpool Zoo, to upskill their workforce, helping secure £1m of external skills funding, to set up the Blackpool Tourism Academy (BTA). The BTA enabled Blackpool to become the first tourist resort in the UK to be awarded WorldHost Destination status, having trained over 2,500 frontline staff in this international customer service standard.
- 5.14 The Council's Business Support team continues to support new and existing local businesses to access available business support. In the seven months to the end of October 2016, business advisors within the Get Started team have assisted a further 45 new start businesses to commence trading; providing direct support to a further 82 young businesses in the first three years of trading to aid their sustainability, through training and 121 advice. A series of networking events have been undertaken including Global Entrepreneurship Week.
- 5.15 The Council continues to facilitate the now decade old Blackpool Business Leadership Group, a vital communication mechanism between the public and private sectors. This is complemented by the Council's business communication portal, BlackpoolUnlimited.com, which connects with 7,500 subscribers to provide the latest news and views that will interest the business community.
- 5.16 Demand has risen for Council managed workspace at the Blackpool Enterprise Centre and FYCreatives, with occupancy rates exceeding 90%. The combination of modern space and on-site business support is welcomed by business tenants.

5.17 **Conclusion**

5.18 In order for much of the above to take place the Council has made strong business cases for public investment in Blackpool, securing large amounts of government and European funding, working with several government departments, former regional agencies, and latterly the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership to ensure Blackpool has its share of available regeneration resource. This work is continuous including the forthcoming refresh of Lancashire's Strategic Economic Plan, the reference strategy for targeting government resource such as Growth Deal funds in the future. This means the Council has to be alert to opportunities and have a refreshed set of projects and interventions exemplified by the Growth Deal bid for a Conference Centre.

5.19 The Council has developing strong relationships within the Fylde Coast, Lancashire and regional and national levels. Within our natural economic footprint, the Fylde Coast, there is a review as to the future working relationships currently routed via an Economic Development Company. This may result in a move towards a Joint Prosperity Board.

5.20 A separate report will set out the potential importance of the emerging Lancashire Combined Authority, which will work in partnership with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership to derive resources and drive economic growth in the area.

5.21 The Place Directorate achieves this with fairly modest resources, when compared to the Council's budget as a whole. Maximising economic growth remains a paramount priority for the authority.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

List of Appendices:

None.

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 Not applicable.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 A wide range of property and investment projects are referenced in the report which will generate new employment opportunities for Blackpool residents, both in the construction and end-use phases. Tailored job search advice and skills support is available from the Council's adult and youth employment services (via HealthWorks and Connexions), as well as learning providers such as Blackpool and the Fylde College.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.