

**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

Built Heritage and Conservation: Our Piers and the World Monuments Fund Watch

I am very pleased to report that Blackpool's three piers have been included on the 2018/ 2019 World Monument Fund Watch, a list of internationally significant sites at risk. The Council put forward the case for our piers in a competitive process and this included a visit to Blackpool from relevant assessors based in New York. The World Monuments Fund listed the risk of climate change (rising sea levels and increased storm surges) as a key challenge for our piers, along with lack of access to funding and the changing nature of tourism. Importantly, the assessors recognised the historic significance and importance of our piers and the need to draw attention to the challenges they face in terms of their long-term future. Inclusion on the Fund Watch will provide a platform for dialogue with Central Government over the future of the piers and will provide access to funding for research and events to re-engage the local community in the future of these iconic landmarks. Media coverage of the announcement was excellent and an Action Plan is being finalised to focus the resources on the key issues and to ensure the best outcomes are achieved.

Visitor Numbers: Continued Improvement and Growth

I am pleased to confirm that the annual STEAM survey used by destinations across the UK has revealed that the overall number of visitors to Blackpool grew to 18 million in 2016 - an increase of around one million compared to the previous year. The STEAM survey valued Blackpool's visitor economy at £1.5bn, supporting more than 25,000 jobs. The 2016 study shows that visitor numbers in Blackpool grew by 6% and represented almost 30% of all visits to Lancashire. There was year-on-year growth in staying visitors (+3.3%) and day visitors (+6.4%). In addition, a snapshot survey carried out for the summer of 2017 shows a significant increase in adult visits between May and August compared to the same period in 2016. The Omnibus survey shows there were approximately 3.2m adult visits over the four months, compared to

2.75m in 2016 with increases in staying and day visitors. The highest figures were recorded in August when there were 1.2m adult visits compared to 0.9m in 2016. During the May to August period, the resort was heavily promoted through the 'Blackpool Has It All' destination marketing campaign, which featured extensive TV advertising, PR and digital campaigns.

Incident at 21 Charles Street

Members will no doubt be aware of the explosion that took place on Charles Street in late September. Various Council Departments have played a leading role since the event, helping re-home those affected, as well as working to secure the various structures linked to the site of the explosion. Following the explosion it was necessary to organise the erection of birdcage structural scaffolding to adjacent properties to ensure these properties were protected from further collapse. The main dwelling has now been demolished with no further damage to neighbouring properties. The Council's Building Control has been working closely to facilitate investigating agencies during this complicated process. It is envisaged that the investigation on site will come to a close towards the end of this week (led by the Health and Safety Executive, Fire Investigation and relevant gas supplier). We are now looking to engage with local contractors to erect a new outer skin to both 19 and 23 Charles Street and reopen the road as soon as possible.

Strategic Issues

Blackpool's Bridges Renewal Programme

The investment of £11.4m from the Department for Transport Challenge Fund, Lancashire Growth Deal and Blackpool's Local Transport Plan funding in the essential renewal of our bridges is now well underway. I am particularly pleased with aspects of how this challenging project has and is being managed, with Princess Street, Plymouth Road and Waterloo bridges schemes all delivered on budget and completed ahead of schedule. Work has now commenced on essential repairs and upgrading of Harrowside Bridge and replacing Squires Gate Bridge, which are programmed to be completed by March 2018.

Anchorsholme Scheme

I am delighted that the new £27.1m sea defences at Anchorsholme were opened on Monday 30 October 2017, with the Environment Agency very pleased with the project. A kilometre of concrete sea wall has been replaced, maintaining access to the beach, with the new promenade attracting residents and visitors to take in views across the Irish Sea. The Council and the contractors are aware that a small number of slabs at the Northern end of the scheme have experienced some movement. The contractor has accepted it is their responsibility to correct this defect and we are confident the matter will be resolved in the near future. The new promenade and raised highways provides a link to Anchorsholme Park, which is currently being invested in by United Utilities in relation to water management. The scheme has worked closely with the community, with many positive public consultation events.

Yeadon Way

I am pleased to confirm that the Council has been successful in a highly competitive funding round and has secured £2.345m of resource from the Department of Transport to upgrade the outer areas of Yeadon Way. As Members will recall, the middle third of Yeadon Way was recently upgraded at a cost of £3.1m and this was the part that was in the poorest condition. It is essential that the remainder of the structure is secured for the long term, as Yeadon Way is a crucial arterial link into the centre of the town. This additional funding from the Department for Transport, together with a contribution from Blackpool's Local Transport Plan funding, will mean the whole of Yeadon Way will be upgraded and its future secured for a generation. We anticipate that significant works will not take place on the highway until the winter of 2019/2020.

Policy Issues

Housing Standards and Licensing: Visit of DCLG's Permanent Secretary, Melanie Dawes

On 12 October, Blackpool Council hosted an all-day visit from Melanie Dawes, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and other senior civil servants. I was pleased to play a full part in this visit along with other relevant Cabinet Members. Melanie wanted the day in Blackpool to focus on our housing challenges and she specifically requested to see at first hand the housing and homelessness challenges we face, with a view to discussing how Government policy can help support the Council's work. The visit included an initial discussion with senior officers and Members on our strategic housing challenges and how the Council currently responds to these. We also took Melanie and her colleagues on a tour to see the new homes at Queens Park and Foxhall Village, a refurbished home from Blackpool Housing Company's portfolio and a poor quality House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that had recently come under the jurisdiction of enforcement. We concluded the tour with a focus on our homelessness challenges in discussion with the Housing Options team.

The Permanent Secretary made it clear how impressed she was with the Council's pro-active response to many difficult housing challenges we face and commented positively on the visit afterwards in various social media. Melanie confirmed that she wants Government policy to further evolve to help us develop a better housing offer in inner Blackpool, in particular to support more robust regulation of poor quality private rented properties and ensure effective support for vulnerable residents. Related to this, DCLG has made it clear that the Council's case for selective licensing in the Central area is strong, but that they are not currently minded to support a co-regulation approach in its delivery. In agreement with the team at DCLG, the Council has withdrawn its current application and has agreed to work with DCLG in the coming months on a revised proposal with a view to resubmission and a positive decision early in the New Year.

Transforming Services

New Key Appointments in Cultural Services and Libraries

I am pleased to confirm that the Grundy Art Gallery has named Paulette Terry Brien as the gallery's new curator. Paulette, who will start in post mid-November, has more than 25 years of experience working within contemporary visual art and is well known for raising the profile of the North West region on a national and international level. As co-founder and co-director of The International 3, a contemporary art gallery based in Salford, Paulette delivered a year round programme of exhibitions and events and has been instrumental in developing projects such as Manchester's annual contemporary art fair, The Manchester Contemporary. Paulette comes to the Grundy with a strong track record of identifying and nurturing emerging talent, commissioning and curating high quality contemporary art exhibitions for both gallery and non-gallery settings.

The Council has also appointed a new Head of Libraries following the retirement of Elaine Midgley at the end of October after long and dedicated service. Mark McCree will be joining the authority on the 29 January 2018. Mark currently works in Peterborough as the Head of the National Library and Heritage Service for the Royal National Institute of the Blind. Crucially, Mark has an extensive career as a librarian working his way up from a Library Assistant to Senior Community Librarian (responsible for 12 libraries) and Major Projects Manager. He has transformed the service at the RNIB from a declining service to achieve significant customer growth, with a particular emphasis on the digitisation of services.

Planning: Development Management Performance

The Development Management Team has been assessed for its performance in dealing with planning and other applications over a two year period which ended on 30 September 2017 (1 October 2015 to 30 September 2017). The Government set the following targets for the determination of planning applications - majors 60% within the 13 week timescale and minors 70% within the eight week timescale. I am pleased to confirm that the team achieved 76% for major applications and 72% for minor applications over the two year period, both above the Government targets.

Over the last 12 months, performance on major and minor applications has consistently been above the respective targets and in October 2017 our performance was 100% for both majors and minors (and 100% for 'other' applications, which are not currently subject to Government targets). This level of performance is a fantastic achievement given some of the pressures and changes the service has faced in recent years and I congratulate all involved with delivering the improvement, in particular since the LGA/PAS Peer Review that took place in January this year.

Working with Partners

Blackpool Enterprise Week

Blackpool Council's Business Support Team is hosting a week of free and professional events (13-17 November) across the resort, aimed to inspire and boost local entrepreneurs and established businesses alike, for its annual Enterprise Week (BEW). Leading lights from the resort's business community will be on hand to share their experiences to delegates at a number of information-packed seminars across Blackpool. Enterprise Week will run in conjunction with Global Entrepreneurship Week, the world's largest campaign to promote enterprise, playing a critical role in encouraging the next generation of entrepreneurs to consider starting up their own business. Activities at the Enterprise Centre, the Winter Gardens and the Solaris Centre, range from large-scale events to intimate networking gatherings and connect participants to potential collaborators, mentors and even investors. A wide range of topics including finance, on-line marketing and selling will be covered, as well as the basics of how to start your business and a session on creating customer focused business models.

The British Business Bank will also be attending through the week and they are responsible for coordinating the delivery of several funding streams as part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund. Fund Managers will be describing their offerings and will be available to talk to local businesses about how to apply for the funds to fuel further growth.

Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL)

Blackpool Council is the county lead on the Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) initiative and I am delighted to confirm that Blackpool has had the highest number of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) installations by size of population of any Local Authority in Great Britain since the programme began. Compared with a national average of 64 installations per 1,000 households, Blackpool achieved 186 per 1,000 households. ECO is a Government energy efficiency scheme established to tackle fuel poverty and help reduce carbon emissions.

Circus 250

Blackpool is among six towns and cities to be chosen to help celebrate 250 years of circus in the UK next year. The Circus 250 programme will be launched in the New Year, giving each of the destinations an opportunity to showcase circus-themed activities in their particular area during 2018. The other designated areas are London, Great Yarmouth, Bristol, Belfast and Newcastle-under-Lyme, the birthplace of entrepreneur and showman Philip Astley, who created the first circus on an abandoned patch of land in London's Waterloo area in 1768 with a line-up of jugglers, acrobats, clowns, strong men and horse riders. The Blackpool activities will be announced in the early part of next year.