

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL –‘CORPORATE’ PORTFOLIO AREA**  
**COUNCILLOR SIMON BLACKBURN (TO BE PRESENTED BY COUNCILLOR GILLIAN CAMPBELL)**

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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 confirm to Members that as at month 10 the Council was forecasting an overspend by year-end of £2.0 million. The principal financial pressures are presenting in Children’s Social Care, Strategic Leisure Assets and Parking Services. However, in the context of £34 million of Earmarked Revenue Reserves and with two months of the financial year remaining officers are working hard to improve the position further, but as we get closer to the year-end this does become more difficult. Revised service and financial plans continue to be delivered, including the review of non-essential spend and delays to filling non-front line vacancies.

As Members will recall, the Budget for 2017/2018 required total savings of £18.7 million, a very challenging figure in view of the extent of savings and cuts already made in previous years. As at 31 January 2018 (month 10) 65% of the 2017/2018 savings target had been delivered. The full-year forecast predicts that 89% will be achieved by the year-end, which takes into account anticipated pressures and savings. The full-year effect of the 2017/ 2018 savings in 2018/ 2019 amounts to 73% of the £18.7 million target.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced the Final Settlement of Blackpool Council’s 2018/ 2019 Settlement Funding Assessment on 6 February. I can confirm that the two changes affecting Blackpool Council were:

- Additional funding through Adult Social Care Support Grant.
- Extra compensation for under-indexing the business rates multiplier.

The share of the non-recurrent Adult Social Care Support Grant for Blackpool is £565,000. I have agreed that this will be held in contingency until its conditions for use have been clarified and a plan for its utilisation agreed. As this is a net nil budget adjustment with budgeted expenditure being met by budgeted grant income, it has no impact upon the recommended

General Fund Revenue Budget Net Requirement or Council Tax level. An extra £97,000 will be received in 2018/ 2019 for compensation regarding the under-indexing of the business rates multiplier, which will be transferred into the Earmarked Business Rates Reserve. This too will have no impact upon the recommended General Fund Revenue Budget Net Requirement or Council Tax level. As such, the 2018/ 2019 General Fund Estimate of £124,365,000 was recommended to the Executive on 19 February 2018.

### **Treasury Management**

As at the end of January 2018 I can confirm that Council Tax collection was 85.0% compared to 84.4% at the same month in 2016/ 2017. The total amount collected has risen by £2.4 million, mainly due to increases in both the Council Tax rate and base.

I am pleased to report that Business Rates collection is showing an improvement when compared to 2016/ 2017, standing at 83.1% at the end of January, compared to 82.4% the previous year. This increase in collection of 0.7% equates to £0.5m.

### **Policy Issues**

#### **Blackpool Resident Survey 2018**

The Council last undertook a comprehensive resident survey in 2014. The survey covered a wide range of questions from satisfaction with our services to how people feel about the local area. We recognise that it is good practice for councils to monitor opinions through a representative survey of its residents. Indeed, an LGA Peer Review of Communications prior to Christmas highlighted the need for the Council to undertake a new survey and we accepted this recommendation. I can therefore confirm that we have committed to undertake a new resident survey this year.

Officers are now making preparations for a 2018 Blackpool Resident Survey. I wish to inform Members that after very careful consideration we have opted to use telephone surveying as part of the work on this rare occasion. I would like to reaffirm that I am well aware of sensitivities surrounding the use of telephone survey methods. However and after consulting with experts in the field, there are compelling reasons why we have opted to use telephone surveying methods. Telephone surveys are commonly used by other councils as part of their resident surveys, it is also the methodology of choice for LGA's triannual poll of resident satisfaction across the country. Whilst alternative approaches have been considered, each comes with their own limitations. Postal surveys generally suffer from poor response rates, particularly in Blackpool and online surveys cannot be considered representative of the population. A change in methodology would also impact on the comparability of the data between 2014 and 2018.

I have instructed officers to ensure that the use of a telephone survey on this occasion does not cause undue nuisance and worry to our residents. A number of enhancements and safeguards will therefore be in place when conducting this telephone survey. This will include sensible practice around when the calls are made and restricting the number of attempts made to

contact an individual number. Additionally, before the Resident Survey commences, key frontline services such as Customer First would be briefed to deal with any queries during the survey period. We are currently planning to commence the Blackpool Resident Survey in late spring/ early summer.

## **Strategic Issues**

### **Strategic Leisure Assets Update: Winter Gardens Conference and Exhibition Centre, Spanish Hall, Tower Restaurant Works and Madame Tussauds Superhero Attraction**

I am pleased to report that construction activity is now well underway on our new conference and exhibition centre at the Winter Gardens. Specific tasks undertaken so far include:

- Repairs to the existing building facades, which will abut the new building.
- Site clearance and remediation.
- Utility diversions.
- Redundant buildings have been demolished.
- Piling for the new build foundations has commenced.
- Relocation and opening of the new Quilligans restaurant.

Activity to be undertaken in the coming period includes:

- Installation of the new drainage system.
- Further underpinning of the existing building.
- Commencement of the structural steel installation forming the frame of the new build.

The project remains on course to be complete in the spring/ early summer of 2019.

I can confirm that the appointed contractor commenced work to the Spanish Hall roof on 12 February and has completed site set up. Construction materials are now being delivered to site and the project is scheduled to complete in December 2018.

External works to the north-west corner of the Tower building commenced on 26 February and will complete the new shop frontage to the restaurant unit. Internal works will begin very soon and are scheduled to finish mid-April. I am pleased that theming works are almost complete for the new Superhero attraction at Madame Tussauds and the attraction is forecast to open ahead of schedule, one week before Easter.

### **Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone**

Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Masterplan was approved at Executive on 5 February. I am pleased that the Masterplan also received approvals from St Anne's on the Sea Parish Council and Fylde Council Planning Committee the same week. These approvals followed assessment of responses from the public consultation which was concluded on 21 December 2017. The

Masterplan will be presented to Lancashire LEP and the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in later spring this year alongside the formal Delivery Plan.

The Delivery Plan will identify the increased potential for retained business rates growth funding on the site and the phasing of essential infrastructure works. The 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.

Preliminary design and planning work has commenced to progress the first elements of enabling infrastructure required to release new sites for development within the Enterprise Zone, including provision of new playing field facilities and a new eastern gateway access, with works targeted for commencement in 2019 and completion in 2020.

The Airport and its future are a fundamental part of the Enterprise Zone. In view of this, I can confirm that the Council has commissioned York Aviation, specialist aviation consultants, to recommend future operational strategy options for Blackpool Airport and identify new business opportunities to maximise its potential. They will engage with key stakeholders at the Airport as part of their work and will report back in May.

## **Working with Partners**

### **Job Centres**

I am very pleased that Queen Street and Tyldesley Road Job Centres have now moved with staff co-located with Council teams at Municipal Buildings following redevelopment of the offices. This provides excellent joint working opportunities between the Council and Job Centre and already the Customer First Centre is being used as a shared space between both organisations. In order to align opening times with Job Centre Plus, the Customer First office now opens at 10am on Wednesdays, but the main Customer First telephone number (477477) is still operational from 9am.