

**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

Quality Corridors Property Improvement Fund

I am extremely pleased to confirm that Blackpool Council has now launched a £1million scheme designed to improve the appearance of town centre properties. The principal target area for this scheme at this time is the streets between Talbot Gateway and the new Conference and Exhibition Centre. The Quality Corridors Property Improvement Fund (PIF) is funded by Blackpool Council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and aims to help make the town centre more attractive to shoppers, residents and investors and is part of a bigger programme of works to make Blackpool better.

The Property Improvement Fund was formally launched on Wednesday 21 February. Letters of introduction were issued to all 168 eligible businesses in the core target area, alongside promotion through social media and local and regional press. Businesses and property owners in the following core areas are currently eligible to apply (although we will consider exceptional applications from businesses on the edges of this area):

- Edward Street
- Deansgate
- Topping Street
- Church Street (St John's Square to Cookson Street)
- Talbot Road (Promenade to Dickson Road)

The funding is to be used to improve the external look of business premises, which could involve replacing shop fronts, windows and doors, rendering, roof works or brickwork repairs.

The response to the scheme has already been very positive and generated substantial interest from businesses eager to take advantage of this fantastic opportunity. Over 20 individual enquiries have been received with two formal expressions of interest already submitted and invited to prepare a full application. These are from businesses based on Topping Street who are looking to replace completely the front of their business through transformational projects.

Businesses and property owners can find out more at www.blackpool.gov.uk/PIF or by calling 01253 477144 and speaking to a member of the team.

Blackpool's Bridges Renewal Programme

I am very pleased to announce that both Harrowside and Squires Gate Bridges are now open and fully operational. I would like to remind members that Harrowside has been repaired, with Squires Gate fully replaced. I am especially pleased to confirm that both bridges were completed ahead of schedule and within budget. I am sure the Members will join me in thanking all those involved in making this happen.

The final bridge to receive investment in the £11.4m programme is Devonshire Road Bridge. Works are scheduled to take place during June, July and August, with the exact dates currently being confirmed. This work is a refurbishment.

Works will include:

- New brick cladding to improve the appearance of the bridge
- Improved street lighting under the bridge
- Grit blast and paint the beams (which can only be completed in warmer conditions)
- New drainage system behind the retaining walls
- Maintenance works (footway resurfacing and general improvement works).

Progress on Town Centre Enabling Works: Highways and Traffic Management

I can confirm that utility diversion works to Talbot Road are on programme and due to be completed within the next week. These works have been essential and mean the actual construction of the tramway can now begin in April. In relation to this, Highways and Communications have been busy ensuring businesses are fully informed of the next phase of works, April to July, including the Quality Corridor works to Cookson Street and Counce Street.

Treasury Management

Contracts awarded since the last meeting are as follows:

CONTRACT	PROVIDER (Locations)	TERM (including extensions)	CONTRACT VALUE	NO. OF INITIAL BIDS	NO. OF BIDDERS WITH FY POSTCODE
HeadStart – Creative Experiences	Blackpool and Fylde College (Blackpool) Blackpool Sixth Form College (Blackpool) The Grand Theatre (Blackpool)	Ad-hoc (until the work is completed)	£81,000	Direct Award	3
Enlighten Therapeutic Services Provision	Core Assets Children's Services (Bromsgrove) Child Action Northwest (Blackburn) Excel Social Work and Therapeutic Services (St Annes)	1 + (1)	£80,000	3	1
Civic Attendant Outsourcing	CD Chauffeur Hire (Bolton)	2 + (1)	£90,000	2	0
Practitioner Training & Intervention Evaluation	UCLan (Preston)	Ad-hoc (until the work is completed)	£17,625	Direct Award	0
Purchase of 2 Box Vans for Waste Services	North East Truck & Van (Carlisle)	2 year warranty period	£82,640	2	0
CONTRACT	PROVIDER (Locations)	TERM (including extensions)	CONTRACT VALUE	NO. OF INITIAL BIDS	NO. OF BIDDERS WITH FY POSTCODE
Volunteer Coordinator for Fulfilling Lives	Empowerment (Blackpool)	1 + (0)	£100,000	2	2

CONTRACT	PROVIDER (Locations)	TERM (including extensions)	CONTRACT VALUE	NO. OF INITIAL BIDS	NO. OF BIDDERS WITH FY POSTCODE
Blackpool Housing Company Large-Scale Construction Works and Refurbishments	M&Y Maintenance & Construction Limited (St Helens, but trading out of Poulton) Evolution Media Installations Limited (Thornton-Cleveleys) Bambers Remedial Contractors Limited (Blackpool) Warden Construction (Kirkham) John Southworth Builders (Dunkinfield) Coastal T/A Simmons (Thornton-Cleveleys) F Parkinson (Blackpool) Eric Wright (Preston) Novus (Stoke) Carrol Build (Liverpool) Torus Property Solutions (St Helens) Forrest (Bolton)	1 + (1+1+1)	£3,500,000	20	8
Bread and Morning Goods	Morris Quality Baker (Coppull)	1 + (0)	£303,342	Direct Award	0
Gully Tanker Vehicle	Whale Tankers (Solihull)	1 + (0)	£132,935	2	0

Strategic Issues

New Hotel Investment: Hampton by Hilton, South Beach

I am sure that Members will be pleased to learn that Create Construction is nearing the completion of the new 130-bedroom Hampton by Hilton hotel at South Beach. They hope to open in May. Mr Paul Mathison of Create Construction recently gave a presentation to the Blackpool Business Leadership Group, showing the proposed layout and interior design of the hotel, all of which has been carried out to Hilton specifications with some additional Blackpool theming.

A development of this standard on this particular site was almost unthinkable two years ago. The collapsing structure that once stood there is now a distant memory and I am grateful for everyone who has contributed to making this development happen. I am very proud that the Council played a critical role in taking the site from the eyesore it was to what it is now, in partnership with the private sector. This development, along with others, proves that the private sector has increasing confidence in the future of the visitor economy of our town.

Key Town Centre Schemes: Talbot Gateway and Central Leisure Quarter (CLQ)

The main development for the construction of a new four-star hotel, tramway extension and transport interchange (connecting the tram to the rail system) on the current Wilkinson's site is set to commence late 2018/ early 2019. The hotel will be a Holiday Inn (which is a four-star equivalent) and I am pleased to inform Members that the Franchise Agreement has now been signed with the International Hotel Group to secure this. Work on the construction of the new access ramp to Blackpool North Station from High Street commenced in January 2018 with some service diversions. The main construction work will begin in April on a 16-week contract. The underpass that connects the new tram extension to Blackpool North station will be constructed as part of the new hotel development.

As Members are aware, the planning application for the new Wilkinson's store on Tower Street, together with an IMAX cinema and restaurant, was conditionally approved by the Planning Committee on 26 September 2017 and tenders are now being sought for its construction. Once constructed, this will facilitate the relocation of Wilkinson's from this site.

Discussions have continued this month with the international developer working on the CLQ site and we are looking forward to seeing their first draft proposals for this complex site in the next few weeks. With regard to reviewing the facilities for the Courts and their potential relocation, the Council have commissioned AHR Architects to undertake a feasibility study which will review a number of potential sites in and around Blackpool. Engagement sessions will be undertaken with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) throughout the course of the piece of work. The objective of the study is to find a suitable and preferred site for the potential relocation of both the Magistrates and County Courts. This study should be completed late spring and will form part of the future negotiations with both the Developer and HMCTS, as the scheme for the Central Leisure Quarter progress. I am pleased that this study has been funded through external money that we applied for from the Cabinet Office.

Enabling New Housing Delivery: Success in Our Submission to the Land Release Fund

The Government announced in late February that Blackpool had been successful in its bid for £3.1m to the national Land Release Fund to explore opportunities to develop some of its land for future housing supply. I am pleased that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government recognised Blackpool's ambitious solutions to the shortage of quality homes and awarded Blackpool one of the highest packages of financial support in the country.

As part of this bid, sites on Bispham Road, Ryscar Way and Blackpool Road were selected to explore their potential for delivery of much needed quality homes. The money will be used to

undertake site investigations and other works and for capital costs supporting necessary infrastructure as required. The sites have their challenges and are all at very early stages in the process. I am keen to ensure that we explore how these sites can provide routes to affordable home ownership to our residents. The Council intends to examine a range of opportunities, including affordable quality homes and bungalow schemes allowing older Blackpool residents the option to stay in their own homes into later life.

Policy Issues

Housing Enforcement Civil Penalties

As Members will be aware, I am very keen that we exhaust every available opportunity to tackle the worst excesses in our private rented sector and do what we can to ensure our residents get the minimum housing standards to which they are entitled. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced a range of measures designed to increase powers to tackle rogue landlords. This included Civil Penalties, which the Council is now intending to use as an alternative to prosecution.

The imposition of a Civil Penalty requires the same standard of proof as for prosecution, however, it potentially provides a way of dealing with the offence(s) in a more straightforward and efficient manner without the need for criminal proceedings. In relation to the latter going forward, criminal proceeding will be considered for breaches that are more serious. Civil Penalties range from £500 to £30,000, with guidance under the Act in relation to level of penalty to offence.

Community Consultation Neighbourhood Planning – remaining lands at Marton Moss

Work on our new Local Plan continues apace. The Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (adopted 2016) identifies the remaining lands at Marton Moss as being integral to the local distinctiveness of Blackpool and is highly valued by the local community. Policy CS26 of the Core Strategy adopts a neighbourhood planning approach for this area to enable the local community to develop a shared vision and to shape and direct development, which recognises and appropriately responds to this distinctive character.

Envision consultants were appointed to undertake an independent consultation exercise with the Marton Moss community and other relevant stakeholders to determine whether the community wants to produce a Neighbourhood Plan themselves for their area or alternatively, if they wish the Council to develop neighbourhood policies for the area as part of the Blackpool Development Plan. A comprehensive consultation approach was undertaken, including sending out 589 letters and information leaflets to all addresses in the Marton Moss area and arranging two drop-in events at St Nicholas C of E Primary School. The letter and leaflet encouraged people to complete a simple online survey (hard copies of the survey were also available at the events).

I can confirm that the outcome of the consultation was that 55% of respondents wanted the community to prepare their own Neighbourhood Plan. As Blackpool does not have parishes, the Marton Moss community will have to set up a Neighbourhood Forum comprising a minimum of 21 members to guide the development of their Neighbourhood Plan. The Forum will also need to identify potential sources of funding including applying for available Government grants. The Forum can use this money to employ a consultant with Neighbourhood Planning experience to assist in developing the Neighbourhood Plan. Now the community has chosen to do their own Neighbourhood Plan, the Council's role will only be to provide assistance such as sharing evidence and advice on planning issues and policies, helping with consultation events and communication with external partners.

Working with Partners

Blackpool Housing Company progress: Former Malibu and Astoria Hotel, 114-118 Albert Road

I recently attended the formal opening of Blackpool Housing Company's largest project to date, the purchase, renovation and conversion of the former Malibu and Astoria hotels. As Members will be aware, these properties had long posed problems for the Council and the surrounding area. It is fantastic to see a former problem turned into high quality affordable rented property.

At the opening, I was particularly pleased to learn that whilst the contractor for the scheme is based in the wider region, they strove to use local labour wherever possible. The result being that over 80% of all employees working on the scheme hailed from an FY postcode. Many of the main trades used on the job were local companies including the roofing contractor (Blackpool Industrial Roofing), electrical contractor (Technical and Electrical) and the plumbing/heating contractor (Read and Errington).

Electrification and Blackpool North Railway Station Reopening

Work to electrify and re-signal the North Fylde Line has been proceeding to Network Rail's schedule and the rebuilt (platform side) Blackpool North railway station is due to reopen on 26 March 2018.

I am disappointed to confirm that the new electric trains will **not** be immediately available from the 26 March reopening. Electric train services were originally due to commence from the May 2018 timetable change, but as a consequence of infrastructure improvement delays between Manchester and Preston (unknown former mine-workings) these will now not commence on this route until December 2018. I am concerned to report that there will now be weekend closures throughout the 2018 season on the Preston to Manchester line as Network Rail tries to recover its lost programme. Industry representatives have been told that this approach discriminates against Blackpool through a key time in our season, but as ever peak time commuter flows into big cities take precedence. Although electric trains will not be able to reach Blackpool using the Bolton corridor until December 2018, there are other possible routes for these trains. Network Rail colleagues are considering how these might be best employed to provide some kind of electric service to Blackpool in the meantime.

As electric trains are already in place for the Blackpool, Liverpool service (currently terminating at Preston), it is to be hoped that this service can return from the 26 March and Northern Railway has been asked to confirm this if possible.

Northern Railway's brand new trains start to arrive from Spain in December 2018. These are the class 195 diesel multiple unit, which will operate the York service and the class 331 electric unit, which will operate the enhanced quality 'Northern Connect' service to Manchester Airport. All these units are a step-change in quality from what the resort has suffered for decades and represent a promotional opportunity. In addition to superior facilities and ride quality, the new units offer a lot more capacity that should help reduce the peak time overcrowding that has spoilt our visitors' rail arrival experience for many years. The new trains should also see the final departure of the class 142 Pacer train, these have to be retired before 1 January 2020, as they are not disability discrimination act compliant. I am sure Members will join me in not mourning their belated retirement!