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BLACKPOOL COUNCIL

Tuesday, 13 January 2015

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, 21 January 2015 commencing at 6.00 pm for the transaction of the business specified below.

Director of Governance and Regulatory Services

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; 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 26 NOVEMBER 2014 (Pages 1 - 4)

To agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 26 November 2014 as a true and correct record.

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive official announcements from the Mayor.

4 EXECUTIVE REPORTS (Pages 5 - 44)

To receive reports from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members and Outside Body representatives and consider matters arising from councillors.

- a) Leader of the Council - Councillor Blackburn
- b) Cabinet Member for Urban Regeneration - Councillor Jackson
- c) Cabinet Member for Housing, Public Safety and Enforcement - Councillor Campbell
- d) Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Taylor
- e) Cabinet Member for Tourism and Leisure - Councillor Cain
- f) Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care - Councillor Rowson
- g) Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Equality and Diversity - Councillor Jones
- h) Cabinet Member for Public Health - Councillor Collett
- i) Cabinet Member for Street Scene and the Environment – Councillor Cross
- j) Cabinet Member for Culture and Heritage – Councillor Wright

5 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME (Pages 45 - 54)

To consider the recommendation of the Executive from its meeting on 14 December 2014 relating to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

6 CREATION OF A HOUSING REGENERATION COMPANY (Pages 55 - 78)

To consider the recommendation of the Executive from its meeting on 14 December 2014 relating to the establishment of a wholly Council owned housing regeneration company to lead housing market change within Blackpool.

7 PROPER OFFICER DESIGNATIONS (Pages 79 - 82)

To consider the updating of Proper Officer designations and appointments to certain positions in the health sector relating to the Council.

8 MOTIONS AT COUNCIL (Pages 83 - 84)

To consider the following motion which has been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 12.1 :-

SUN BED OPERATORS. Councillor Williams to propose.

“In 2014, the Council undertook a test purchasing project in Blackpool, which found in a number of sun tanning salons, instances where there was harmful exposure of sun beds emitting higher than recommended levels of ultra violet light, which could cause serious health implications. Another safety concern highlighted was use by under-age individuals. More robust powers to Local Authorities are needed in regard to the enforcement and prosecution of operators, through a stringent licensing scheme.

The Chief Executive is therefore requested to write to the Secretary of State for Health to request the introduction of such a scheme, to include minimum levels of staffing, staff training and age policies”.

9 MAYOR ELECT FOR 2015/ 2016

To determine who should be invited to offer themselves for election as Mayor at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 22 May 2015 and agree that the meeting commence at 2.00pm, as it did in 2014.

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 Services Projects Officer, 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 Ryan (in the Chair)

Councillors

Benson	I Coleman	Green	O'Hara
Blackburn	Collett	Mrs Henderson MBE	Owen
Cain	Cox	Hunter	Robertson BEM
Callow	Cross	Hutton	Rowson
Mrs Callow JP	Mrs Delves	Jackson	Smith
Campbell	Doherty	Mrs Jackson	L Taylor
Clapham	Elmes	Jones	Williams
D Coleman	Evans	Matthews	Wright
G Coleman	Galley	M Mitchell	

In Attendance:

Neil Jack, Chief Executive

Carmel McKeogh, Deputy Chief Executive

John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Alan Cavill, Director of Place

Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health

Steve Thompson, Director of Resources

Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Regulatory Services/ Monitoring Officer

Lorraine Hurst, Head of Democratic Governance

Yvonne Burnett, Democratic Governance Projects Officer

Jenny Bollington, Media Manager

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Haynes who was on official Council business.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Green declared a non-specified interest in agenda item 6(a) 'Notice of motion – Classification of holiday flats' as he had friends in the holiday sector.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2014

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council held on 17th September 2014 be signed by the Deputy Mayor as a correct record.

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Councillor Derek Robertson BEM to his first Council meeting, following the recent Waterloo by-election.

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2014

4 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Cabinet Members presented reports to the Council on work undertaken within their portfolio areas. Councillor Blackburn presented the report on behalf of Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Children's Services. All the reports covered decisions taken, work in progress and work to be undertaken in the near future. Questions, comments and debate were invited from all councillors on each of the report areas.

Notes:

- (1) Councillor Blackburn agreed to provide Councillor Clapham with details of the amount of the 3% reduction in the Business Rate collection and its financial implications.
- (2) Councillor Jackson agreed to investigate the concerns raised by Councillor Clapham in relation to reports of the heating and air conditioning systems conflicting with each other at Number One, Bickerstaffe Square and the action being taken to resolve the issue.
- (3) In response to a request from Councillor Williams, Councillor Campbell agreed to clarify why the new homes at Foxhall Village were being let only to working families. She also agreed to provide Councillor Mrs Callow with a definition of a working family. Councillor Campbell also agreed to provide Councillor Mrs Callow with details of external organisations being used by the Council to telephone canvass residents, how these were being funded and the reasons for their use.
- (4) Councillor Jones agreed to provide Councillor Robertson with the start date and completion date for the road repairs on Bond Street. He also agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Galley on the costs of the additional street lighting columns being installed in the town and the methodology used to identify those areas deemed as vulnerable.
- (5) Councillors Peter Callow and Ian Coleman left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

5 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

Members were aware that at the September Council meeting, it had been agreed that a review of the political balance calculations and the effect on committees would be required following the Waterloo by-election in October 2014.

The Council considered proposals for political balance calculations which took into account the election of Councillor Robertson.

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

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2014

- ‘1. To re-appoint the following committees, in line with the political balance calculations and adjustments at Appendix 5(a) to the Council report. These are:
 - Scrutiny Committee (membership of fifteen and with a composition of ten Labour and five Conservative)
 - Health Scrutiny Committee (membership of nine and with a composition of six Labour and three Conservative)
 - Planning Committee (membership of ten and with a composition of seven Labour and three Conservative)
 - Appeals Committee (membership of six and with a composition of four Labour and two Conservative)
 - Finance and Audit Committee (membership of seven and with a composition of five Labour and two Conservative).
 - Standards Committee (membership of six and with a composition of four Labour and two Conservative).
 - Chief Officers Employment Committee (membership of six and with a composition of four Labour and two Conservative).
2. To agree that the powers and duties of those committees remain as set out in the Constitution.
3. That the Scrutiny Committee be requested to appoint a ‘Call In’ Sub Committee, (membership of nine and with a composition of six Labour and three Conservative), to meet as and when required, with the powers and duties, as set out in the Constitution.
4. To note that the Licensing Committee and the Public Protection Sub Committee do not need to be re-appointed as the political balance calculations do not change.
5. To note the appointment of members to committees as set out in Appendix 5(b) to the Council report.
6. To confirm the re-appointment of the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen for those committees and the six Scrutiny Lead Members identified at Appendix 5(b) to the Council report based on the above recommendations.
7. To agree that the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services be authorised to amend the Constitution accordingly.

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

6 MOTIONS AT COUNCIL

Motion: Having submitted notice, Councillor Smith proposed (and Councillor Williams seconded):

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2014

'Blackpool Council is concerned that holiday flats and permanent flats fall within the same use class in terms of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). Both currently fall within use Class C3 - 'dwellinghouses' and hence there is no material change of use involved if a holiday flat changes to a permanent flat (unless there is a condition or conditions attached to the planning permission which preclude the change).

This is a problem in Blackpool for a number of reasons. Many holiday flats were approved in the 1960's, 1970's and early 1980's when it was never envisaged that there would be a reduced demand for this type of accommodation and hence no conditions were applied to the planning permissions to restrict them solely to holiday flats.

The Council considers that holiday flats would be more appropriately classed as C1 which comprises the following 'hotel, boarding house or guesthouse'. This would allow holiday flats to be converted to hotels and guesthouses without requiring planning permission whilst retaining the holiday character of streets in the town whilst preventing the creation of further one bed flats in the town of which there is already a substantial stock.

The Council therefore requests the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to seek a change in the legislation so that holiday flats fall within use Class C1, rather than C3, for the reasons outlined.'

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

Mayor

(The meeting ended at 8.50 pm)

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

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL – COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN

Financial Management

The latest financial performance report for 2014/ 15 were reported to the Executive on 15 December 2014. As at month 7, in-year pressures in Children's Services, Adult Services, Parking Services and Community and Environmental Services have been mitigated in part by the performance of Treasury Management, Area Forum and Ward Budgets. The Council's forecast working balances are now at a forecast year-end level of £4.6m. Services are working to recover their deficits whilst at the same time financial planning for the 2015/ 2016 financial year.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Autumn Statement to the House of Commons on 3 December 2014. Key announcements relevant to local government are summarised below:

Public Sector Expenditure is set to fall at the same rate as between 2010/ 2011 and 2014/ 2015 until 2018. It is then forecast to increase by inflation in 2018/ 2019 and 2019/ 2020.

The Government estimates that public sector pay restraint in this Parliament is expected to save £12bn by 2014/ 2015. It also expects that the continuation of this policy will lead to commensurate savings by 2017/ 2018.

From April 2016, the Government will increase childcare support within Universal Credit from 70% to 85% of eligible costs for all families.

Travel expenses paid to councillors are to become exempt from income tax and employee NICs from April 2015 (on Approved Mileage Allowance Payment rates).

Business Rates

The Government will undertake a review of the future structure of business rates. This will report by Budget 2016. It will also publish its interim findings on the review of business rates administration by December 2015. The review is intended to be revenue neutral and "consistent with the Government's financing of local authorities".

The current doubling of Small Business Rates Relief will continue in 2015/ 2016. It is expected that this measure should be revenue neutral for local authorities based on the Autumn Statement 2014 Arrangements. The Department for Communities and Local Government currently refunds local authorities for the lower business rates collected (due to the 100% relief instead of 50%) through Section 31 grant payments.

The 2.0% cap on the increase to the Business Rates Multiplier in 2014/ 2015 will also be applied in 2015/ 2016. Based on the September RPI figure (the indicator used to determine the increase to the multiplier in the following year), the increase to the multiplier should have been 2.3%. It is expected that this measure should again be revenue neutral for local authorities based on the current arrangements. It is not necessary to refund local authorities beyond 2015/ 2016, as the Revenue Support Grant paid will be adjusted accordingly from 2016/ 2017 onwards.

The Chancellor also announced that the current £1,000 business rates discount to retailers (announced in Autumn Statement 2013) will continue in 2015/ 2016, but will increase to £1,500.

Legal Services

The service has been drafting and advising in connection with a wide variety of contracts, including Yeadon Way refurbishment, variation to the joint working agreement with Lancashire County Council regarding waste disposal and funding for an apprenticeship scheme. It has assisted with the evaluation processes for the appointment of a project manager and architect for the Blackpool Museum project. Four 'Right to Buy' sales have been completed since October 2014. A Hybrid Agreement is being negotiated for section 278/ 38 Agreements for the Royal Mail delivery office development at Hawking Place, Faraday Way, which would allow and enable road improvements necessitated by the development.

Rigby Road/ Tyldesley Road Compulsory Purchase Order was made and submitted, attracting three objections. One has been withdrawn and an inquiry took place on 13 January 2015 to hear the two outstanding objections with a decision expected in late spring/ early summer. The Queens Park Compulsory Purchase Order attracted one objection. Discussions are taking place in this regard and if the objection is withdrawn, an inquiry will not be required. If the objection is withdrawn, a decision should be made around the same time as the Rigby Road decision.

The service has also been advising and preparing documentation in connection with the new processes introduced by the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, such as public spaces protection orders (previously alley gating orders under the Highways Act 1980) and community protection notices. The service has recently secured conviction, successfully resisted a judicial review application and obtained a Proceeds of Crime payment arising from a prosecution for breach of a planning enforcement notice.

Democratic Governance

A joint working group has been set up with key members from the Standards Committees of both Blackpool Council and Fylde Borough Council (with whom we have reciprocal arrangements) along with the independent persons, who supports the standards framework. The working group will be reviewing the Code of Conduct that was first agreed by Council in 2012 and the arrangements for dealing with complaints and will report back to the Standards Committee and Council in due course.

Revenues, Benefits, Invoices and Payments

Council Tax collection at the end of November was 71.5%, which is 0.4% less than the same period last year. The Business Rates collection figure at the end of November was 69.9%, which is 2.9% (or £1.5m) less than the same period in the previous financial year. This is the first year that businesses have had the right to pay over 12 monthly instalments rather than 10 and so a direct comparison with the previous year is not possible.

Resources are still being concentrated on processing the new Housing Benefit claims and changes of circumstances that are outstanding. As a result, the service is not yet in a position to review the partial closure of the Benefits telephone line.

Online service usage is still being promoted and figures for the number of new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims completed online is steadily increasing. It is anticipated that paper application forms will be withdrawn by the end of March 2015, subject to an Equality Analysis. This change will be co-ordinated with the introduction of an automated download of the form into the core processing system.

Universal Credit went live at the Blackpool Job Centres on 8 December 2014 for single claimants and couples. Training has now been completed for all staff and Blackpool is also taking part in a pilot scheme, which will involve verifying Housing costs on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. Other services the Council will deliver include Personal Budgeting Support and supporting customers to claim Universal Credit.

All of the Council's merchant accounts (bank accounts for credit and debit card payments) are now compliant with Payment Card Industry legislation.

The Council's internet payments site moved to a new server in December, which will improve the payment facility for customers as it is compatible with all web browsers.

Blackpool Fylde and Wyre Credit Union

Since the credit union's successful move to its Birley Street branch it has experienced record months in October and November in levels of new accounts, levels of deposits and levels of new lending and is able to offer a smoother, faster service to its members on site.

Risk Services

Work is currently underway to renew the Council's insurance programme for 2015/ 2016. It is not envisaged that any change to the programme will be required, but updated information in relation to the Council's insurable risks is being collated and submitted.

The transfer of benefit fraud investigators to the Department for Work and Pensions is now picking up momentum with a planned implementation day of 1 April 2015. Initial meetings have been held with the Department of Work and Pensions, Human Resources team and also the operational team and work is underway to populate the detailed project plan with timescales and responsibilities. There will be a significant amount of work, which will remain with the local authority and steps are being taken to assess the impact of this and determine how to resource it.

Contracts and Purchasing

Tenders completed and contracts awarded since the last report include:

CONTRACT	PROVIDER
Provision of Banking Services	Barclays (London)
Bedding Plants	Crosby's Nurseries (Cheshire)
Sprinkler Systems, Dry Risers and Gas Suppression Systems Inspection and Maintenance	FVS Limited (Rochdale)
Firefighting systems, inspection and maintenance	Walker Fire (UK) Ltd (Preston)
Provision of Male Condoms and Lubricants	Leeds Trading Company (LTC) Healthcare (Harrogate)
Medical Assessment in Relation to Blue Badge Applications.	Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (Blackpool)
Council Tax Daily Printing (6 month trial)	Document Outsourcing Limited(Warrington)
Parking Bailiffs	Phoenix (Bolton) Equita (Northampton) Rundle (Leicestershire)
Legionella – Provision of periodic servicing and monitoring of hot and cold water services	Waterman Environmental Services (Staffordshire)

Health and Wellbeing Board

The Health and Wellbeing Board met in early December 2014. It received presentations on two recently successfully submitted BIG Lottery bids, Better Start and Headstart. The first, Better Start, was £45 million over ten years to transform services for 0 to 3 year olds, the second, Headstart, is a £500,000 pilot aimed at building the resilience of 10 to 14 year olds to reduce the likelihood of them developing mental health problems in the future.

Better Start is a Partnership lead by the NSPCC with the key partners being the Council, the Police and the NHS. The strategy has four key components, a public health approach - shifting the curve for the whole population, evidence-based interventions - providing more intensive help for those who need it, systems transformation - building shared understanding, shared action, and creating the Blackpool Centre for Early Child Development.

Headstart is a pilot programme lead by the Council aiming to increase resilience amongst 10 to 14 year old young people. The Council had been selected as one of ten areas to develop a range of innovative interventions with the opportunity to submit a further bid for a longer-term project lasting five years.

The Board also received a number of presentations, including one on End of Life Care which detailed the Hospice at Home pilot, a range of multi-professional education and training, Do not attempt cardio- pulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) forms, the Gold Standard Framework for care homes and Care of the Dying Pathway.

Staff and Public Communications

A new fostering campaign is being rolled out in the New Year, which will involve an improved website and some social media advertising. Dry January will be the focus of the Public Health campaigns this month.

The main topic generating media interest this month has been the proposed budget savings. Work has been undertaken to ensure both the public and staff are aware of the proposals and how they can share their views.

There has been coverage relating to the new sea defences at Anchorsholme, changes to crossings in the Talbot Gateway, new funding to help people with mental health problems gain employment, case studies on business start-ups and the Christmas Give a little campaign.

Social media accounts have been used to keep residents updated of gritting activity and the closure of Yeadon Way.

“Customer First”

The Customer First reception point now deals with Customer First and Benefit enquiries. This enables Benefits staff to assist customers with basic benefit queries and where possible to enable customers to self-serve using the computers in the Centre. This has resulted in shorter waiting times as customers only need to see an Advisor where necessary. The corporate channel shift agenda is currently addressing how we can enable customers to self-serve their enquiries where appropriate.

Council Efficiency Programme

The Budget for 2014/ 2015 required total savings to be found of £15.8 million. As at month 7 of the financial year, 69% of this savings target had been delivered. The current full-year forecast predicts that 86% will be achieved by the year-end, taking into account new in-year pressures and savings and work is underway to close this gap further with alternative savings plans.

Human Resources (including Schools)

Investors in People (IIP)

Following the recent Investors in People review Blackpool Council has received silver accreditation of the prestigious Investors in People award and has been found to be “demonstrating a progressive approach to achieving business improvement through people”.

Achieving silver status of the IIP standard is a fantastic endorsement of our continued commitment to supporting and developing our employees, so that they can be the best that they can be. The fact that staff are still engaged, empowered and committed to providing high quality services is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of Council staff. This is of particular importance in these challenging times, when we face significant financial pressures and increasing demand.

The challenge now for the Council is to embrace any identified areas for development and we will work hard to ensure Council-wide consistency in all that we do so that we can achieve our business objectives and provide the best possible service to Blackpool residents.

NJC Pay award

In November agreement was reached between the National Joint Councils for Local Government (NJC) and the Trade Unions on the pay proposal covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The agreement covers the terms and conditions of 95% of Blackpool Council employees.

Flu vaccine programme

The Council's annual programme of flu vaccinations for employees is now complete and totals 690 vaccinations this year, which is an increase of over 200 based on last year's figures.

The programme is designed to help keep employees healthy, improve attendance and protect vulnerable service users.

Fairness Commission

The review of the Fairness Commission is now complete, the Steering Group are due to meet early in the New Year to consider the recommendations and implement any appropriate changes. In the meantime, the Fairness Commission continues to deliver a great deal of activity in our communities:

- The Enjoy and Respect Campaign has been delivered again throughout December 2014, delivering key messages to party-goers in the Town Centre at night;
- The Fairtrade activity continues, the working group has now been established and they continue to work with the Public, Private and Voluntary Sector to ensure Fairtrade products are offered as the first choice wherever possible;
- The Loneliness Project on Grange Park continues to gather pace, community members are working closely with members of the Fairness Commission to provide a range of opportunities for people to make new connections within their community, creating friendships and social cohesion which in turn will improve the health and well-being of our citizens and improve their resilience in times of challenge; and
- A Teenagers Summit took place in December 2014, an opportunity for young people to meet with Public Sector Chief Officers, challenging policy and decision making and sharing their views on how they would like things to look in the future. Over 70 young people attended the summit, which followed the Children's Summit earlier in the year where 80 children mainly from our primary schools attended to share their views. These events are very well received and they will continue in 2015.

Community Engagement

The Night Time Economy Working Group has undertaken an extensive community engagement exercise to gather the views of Blackpool and Fylde Coast residents on Blackpool town centre. Two pieces of work have been undertaken, a random sample survey to understand perceptions and satisfaction with the town centre covering over 360 people and an open access public consultation engaging 625 people. This was achieved through a mix of online responses (supported by press releases, social media and the Your Blackpool newspaper) and proactive engagement in town centres, out-of-town locations, libraries and the college. In total, this represents nearly 1,000 people who have been engaged in this conversation.

The analysis and findings will be reported to the Working Group this month and used to shape future action to improve the town centre.

Museum for Blackpool Project

The recruitment for the new in-house project team is now complete. In all, eight new posts have been created. The project director is Belinda Betts, who joins us from Newcastle, Australia. Belinda has experience of managing major capital developments within the museum sector, including a major development at the London Transport Museum. The full team will be in post in Blackpool early in the New Year.

An external project management company to support the project has been appointed. They are the Prince's Regeneration Trust, which is one of The Prince of Wales's charities, which works to deliver regeneration projects for historic buildings and sites. They have considerable experience in managing high-profile heritage regeneration projects of a similar nature to the Museum for Blackpool.

Interviews for the Architect Design Team took place in December 2014 and a preferred company identified. The final stages of the procurement process are in the process of being finalised. There will be an announcement about the successful company in January.

Next steps for the project are procurement of the interpretative design team, which is a very important appointment and the community engagement programme, which is being planned in detail now and will be rolled out in the New Year.

DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR URBAN REGENERATION – COUNCILLOR JACKSON

Sea Water Quality

This year will see the introduction of the Revised Bathing Water Directive with much more stringent standards. Blackpool Council continues its partnership working across the Fylde Peninsula with Wyre, Fylde and Lancashire County Council along with United Utilities and the Environment Agency to ensure that all possible action is taken to react to these increased standards.

In addition, the regional Turning tides Partnership are working together with the 'Love my Beach' campaign to ensure awareness is raised across the region and that we work together to ensure we have the best possible bathing waters.

Work is progressing in partnership with United Utilities for their works in Anchorsholme Park. United Utilities have recently received their determination of funded schemes from Ofwat (the Water Services Regulatory Authority) and we now understand that the schemes, presented to improve bathing water, have been accepted.

Flood and Water Management Statutory Services

The Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Chairman recently attended the Lancashire Strategic Partnership for flood risk and were extremely complimentary about the work being done by Blackpool, Lancashire and Blackburn and the Environment Agency and United Utilities. The Partnership will continue to build on its successes for bids such as the recently successful Anchorsholme, Rossall and Marton Mere coastal projects to ensure that all flood risk is minimised.

Fylde Peninsula Water Management Partnership

The Partnership is awaiting the results and proposals from Defra on the consultation on the Sustainable Urban Drainage role. In the meantime, the Partnership continues to develop its strategies for ensuring all developments consider its drainage proposals ensuring they address the need for sustainable drainage.

Blackpool will be host to two major conferences in 2015. The Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group will host their Annual General Meeting in Blackpool in July 2015. This will involve representatives of all Coastal Towns in England visiting Blackpool to look at the Coastal investment and its associated economic benefits. In addition, the Environment Agency Coastal Practitioners workshop is being held at the Imperial in Blackpool in April 2015. As a result of the Best practice recognised by the Environment Agency, they have asked for a representative of the Fylde Peninsula Partnership to speak at this workshop. This is a National event for the Environment Agency

Getting People into Work

Mental Health Pilot Scheme

Blackpool is one of four areas in England set to benefit from a new Government pilot designed to help people with mental health conditions return to work. Many existing employment initiatives perform poorly in addressing the needs of job seekers with such conditions as depression and anxiety, especially those in receipt of Employment Support Allowance where the government estimate 46% have some form of debilitating mental health condition.

The pilot aims to test a more integrated approach to supporting unemployed residents affected by common mental health conditions. A new team of employment and health professionals will be formed to speed up access to a range of talking therapies, work readiness and in-work support, aiming to assist around 1,000 residents to improve their mental well-being and back to work focus. Blackpool is to receive £1.1m from Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Transformation Challenge Award fund towards a £2.2m project, with the balance to be met via the European Social Fund.

The pilot, which will run for two years from April 2015, will be project managed and co-delivered by Blackpool Council (led by Positive Steps into Work) and NHS Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and supported by Jobcentre Plus and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. The programme is entirely voluntary.

Tangerine Confectionery

Positive Steps into Work is coordinating support for 111 Tangerine Confectionery staff facing redundancy by the end of March 2015 due to the closure of the Clifton Road site.

A range of key support services are assisting including Jobcentre Plus, the National Careers Service, the Money Advice Service, Get Started and a number of local training providers to help staff in the difficult transition to alternate employment.

At the end of November, the team delivered four group information sessions to 77 staff and worked with the company to undertake a complete survey of needs. The results have informed a 'market place' event that took place in early January where staff were able to meet all the agencies involved and arrange appointments for ongoing support.

An additional 35 jobs have already been safeguarded by the Council's financial intervention, relocating two production lines to Vicarage Lane plant by the end of February 2015.

Planning and Land Use

The Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy

The Core Strategy Proposed Submission document (June 2014) with the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment and other supporting evidence base documents was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination on 19 December 2014. A Planning Inspector will be assigned who will review the submitted plan and supporting documents in January and decide whether the plan can proceed to examination. If we are able to proceed, the Planning Inspectorate will agree dates for the Examination with the Council, which is likely to be around March 2015.

Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

As a minerals and waste authority, Blackpool works jointly with Lancashire County Council (LCC) and Blackburn-with-Darwen Council on the Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

The joint authorities have agreed to review the Minerals and Waste Local Plan to extend the plan period to 2032 (15 years from the anticipated date of adoption). The current plan only covers the period to 2021. A scoping consultation inviting comments on what the review of the local plan should contain took place between 7 November and 19 December 2014.

A Chief Officer meeting will take place in January 2015 to discuss the outcome of the scoping consultation and the reports that will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). These reports will inform members of the responses received to the scoping consultation and how the comments have informed the next draft of the Plan. It is expected that the next stage of consultation

on the draft Plan will take place around June 2015 following individual approval of the consultation draft by the three authorities.

Onshore Oil and Gas Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Blackpool Council is working jointly with Lancashire County Council and Blackburn-with-Darwen Council in preparing an SPD on Onshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production and Distribution. The SPD will provide clarity as to the information required accompanying planning applications, how to present the application so that those consulted can have confidence in the process and the main issues and considerations necessary to satisfy the policy tests contained in the local plan.

In June and July 2014, the councils consulted on what the SPD should contain. Feedback received from a number of key stakeholders has been taken into account and a draft consultation document has now been produced which will be consulted upon during January and February 2015. The draft Consultation SPD includes:

- An introduction to the planning system and process and the division of responsibilities within the wider regulatory process.
- An introduction to oil and gas processes and links to relevant other sources of information.
- An illustration of the licenced oil and gas areas.
- A summary of the development plan and the most relevant planning policies.
- A description of the main phases of development and the main planning considerations associated with them.
- A description of the principal issues associated with oil and gas proposals, the land use planning objectives that are relevant and the necessary supporting information.

The Joint Advisory Committee for Strategic Planning representing the three authorities will consider a report on the result of the consultation before the relevant Executive Member at each authority makes a decision on whether to adopt the document.

Economic Development

Get Started

The Get Started service continues to be in high demand by Blackpool residents. Between April and November 2014, 240 residents benefited from various workshops and one-to-one advice, resulting in 63 new businesses being formed. In the same period, £247,000 of start-up finance has been secured to assist these businesses, bringing the total start up finance secured since 2012/ 2013 to £635,000. Get Started remains on target to assist 90 new business starts in 2014/ 2015. A diverse mix of new businesses has been formed ranging from a florist, an e-commerce business to a learning assessment consultant.

Get Started will be supporting a new Blackpool youth enterprise initiative to be launched in January 2015. The Young Enterprise Solutions (YES) project, co-ordinated by One Blackpool, has received £50,000 sponsorship from the Royal Bank of Scotland. The project will work with unemployed young people aged 16 - 24 in Blackpool to promote enterprise and social enterprise as a viable career pathway. Get Started will work closely with YES, ensuring maximum benefit from this new money coming into Blackpool. YES will offer one-to-one business mentoring, facilitated peer support, on-line learning and interactive workshops. Get Started will supplement this offer by delivering additional workshops, access to our Small Business Advisors and a dedicated YES room at Blackpool Enterprise Centre. The YES room will offer a free professional office environment for research and business planning with access to Wi-Fi and onsite business advice and online toolkits via Blackpool Unlimited (the Council's business communications portal). YES is aiming to engage 130 young people in the interactive training programme and 52 of these will go on to the one-to-one support.

Blackpool Tourism Academy

Blackpool Council is supporting the programme of skills activity emanating from the Blackpool Tourism Academy (BTA), which has been established by a consortium of leading tourism businesses with a vision to increase the vocational skillset of the resort's workforce. One of the key objectives of the BTA is for Blackpool to become the first UK seaside resort to achieve WorldHost status, an international standard of customer excellence. Some 2,500 people need to be trained to unlock this status for the resort. WorldHost training has been used to train over one million people worldwide including tens of thousands of volunteers and staff at the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympics, widely praised for the fantastic welcome they gave to visitors. The BTA employers have already committed training almost 1000 of their staff in this financial year and other smaller tourism businesses are starting to take up this offer too. It is hoped destination status can be achieved by the end of 2015. Businesses need to train 50% of their front line staff to become a WorldHost recognised as an individual business and the Sandcastle Waterpark is the first Blackpool tourism business to achieve this status.

Youth Employment

The proportion of 16 to 18 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at the end of October 2014 was 5.7% compared with 6.2% in October 2013. This represents 297 young people who were NEET, the lowest it has been at this time of year. Overall NEET has fallen by 18.3% between October 2012 and October 2014.

Youth Enterprise Challenge for Blackpool and Fylde College Students has been launched. Mike Taplin, Senior Manager (Post 16 Learning) brought new partners together with Blackpool and Fylde College and Brian House to launch this year's challenge. Students will be tasked to raise money for Brian House through an enterprise activity, but this year students will have access to a business mentor through the 3E Partnership and training from Think Forward. An evaluation framework has also been put in place to provide evidence based practice for future funding opportunities to help roll out this model across Blackpool.

Connexions are currently involved in running a project in the Claremont Ward specifically to engage NEET 16 to 18 year olds. Claremont was chosen as it has a high concentration of NEET and it also links in with the Selective Licensing/ Transient Team. Through linking with other organisations in Claremont more intensively, Connexions will be able to target young people that would otherwise most likely not access our service. This will also allow the service to assess and understand the barriers and needs of young people that are not accessing appropriate provision. It will also allow the service to assess and evaluate other services to allow for better joined up working. The project will run until March 2015.

Phones and IT

Windows 7 Upgrades and device Deployment

The IT Service is continuing with the refresh of Windows software and hardware devices. This is necessary due to the withdrawal of Windows XP and the age of many hardware devices significantly exceeding their serviceable lifespan.

In the November and December 2014, a further 213 devices were rolled out taking the total number of devices upgraded since the programme started to 1853. The new devices will enable faster access times, improved productivity and flexible working.

Printing Upgrades

Roll out of new printing facilities to areas of the Council that have been upgraded to Windows 7 continues. We have now completed around 60% of the print device refresh.

Joint working with NHS

- Provision of Wi-Fi facilities for access by Council staff at Blackpool Victoria Hospital and Clifton Hospital to support flexible working.

The launch of Go ON Blackpool was held on the 11 December 2014 at the Winter Gardens. Go ON is a national charity that is committed to increasing the digital skills of individuals and businesses to improve the UK's standing as a digitally included nation and we have committed to getting colleagues, communities and customers online as part of their Digital Skills Pledge. There were a range of partners represented, including Libraries, Argos and Disability First and residents were invited to see what they had to offer in terms of digital services. Of those that visited 47% expressed an interest in training and 37 % offered their skills as digital champions.

Alongside this ran a more formal event with presentations from a range of organisations, which included the opportunity for representatives to complete a pledge to increase digital skills amongst their clients.

Schools IT SLA

Large amounts of work have been undertaken supporting the 'new' ICT curriculum. This support has been in different formats, half day INSET, Staff meetings and individual meetings with heads and subject/ ICT leads. More INSET on new curriculum in diary for the early part of the New Year:

- Additional support providing professional development to teaching staff familiarising them with new software to support the Programming element of the new curriculum planned for the New Year.
- Undertaken E-safety work on a number of levels. These include policy support and development, parent awareness sessions, targeted KS2 pupil and staff awareness raising sessions in readiness for new 'Gadgets' and online access as a result of Christmas. Planned E-safety updates and awareness sessions for all school staff in January.
- Code Club information circulated to all schools, encouraging school staff to get involved with coding.

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CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, PUBLIC SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT – COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL

Transience

The Council has been successful in bidding for £1.54m of additional revenue funding to support a Transience Programme for three years from April 2015. The funding comes from the Government's Transformation Challenge Award and is part of a wider agenda of putting in place more joined up ways of working that prevent future demands on public services.

The bid showed how investing in holistic and preventative services in particular neighbourhoods would help reduce costs to the Council, health services, police and fire service.

The funding will pay for the teams of transience support workers to work across inner Blackpool reaching out to vulnerable people and helping them to become more stable.

The work builds on the pilot in South Beach where support workers accompanied housing enforcement teams as they inspected privately rented properties following the introduction of selective licensing.

At first, the funding will pay for transience work in the Claremont ward and put more capacity back into South Beach. It is anticipated that a further roll out to other parts of inner Blackpool such as Talbot, Brunswick, Revoe and St Heliers will take place from early 2016.

The funding will also help support more community development activities in these areas, to provide opportunities for people to make new contacts and develop their skills alongside support from statutory services.

Trading Standards, Food Hygiene and all Enforcement activities

Environmental Protection Team

Following the break-up of the Neighbourhoods Division, a centralised Environmental Protection team has been established within the Public Protection Division. Working practices have been amended with the intention of launching an out of hour's noise / Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team early in the New Year.

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act

Following this legislation being enacted, the Directorate Enforcement Policy has been amended to reflect this and officers authorised as appropriate. The first Community Protection Notices have already been issued by officers to address antisocial behaviour, which spoils the community's quality of life.

Scam Alerts

Officers of the Advice and Education team have started issuing scams alerts via social media for the first time via Public Relations. This proved to be the most popular use ever by the Authority of social media, with the first alert being shared over 400 times and reaching over 20,000 people.

Claremont Selective Licensing

The inspections phase of the scheme is now well underway. Of the 1,284 properties to which the scheme applies, licence applications have now been received for 911 premises, with more arriving daily.

Gambling Test Purchasing

Operations have been performed by officers along with the Gambling Commission, using underage volunteers. Of the premises visited, four have been submitted for Licence Review following repeat failures, whereas six more have been put on notice by written warning following the failure of one incident.

Proceeds of Crime

Following a joint investigation involving Planning Enforcement and Trading Standards a conviction was obtained regarding an unlawful conversion of a premise. Both defendants were fined £6,000 each with £7,000 costs and both were ordered to pay £50,000 each of Proceeds of Crime, with a penalty of 18 months imprisonment for failure to do so, upon completion of which the monies would still be owed.

Police Joint Working

Officers are now working every day in the Town Centre paired up with Police Officers to reduce crime/ Anti-social behaviour and to tackle street crimes ranging from begging, street trading, thefts and commercial waste. A number of miscreants have already been apprehended and reported for prosecution. These include one beggar who was apprehended 13 times in a single weekend. All appropriate prosecutions will be accompanied by applications to the Courts for Criminal Behaviour Orders.

Problematic Street Trader

As part of the ongoing joint working operations with the Police to tackle problems in the town centre and Promenade areas, an individual has been successfully prosecuted twice resulting in two suspended jail sentences for 70 days to run consecutively. He has been selling fake vodka and whisky on the streets. Upon being analysed these were found to contain urine and faecal contaminants.

Public Space Protection Order

These orders recently became available to the Authority as part of the ASB, Crime and Policing Act. A report has been drafted on this subject recommending a 12 week public consultation to be undertaken after the Parliamentary and Local Elections, relating firstly to the Town Centre and Promenade and secondly to Public Parks.

Such an Order would implement new rules relating to behaviour that the Authority expects and stop individuals or groups committing certain types of antisocial behaviour in public spaces, which has a detrimental effect on the quality of life. The Orders can subsequently be varied and amendments or additions can be made to the prohibitions and/ or requirements. It is an offence to breach such an Order.

Amongst the issues suggested for consultation in the Town Centre/ Promenade Order are:

- Street Drinking
- Loitering around cash machines/ shop doorways (an extension of begging)
- Rag Mag Sellers/ Charity Collections
- Using legal highs
- Lucky charms/ heather sellers.

Licensing Services

The Licensing Committee in December 2014, agreed to go out to formal consultation on a revised statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003. The consultation will end on the 12 March 2015. The Committee also considered an interim report from the Night Time Economy Working Group.

“BSafe” – Blackpool Community Safety Partnership

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Performance

All crime in Blackpool showed a 6% decrease in October to November 2014 when compared to the same period the previous year. This equates to 150 fewer crimes.

Individual breakdown of other crime categories include:

- Anti-social behaviour has remained at the same level
- Vehicle crime has decreased by 9% (equivalent to 18 fewer crimes)
- Domestic Burglary has decreased by 14% (19 fewer crimes)
- Domestic Abuse has decreased by 1% (two fewer crimes)
- Sexual Offences (not including rape) have remained at the same level
- Assaults have increased by 5% (28 more crimes)

Crime reduction and substance misuse initiatives

Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Week

A Lancashire-wide campaign to raise awareness around Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was held between 10 and 14 November 2014. The week of action focused on operational activity and awareness raising around five main themes, Internet safety and offending, missing from home and care, street grooming, groups and gangs CSE and trafficking.

It is hoped that the campaign will provide advice and information around prevention of child sexual exploitation, increased awareness of the issues and to send out a warning to potential offenders.

Domestic Abuse

White Ribbon Campaign

On 25 November 2014, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the White Ribbon Campaign was launched, resulting in 16 days of action across the country. The campaign focuses on encouraging men and boys to take responsibility for eliminating violence against women by asking them to wear a white ribbon and sign a pledge ‘never to condone or remain silent about violence against women’.

In Lancashire, a performance of ‘Lady in Red’ was shown at Police Headquarters to highlight the plight of women who are in abusive relationships and for professionals to discuss their experiences with victims of domestic abuse. In Blackpool, a social media campaign was launched featuring photographs of staff, partners and the public wearing the white ribbons and an event was held in the Town Centre to obtain pledge signatures on 5 December 2014.

Funding boost for domestic abuse refuges

A £10m fund has recently been developed to support specialist domestic violence refuges in England. The provision of specific refuges for victims of domestic abuse is vital in making a difference to the lives of thousands of women and children each year.

The funding is available for 2014/ 2015 and 2015/ 2016 and will allow local housing authorities to strengthen their existing refuge services. It is hoped that this will provide effective national coverage to keep victims of domestic abuse safe.

Early intervention

The Stakeholder Group has been established and initiated the planning for the UCLAN pilot 'Step Up – Building the Evidence Base for Early Intervention Responses for Children Living with Domestic Abuse'. Step Up research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and will focus on strengthening the response provided to families identified as standard risk domestic abuse cases.

Domestic Abuse Commissioning Review

The next stage of the review is to hold a stakeholder event utilising, 'Positive Transitions' to facilitate a customer journey through Domestic Abuse pathways, this will determine the work that is currently undertaken and what the identified need is moving forward. Service User participation will be included to capture real experiences.

Coordinate Response against Domestic Abuse (CAADA)

Empowerment to present CAADA insights, reviewing the outcomes measured over the past 12 months, the report will be fed back to the Steering Group. Empowerment have won a national 'Children and Young People Award' 2014 for the work the Children's IDVA's deliver in Blackpool to children and young people affected by Domestic Abuse. CAADA Self-Assessment for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) was also undertaken, facilitated with a CAADA representative and the MARAC partnership. The results will inform the delivery of MARAC.

Domestic Abuse Pan Lancashire Steering Group

Work with perpetrators is considered within this group, alongside the MARAC Steering Group, Honour Based Abuse and Workforce Development Group. A sub group has been created to look at Domestic Homicide Reviews and Mental Health, the first meeting will be held in January.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES – COUNCILLOR TAYLOR

Commissioned Services for Children

A Customer Journey Mapping Workshop has been held in conjunction with the Public Service Transformation Network looking at positive support and accommodation pathways for young people 16 to 24 years old. Blackpool are one of a number of Local Authorities, nationally, involved in the Positive Transitions project led by Department for Communities and Local Government. The workshop was very well attended and created a huge amount of debate and discussion. A follow up event will be held in early February to reflect on the learning and begin to shape Blackpool's Support and Accommodation Pathway.

The Positive Transitions programme has been set up to tackle youth homelessness and improve services for vulnerable young people. Going forward the work will redesign and shape local provision to improve the outcomes for our most vulnerable young people.

The new draft Commissioning Strategy for Adult and Children's Social Care is now available for public consultation. The new strategy has been prepared following extensive consultation with providers, people who use services and groups of young people. The strategy includes the team delivery plan for 2015/ 2016 with dedicated sections highlighting the actions for Children and Young People. The draft document will be available for comment until the end of January, feedback will then be taken into account and the final document will progress through governance during February.

Looked After Children and Children's Homes

New regulations have come into force governing looked after children placements, whereby Director of Children's Services approval is required for any child moving further than the adjacent Local Authority border. In addition, a consultation has opened on the inspection framework for Adoption support arrangements.

The office of the Children's Commissioner visited Blackpool to explore how we work with child sexual abuse within families and an interim letter of feedback will be considered at the Safeguarding Board. The Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Home Office visited to look at the management of Child Sexual Exploitation in December and we await feedback.

Argosy children's home has had an interim inspection in December 2014 and the outcome is to maintained Good status.

Children's Improvement Plan

Following the publication of the Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board report on the 8 September 2014 the Improvement Plan has now been refreshed.

Staff, partners and young people themselves were consulted when developing the refreshed Improvement plan and this plan was submitted to Ofsted on the 15 December 2014 and we are awaiting feedback from them.

Safeguarding (Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB))

Mr David Sanders (Independent Chairman) is now in post and is beginning to immerse himself in Board business and has fully contributed to the BSCB section of the Improvement plan for Ofsted.

BSCB currently has four Serious Case Reviews underway. The BSCB is required to undertake a Serious Case Review in specified circumstances. Namely, where (a) abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and (b) either (i) the child has died, or (ii) the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.

On Friday 12 November 2014 the BSCB published a Serious Case Review. This report is available on the BSCB website via the following link

<http://www.blackpoolscb.org.uk/contents/documents/Child%20BR%20Final%20November%202014.pdf>

Children's University in Blackpool (CU)

We are now starting to implement a project in conjunction with the National CU regarding 'Social Action'. This will involve normal CU participation with an added element of 'Social Action' activities included as part of the CU programme. The project will be evaluated independently by Durham University and is supported by the Education Endowment Fund (EEF). The criteria had to be for 'new' schools, with no previous contact with the CU and we have managed to get Educational Diversity involved with this exciting new project.

We also plan to provide access to any 'Social Action' opportunities/ activities, to existing Blackpool schools participating in CU, outside of the national project, once they have been established.

Another new initiative being developed is 'Code Club'. The aim is to engage and support Blackpool CU's with providing Coding clubs as after school clubs, as part of their CU provision. The aim is for staff in school to be supported in delivering coding clubs as a CU activity. This initiative is particularly relevant now with the introduction of 'programming' into the new ICT curriculum and the national 'Hour of code' campaign, which can be found at <http://code.org>

Adult, Community and Family Learning.

A review of the Academic year 2013/ 2014 has now been completed to inform the Self-Assessment Requirement. The total number of learners who have participated in programmes in 2013/ 2014 is 3596 compared to 2012/ 2013 figures of 3558.

The quality of the service remains high, however despite targeting further vulnerable groups, the Retention of Learners remains the same as last year and stands at 96%. The completion of learning has slipped slightly from 96% to 94%.

Other successes in 2013/ 2014 include:

- "Volunteers - helping the community to help themselves" - Michael Flynn won the prestigious North West Learner of the Year. The Blackpool Volunteer of the Year continues to provide a reading group for those who have learning difficulties.
- "Family Learning - helping to build resilient families" - Family Learning ran 113 courses during 2013/ 2014 and worked with 645 adult learners and their families. The team ran a mixture of accredited (Maths, English, Supporting a Child's Learning and Development) and non-accredited learning. Courses focused on improving the basic skills of parents, their ability to support their children's learning and the development of children's knowledge and skills. A total of 97% of learners reported that they had learned skills to help their family.
- Basic skills - British Computer Society online computer course and accreditation has been highly praised by Job Centre Plus as a good entry level certificate which demonstrates some basic IT knowledge and is a good springboard for the Functional skills ICT or Level 1 ITQ.
- Vulnerable groups; Over 100 members of the community packed Warren Manor to watch a performance of Jack and the Beanstalk given by adults with learning disabilities.

- A Positive Behaviours course is being delivered in partnership with the Wellness Service as an exit strategy for individuals being provided with support from Mental Health services.
- Personal Development courses are being provided at the Women's Centre for women to gain confidence in dealing with complex issues.

14 -19 Strategy.

The proportion of 16 to 18 year olds participating in learning at the end of October 2014 stood at 85.1% compared with 84.6% in October 2013. Overall Participation in Learning has increased by 6% in the last two years.

Connexions Virtual Early Leavers Service

There is now an E-System in place for both Colleges and Training Providers to notify immediately if a young person has left their provision. The Connexions Service then makes contact with the young person within 48 hours. The pilot phase has now completed with the service supporting over 100 young people during its first six months to make a smooth transition into new work and training opportunities when previous placements have not worked out.

Inspection and Intervention of Schools

Blackpool Local Authority School Improvement was inspected by Ofsted between eight and 12 December 2014. The Lead inspector asked for her thanks and that of the team, to be passed to all who have been involved in contributing in any way to the inspection. She praised the highly professional engagement of all concerned.

Overall emerging strengths:

- There are particular service areas where significant improvements have been made
- Where these services have moved quickly to improve, there is clear evidence of impact

Continuing weaknesses:

- Progress has not been fast enough in some areas
- Quality assurance is not sufficiently robust to drive improvement
- There has been insufficient impact on pupil outcomes, especially at secondary

Recommendations:

- Urgently review how we deliver school improvement services
- Involve all key partners
- Support self-sustaining school improvement
- Improve quality assurance and the way in which it drives improvement

Ofsted will not be making any recommendations to the DfE, as it is not Ofsted's role to do this. However, the letter will be subject to extensive quality assurance and moderation, and will be reviewed by the Regional Director (Ofsted) and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI). On publication it will go to DfE. The draft letter is currently awaited. Following this the action plan will need to be updated in response to the recommendations made.

Continuing Professional Development, School Workforce and the City Learning Centre (CLC)

The CLC Media Academy continues to flourish as part of the traded services model with schools. To date it has supported over 3000 students on various projects. It is also a key part of Media support and training for Blackpool Council and continues to be given key projects to develop. Its training arm also supports Council colleagues with the skills and advice needed to achieve high quality visual media outcomes.

The CLC continues to be successful with partners in securing substantial training contracts hosted at the CLC with National organisations to support schools and in the community, also incorporates Area Forums, Grange park community partnership and Community activity programmes.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and School Workforce

The new spring 2015 brochure for schools now incorporates a wider variety of partners in its aim to support and improve upon school led CPD. In partnership with the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance an enhanced CPD programme has taken place this quarter and we will assess the impact of this shortly. The Blackpool Schools Partnership (BSP) has completed its conference programme and one cluster-training programme. It has also embraced a major theme of development for our family of schools with a commission to Bill Thompson, a leading national expert on formative assessment. The schools forum deferred the BSP plan to develop its school-to-school programme. A consultation process has begun with all schools to define clearly a way forward. The school improvement team training was well received with good attendance. The impact of this is monitored through regular meetings with School Improvement Partners.

Music Service

The Blackpool Music Education Hub is annually assessed by the Arts Council. This year's report was received in December 2014 and it stated that:

- The service demonstrates excellent reach into surrounding schools, working with 97% of Primary, 100% of Secondary and 100% of 'other' schools, reaching 97% of all schools, 13% above the national average.
- 37% of musicians continue their musical interests between Primary and Secondary schools, 32% above the national average.
- Ensembles numbers have increased by 100% providing a diverse range of opportunities for Children and Young People.
- Engagement with Children and Young People is strong.
- The service demonstrates strong support for singing strategies working in 30 Primary and 8 Secondary Schools.
- Continuous Professional Development is provided in 94% of our schools.
- The service loaned all 3,200 instrumentalists a musical instrument without charge thus responding positively to local deprivation issues.
- The offer involved many large-scaled performances involving thousands of pupils.
- The service can demonstrate 'value for money'.
- Charity status has brought about several new funding opportunities.
- Good partnership work with professional musicians and organisations can be evidenced.

As a result, DfE funding will continue to be devolved via the Arts Council.

On a practical level, events during the Christmas period included more than 1,600 musicians in prestigious venues including the Tower Ballroom and the Winter Gardens. Audiences have been large and parental support has been strong.

The Service is also celebrating that Blackpool instrumentalists have now been offered places in ten of the nation's best orchestras and bands. This is unprecedented in Blackpool.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TOURISM AND LEISURE – COUNCILLOR CAIN

Illuminations

A very busy run-up to the Christmas period saw the Illuminations service provide Christmas displays in Blackpool, Chorley and St Annes, as well as a number of trees across the borough, funded from ward budgets. In addition, the service has supplied equipment to other localities including Scotland, Bradford and Sheffield.

Plans for the 2015 Illuminations are now progressing, although the overall structure of the display depends on the outcome of the bid to the Coastal Communities Fund, which seeks to reinvent the Illuminations offer around the Tower Festival Headlands. The outcome of the bid is expected in late January.

Leisure Management

Blackpool's sporting talent is set to be showcased in a celebration of community sport. The awards, which are a Blackpool Community Sports Council event, have taken place for over 25 years. They will showcase the dedication and commitment of coaches, teams and volunteers as well as recognising outstanding achievement, which will culminate in a presentation ceremony in the Sponsors Lounge at Blackpool Football Club on Thursday 12 March 2015.

Three young, local leisure workers have secured full time jobs with Blackpool Council after completing successful apprenticeships after completing a year of dedicated on the job learning, training and work experience in a number of different fields from lifeguarding to activity leadership. They achieved certificates in leisure operations, exercise and fitness, circuit training instruction, activity leadership, instructing adolescents, employment awareness and function skills as well as a Level 2 NVQ in exercise and fitness and the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification.

The School Games has continued to engage children and young people from Blackpool Schools in high quality school sport competition with over 2,500 young competitors taking part in School Games Level One Competitions. The autumn term has seen over 200 young athletes competing in the School Games Level Two Indoor Athletics Competitions, which feed into the Blackpool and Lancashire Finals in 2015. A highlight of the term was the Primary School Festive Fun Run, which saw almost 200 children, put on their Christmas Jumpers and Santa Hats to raise money for Save the Children as part of National Christmas Jumper Day.

The Healthy Play Community Sports Programme is now engaging children and young people five evenings every week with the introduction of sessions taking place at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre on a Monday and Stanley Park on a Friday. The new sessions compliment the sessions already being delivered at Mereside on a Tuesday, Talbot and Brunswick Sports Barn on a Wednesday and Revoe Park on a Thursday.

Bikeability Schools Programme

In the period September to December 2014, the cycle training team visited 10 Primary Schools and trained 376 Year 5 and 6 pupils. Of these 318 achieved level two standard, proficient in cycling safely on the road, 39 achieved level 1 standard, basic bike control skills.

Learn to Ride Programme

Learn to Ride sessions were launched in November at Norbreck Academy. Delivered at the same time, their year group participates in Bikeability, this avoids pupil exclusion and full participation across the year group. Our aim is to engage all pupils no matter what their riding ability and providing the opportunity to take part in a cycling activity.

Early Years Cycling Programme

An Early Years programme has been established to combat the current issue we are faced with at Year 5 with bikeability and learn to ride. The programme is aimed at children who have the fundamental walking skills, this can start from two years and will be offered to all children through to five years to introduce them to fundamental skills of cycling. The programme uses specialised Balance Bikes (bikes without pedals) to make learning to ride fun and easy. The sessions have been piloted at West Park and Marmadukes Kindergarden with positive feedback from both.

Wheels for All Schools Programme

Woodlands (25 children), Park (24 children) and Highfurlong (16 children) Special Schools each receive weekly one hour cycling sessions using the specialised Wheels for All bikes. The sessions take place at Blackpool Sports Arena every Friday morning in term time.

Urban Biking Cycle Training

From Saturday 10 January, a new cycle training course called Urban Biking started at Palatine Leisure Centre. The course is designed to give trainees the skills and confidence to cycle on the roads to Bikeability level two national standard. The class ratio will be one trainer to four trainees with two hours of on road training.

Dr Bike Cycle checks and Police coding

A partnership with community safety and our own Dr Bike, has been offered to community residents. A full maintenance cycle check and police coding will be available to anyone who wishes to purchase, keeping our cyclists safe and their bikes secure.

Stanley Park and Showground

Stanley Park contains the biggest and the best children's playground in the North West and is about to get even better through the inclusion of more new toddler focussed equipment. Further to securing a further £3,000 Area Forum funding for interactive play panels, eight of the new features have now been installed and include a 'Make it Rain', 'Farmyard Sounds', 'Animal Jigsaw', 'Interactive Car' and 'Bongo Drums' theme. Play panels are beneficial to children from two to five years, encourage mental stimulation and make play more accessible to children with special development needs, creating a more inclusive, sensory and engaging play experience. The panels compliment the brand new animal themed playground, which was installed back in May using funding from SITA Enhancing Communities Fund. The playground and the wider park have received excellent reviews from visiting customers posting comments on the travel website Trip Advisor. We are seeking further funding to expand the range of the equipment and facilities on the site include more ride-on springies, climbing frames and picnic areas.

Marton Mere Nature Reserve and Ecological Areas

Phase One of the Marton Mere's New Visitor Centre project is now fully underway. A project steering group, attended by Natural England, Bourne Leisure, Fylde Bird Club, Nature Watch and Blackpool Council has been successfully formed and meets monthly to advise and support on the completion of the project delivery plan. A Project Officer and Environmental Volunteer Coordinator have now been appointed and they will be immediately tasked with developing a volunteer engagement and activity programme.

A twenty-year lease has now been agreed for the new visitor centre facility and contractor Eclipse Developments have started works to demolish the shell of the former Ranger Station and start to develop the new centre framework. The anticipated completion date is 31 January 2015 and the building will be a key local tourism attraction, staff and volunteer base for the site. Construction on a new elevated bird hide will start February 2015 and a significant volume of spoil will be used to landscape it into the surrounding landscape.

All design, consultation and tender work associated with the project ground works has been completed. The lake island will be significantly remodelled to include a variegated edge and complex channels and lagoons to encourage and accommodate national protected bird and mammal species including Bitterns and Otters. The largest artificial Sand Martin nesting bank in the North West will be constructed on the south end of the island to attract and accommodate these nationally important birds. New, accessible ponds will be constructed to home Great Nested Newts as well as provide for school education pond dip sessions.

A volunteer management day was arranged by the Parks and Open Spaces Service and Groundwork to clean-up and complete vital conservation work at Weymouth Road Open Space on the 26 November 2014. Fifteen volunteers from DWP Community 10000 joined the team's regular volunteers for the clean up. This was also part of Keep Britain Tidy's campaign 'The Big Tidy Up'. Eight bags of rubbish were collected from site, site entrances widened to improve visibility and personal safety, old infrastructure removed to clean up site aesthetics and 500 bulbs planted to bring some colour in spring. The team also undertook a programme of woodland management to thin and improve the perimeter shrub belt and build 40 meters of dead hedge to build an effective boundary barrier, benefit wildlife and enabling the recycling of cut material.

The Parks and Open Spaces Service staff and volunteer rangers as well as Groundwork have been busy undertaking an intense programme of woodland management, meadow cutting and opening up glade areas to increase biodiversity and extend varied wildlife habitats during the past two months. All three miles of the Heron's Reach bridleway have had the edges cutback, strimmed and cleared. A new suite of timber bins and benches funded by Ward Councillors have been installed and improved drainage, new way marking and interpretation boards are planned for 2015.

Tourism and Marketing Services – VisitBlackpool

Resort Pass

The Blackpool Resort Pass is to be re-launched for 2015 with a credit card style pass used by leading destinations across Europe including London, York, Paris and Amsterdam. The pass will allow customers to pre-book the resort's main attractions at a heavily discounted price. More than 13,000 passes were sold during the 2014 season.

Showzam! Circus Town

The programme for this year's Showzam! festival is now nearing completion. The festival, which runs from 14 to 18 February, has a Circus Town theme and will feature the high-energy Columbian circus company, Circolumbia, which is coming to Blackpool ahead of its official premiere at London's Roundhouse.

Showzam! will also include the popular Carnival Ball on the opening night and there will be a wide range of circus performance and street theatre in and around various venues including the Winter Gardens. This year's festival is a partnership between VisitBlackpool, Left Coast and Sea Change.

2015 Events Programme

The VisitBlackpool events programme for 2015 has now been agreed in principle. The programme includes the two-day Blackpool Airshow on 9 and 10 August, Ride The Lights on 1 September, Switch On Festival Weekend between 4 and 6 September and four nights of world firework championships

commencing on 11 September. The 2014 events programme was credited as one of the reasons for a surge in visitor numbers during the summer months.

Initial discussions have taken place with a number of prospective media partners over the format for the Illuminations switch-on weekend. The aim is to build on the successful 2014 format which saw the return of the free switch on event on the Friday, followed by two commercial concerts on the Tower Festival Headland on the following two nights.

Blackpool To London Rail Services

VisitBlackpool worked closely with Virgin Trains on the launch of the new Blackpool to London direct service. Virgin has agreed to stock copies of the Blackpool Destination Guide and the Blackpool Conference Guide in the lounge areas at London's Euston Station. Further partnership working will be undertaken in coming months to ensure that the new direct services add value to Blackpool's leisure and business tourism markets.

Cemetery and Crematorium

In January 2014, the Executive agreed to appoint the specialist company ATI Technologies to refurbish fully the three cremators at Carleton Crematorium after the original contractor went into liquidation. The original timescale was for the work to be completed by the end of September 2014. However, due to unforeseen problems with the machines, delays have occurred which have been out of our control. The delay in completing the work has been frustrating for all involved, however this is extremely specific work on complicated technical equipment. The Crematorium has been open and operating daily with two out of our three cremators operating nearly every working day last year and the crematorium dealt with over 1,500 cremations in 2014. To ensure minimal disruption officers have been communicating regularly with funeral directors and colleagues at Lytham crematorium to ensure bereaved families are aware of their options. Testing is taking place on the final machine this month and we hope to have it up and running soon.

Grounds Maintenance – community parks.

A SITA Environment Trust Fast Track £20,000 funding bid is being prepared to upgrade Watson Road Park's under stocked and aging children's playground. Parks and Open Spaces Service staff have been working with the Park Friends Group and Playground Engineer to formulate a number of different new play designs, which will form the basis of a site base consultation in January 2015. The Fast Track stream of the grant enables a quick turnaround and if successful will spearhead improvements for next April, ready for the new season.

Parks and Open Spaces Service staff, New Langdale Community volunteers, as well as local councillors have been busy throughout November providing a dose of tender loving care to the memorial woodland within Kingscote Park. The volunteers, made up of adults with learning disabilities, gave up two full days of their time to improve the park and ensuring it was made as accessible as possible, thinning the trees to increase visibility, as well as cleaning up piles of mess that had been left behind and removing some of the dead trees. The green-fingered volunteers were helped by the park based Blackpool Stanley Rugby Club, who opened up their central pavilion to all of the workers and provided refreshments free of charge while they carried out the improvements.

Relationships with the Winter Gardens Company

The line-up for the 2015 season is now starting to take shape with three top quality shows already announced and more to follow in the early part of the New Year. The shows already confirmed are Jesus Christ Superstar from 10 to 14 March 10-14, a revival of Tommy, The Rock Opera from 11 to 26 September and the hit musical, A Christmas Carol from 4 December to 3 January 2016.

The 12 Films of Christmas promotion saw the first season of activity using the new state-of-the art cinema equipment within the Opera House. The programme proved extremely popular with a total of 5,670 paying customers, with 2,300 of those attending two performances of Disney's Frozen Sing-A-Long.

CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE – COUNCILLOR ROWSON

Care and Support – Adult Provider Service

Blackpool Supported Lodgings Service - The Story so Far.....

Blackpool Supported Lodgings Service was commissioned as a two year fixed term project in January 2013 with the remit to provide support to young people from the age of 16 to 18 years with the provision of continued support past 18 years through 'staying put' funding.

The principle of the service is about promoting 'ordinary living and sharing of a home' providing stable, settled and supportive accommodation for young people where they can develop their skills as they move towards independence including the development and maintenance of interests and relationships of their own.

The young person is placed with a 'Host' who provides support based on their individual needs, welcoming them into their home and family.

In January 2013, two new workers were employed to set up the service. A support and information apprentice whose role was to provide back office support to the project and an officer to recruit, assess, support and monitor 'Hosts' and subsequent placements.

Over the two years there have been a steady flow of referrals made to the service that have been actively followed up, with meetings and referral documentation completed, these have resulted in really positive placements which in some cases have been supported for periods of a year or more.

The recruitment of 'Hosts' continues and the service takes every opportunity to promote the service and raise the profile of Supported Lodgings within the community and colleagues who could potentially refer into the service.

Over the two year pilot there have been lots of learning experiences for the 'Hosts', officers and people who use the service, some of these have been challenging and emotional. The 'Hosts' have learnt about sharing their homes with young people who arrive with a whole range of differing needs, they have learnt about the complexities of Local Authority and Looked after Children (LAC) reviews and Missing from Home (MFH) processes.

The young people have learnt how to share their lives and understand that people do care and that they have a valuable contribution to make to their local community and to other people's lives as well as achieving real positive outcomes in their own lives.

During the last two years, there have been young people who have come into contact with the Supported Lodgings Service and who have now moved on in their lives and in some cases away from care and support and into independent living. The time they spent with caring 'Hosts' have enabled them to gain the skills and confidence to make life changing decisions and the Supported Lodgings Service has been able to be a 'stepping stone' for the young person as they have moved along their journey towards adulthood.

This positive work has been recognised and the Supported Lodgings Service has received continued funding which will enable the service to build on the good work already achieved and support more young people along their life journey into adulthood and onto greater independence.

New Langdale Volunteers

The New Langdale 'Green Team' led by Neil Froggett (Langdale Volunteer Coordinator), who has been supporting a project at Kingscote Park, which has achieved outstanding results and has been commended, by the Local parks Friends Groups and Stanley Rugby Club.

The New Langdale Volunteers provided their services for two full days on consecutive Wednesday's on the 19 and 26 November 2014 during which time they tidied, mulched planted areas, planted shrubs and bulbs and then focused their considerable talents in creating a new Woodland Walk in the centre of the park (Millennium Woodland).

It has been recognised the huge difference the 'Green Team' made in improving and enriching the lives of local residents, who use and treasure their local green open space. The group worked well with other partners in the scheme that included the Local Parks Friends Group and Stanley Rugby Club, who manage the centre pavilion/ changing room facility in the centre of the park.

The New Langdale Volunteers received positive feedback from someone who supported the volunteers over the two days and said that he:

"felt quite humbled by just how wonderful all the volunteers were and just how hard they all worked and it reminded him in some ways of why he originally started in a career in gardening all those years ago - Neil is an inspiration to everyone with his enthusiasm and clever way of leading his clients, he must be an example of good practice. I learnt so much working with the 'Green Team' and could spend all day singing their praises, but perhaps most profoundly it taught me how much they contribute and give back to society. It's brilliant for members of the public to see your clients as the givers as oppose to being looked after by society. You must be extremely proud of them and rightly so, as I was proud to work with them for just this brief time. (Mark November 2014)".

The New Langdale Volunteers continue to develop new projects across Blackpool and within Local Communities to enhance the residential area and to work with local residents to create and develop the green spaces available within their local area.

The Local Authority's current position on the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards applications

A request for an authorisation to deprive someone of their liberty is received from a care or nursing home or hospital or from a supported living environment where the Managing Authority (e.g. the care home etc.) believes that the individual is subject to a number of restrictions in their care and treatment to the extent that they are being Deprived of their Liberty (DoL).

The Supervisory Body (the Local Authority) must then cause a series of assessments to be made under the provisions of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to decide if that is the case. If a Deprivation deemed to be occurring, the Local authority is required to authorise that Deprivation for a period of time contingent upon the individual's circumstances. In 2013/ 2014 there were 48 applications for a DoL received by the Local Authority.

In March 2104, a piece of case law commonly known as the Cheshire West and Chester ruling amended the threshold for a DoL. This has created a many fold increase in the number of applications for Deprivation resulting in a significant increase in the work required to be done by the Council. From April 2014 to 16 December 2014 the Council has received in excess of 270 DoL's applications (almost a seven-fold increase) and each requires a review during the period of authorisation. The

maximum possible length of an authorisation is 12 months although many are authorised for a much lesser period of time.

The Adult Social Care service uses its own in-house Best Interest Assessors (BIAs) who carry out the assessments wherever possible, but is purchasing services from independent BIAs in an increasing number of cases in order to meet statutory timescales. The Council has 20 BIAs based across teams. There are four in training and two due to commence training in March 2015. Legal update training for BIAs is provided and the re-formation of a BIA forum to provide peer support is planned. Update training for Supervisory Body signatories is also provided.

To facilitate greater partnership working the Council has recently agreed to indemnify a small number of Health colleagues who are BIA trained to carry out some assessments. At least two to three full working days are required for one BIA assessment and each assessment requires the payment for assessments by a doctor. The impact on Supervisory Body signatories is also significant as each requires a number of hours' scrutiny/ discussion with the BIA before authorisation.

Local Authority Safeguarding Peer Review (Adult Social Care)

The Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care (TEASC) programme brings together partners at a local, regional and national level to improve outcomes for citizens. It works with and for Local Government and its partners to enable them to take responsibility for their own improvement, with a focus on innovation and people centred coordinated care.

It uses the commitment of Councils to share learning and support, to find new ways of engaging local people, to invite challenge from peers and to use the knowledge of what works, data and innovation to act as drivers for improvement in the quality of services locally.

The Adults Peer Challenge intends to help local government to help itself to respond to the changing agenda in adult social care. The peer challenge process is intended to be a constructive and supportive process with the central aims of:

- Helping a council and its partners to assess its current achievements
- Identifying those areas where it could improve.

It is not an inspection nor does it award any form of rating judgement or score. It is delivered from the position of a 'critical friend' to promote sector-led improvement.

The approach agreed for the Blackpool Council Peer Challenge involves exploring the authority's aspiration's, performance and delivery against a modified version of the LGA's model for Standards in Adults Social Care, which has been developed by the LGA and its partners in its Sector Led Improvement programme.

Blackpool requested a peer challenge to consider three aspects of safeguarding practice:

- Strategic approach - to consider direction and policy setting, work with partners and the working of strategic bodies, such as the Safeguarding Board.
- Commissioned services - To consider how the Council ensures effective safeguarding practice in commissioned services, particularly consistency of approach and outcomes.
- Frontline social work practice - In particular the consistency of approach, impact and quality of decision-making.

The Peer Review team will be on site at Bickerstaffe Square for three days from 28 to 30 January 2015 and will interview a number of people including myself, the Chief Executive, the Director of Adult Services, Senior Managers, representatives from provider services, safeguarding board members, practitioners, individuals, carers and a number of partnership board members.

The team's findings will form the basis for a Report for the Director of Adult Services and the Chief Executive and help the Service to identify learning opportunities that may bring about better outcomes for individuals and its stakeholders.

The Care Act

Promotional Activity

Presentations have been undertaken across a wide range of in-house and external organisations. These have included the Health and Wellbeing Board, Clinical Commissioning Group, Blackpool Coastal Housing Limited, Safeguarding Adults Board, Chief Leadership Team. All of the adult social care teams have received briefings, which are ongoing. There is a monthly newsletter, which is distributed internally in Adult Social Care and featured on The Hub. From November 2014 there has been a monthly drop in at Bickerstaffe Square. Work is underway to use in-house video displays in raising awareness.

Organisational Arrangements

There is a Care Act Project Board, with representation from the chairs of all the work stream leads, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and myself, which meets bi-monthly. The work streams, four in total, all report to the Board. The work streams meet approximately six weekly and focus on a particular segment of the Act. These are Adult Social Care, Information and Advice, Finance and Funding, Systems and Reporting, Commissioning and Market Development. Each work stream provides highlight reports on progress in their particular area for the Board. There is a dedicated project lead for the Act that provides the linkages between the streams, Jayne Bentley. She also attends the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) North West Task and Finish Group for the Act.

Training

A training Provider has been commissioned to provide a series of training sessions over the next four months tailored to particular areas, including the following, adult social care workforce (social workers and case assessors), social work managers, Providers and the Public, legal aspects, members and commissioners. Colleagues from the NHS have also been included, particularly from areas where our staff are collocated with or managed by the NHS. The first session has been held and some key areas identified from that, as detailed below.

Some Key Development Issues between now and April 2015:

- Lessen delays between social care assessment, financial assessment and Direct Payments/ closer and more joint working.
- The unknowns of how much extra work new user and care assessments will generate and the staffing needs to be able to cope with demand.
- Policy and Practice Guidance for staff and information and advice for service users and carers.
- Political decision making regarding charging policies for both service users and carers from April 2015 onwards (in line with "power to" rather than "duty to").
- How much prevention.
- Framework changes.
- Better Care Fund developments
- Ongoing staff training on legal and financial aspects of care assessment delivery
- Specialist adult social care legal advice
- Member support for national publicity campaign

Underpinning all the above is cultural change of an enormous magnitude across the whole authority and partner organisations, which will take some time.

Commissioning Strategy for Adult and Children's Social Care

The Commissioning and Contracts team has published the first draft of the new commissioning strategy. This has been developed over the past few months following consultations with the voluntary community, service users, providers of services, minority groups and social care staff.

The strategy will last for the next three years and takes into account the requirements of the Care Act. New commissioning principles and priorities have been developed which are aligned to other Council strategies and priorities. There is also a detailed delivery plan explaining the work to be undertaken during 2015/ 2016 and this will be refreshed on an annual basis.

The draft document will be circulated and the commissioning team welcome any comments. The final document will be available during the first quarter of 2015.

Care Home Dementia Awareness Training

During the last six months another 275 care home staff have completed dementia awareness training. This now brings the total number of staff to over 400 that have received training since the project began. An award ceremony recently took place when over 40 representatives from local care homes received completion certificates.

There is now evidence of progression from this training work with Care Homes introducing dementia friendly environments such as colour co-ordinated crockery, better signage and life story work to help improve the quality of live for people living with dementia.

Autism Capital Funds

The Government is issuing £18,500 of capital monies to each Local Authority to spend on Autism. After consultation with our local autism group, the group have decided to spend the money on extending an existing facility, a log cabin, to make it more sensitive to the needs of people with autism. The log cabin is currently used for people low functioning autism/ Learning Disabilities as a gardening and craft centre. The extension will enable people at the higher end of the spectrum to utilise the space and work shop. It will also provide a base for peer support groups and advice and information. It is a joint venture between the NHS assessment service and Adult Social Care and all partners are excited and enthusiastic about the project.

Extra care

A Commissioning review has recently been completed on the Extra Care schemes in Blackpool, Elk and Tulloch. A tender exercise will begin in 2015, whereby a new model of care will be commissioned resulting in continuity of care and carers to tenants residing within the schemes.

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CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY – COUNCILLOR JONES

Highways Maintenance – potholes, carriageway and footway repairs.

The Yeadon Way scheme is progressing well and is currently on programme for completion by the end of March 2015. The design of the works has been adapted on site following further investigations into the ground conditions and cost effective methods of stabilisation are being installed. Significant effort has been made to keep the wider public informed regarding the works and this has directly led to minimal impact on other traffic routes and businesses.

Work to the surrounding watercourses and land drainage is already providing great benefit to land owners and allotments in the vicinity to the road.

Relationships with Blackpool Transport

In July 2014, the Council submitted a bid to the Government's Clean Vehicle Technology Fund (CVTF), in partnership with Blackpool Transport Services (BTS). This sought the sum of £500,000 to enable 30 buses to be fitted with an emission control technology package. The Council's air quality monitoring system is regularly recording town centre concentrations in excess of the recommended annual average EU limits of 40ug/m³ of Nitrogen Dioxide.

Initially, the Council's bid was unsuccessful, however, new resources were made available in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement and Department for Transport (DfT) has now indicated that the full £500,000 requested will be made available. BTS has confirmed that it is keen to proceed with the project.

The technology package will be fitted to older buses, which are more polluting than newer vehicles. BTS has a relatively old fleet profile and these measures will be a stopgap measure before superior vehicles, also more attractive to current and prospective passengers, can be secured. The technology package is intended to be in use for five years, before the recipient vehicles are retired.

This project does not commit Council resources beyond officer time in preparing the bid and administering the grant achieved. BTS has committed £43,489 as match funding to this project. The project is in line with the Council's environmental and Local Transport Plan objectives, to improve air quality and promote public transport such that the former is not compromised.

Equality and Diversity

Faith Calendar

The 2015 calendar of key faith festivals has been published. This popular publication is part funded by the Hospital Trust and is aimed at promoting awareness, mutual respect and understanding across our community. The Calendar now covers the most important dates for 11 faith/ belief traditions, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, Sikh and Zoroastrian.

Equality Objectives – performance report published

We have now published an extensive report charting our progress in advancing the Council's equality objectives and ambitions. The report is available on the web site and on request in the usual accessible formats.

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CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH – COUNCILLOR COLLETT

Healthy Futures Advisor – Drugs and Alcohol and Sexual Health Services

It is acknowledged that Drug and Alcohol dependency is a significant cause of worklessness. There is a strong evidence base, which confirms that individuals who engage with treatment and ultimately find employment are more likely to maintain sustained recovery. Therefore, employment, training and education are an important aspect of a drug and alcohol client's recovery journey, which brings benefits to the individuals and society. Additionally the service will also support HIV clients.

The Public Health directorate commission Positive Steps to employ an employment advisor, which offers specific intensive, individualised one-to-one support, which includes help with CV writing, job search, completing application forms, interview techniques and signposting to other services and training. The worker will offer intensive support and full access to a menu of interventions, which would include:

- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) from qualified staff
- Supported job search sessions
- Group employment focused workshops
- Support to source and access appropriate training or short courses
- Support to source and access basic skills training and qualifications
- Self-employment support
- Support to access volunteering or sector specific work placements

The service has been operating since November 2013 and positive outcomes are already being realised. To date 67 referrals have been made to the service and of these 22 have already completed the programme and have been successful in obtaining employment. Examples of employment secured are roles with engineering, hotel work, catering and in the care industry.

HIV testing week

National HIV Testing Week took place in November and the campaign was used to encourage actively those most affected by HIV in Blackpool to consider taking an HIV test. These groups include gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM).

The aim of the week was to increase awareness and acceptability of HIV testing among these groups and increase access to HIV testing in both community and statutory settings in order to improve early diagnosis and treatment of HIV (and thus reduce onward transmission).

New and innovative ways of reaching communities outside of traditional clinical settings have long been established in Blackpool. Access to testing was increased by extending the availability of testing times and widening the target groups through additional outreach in locations such as Blackpool and Fylde College, the Mardi Gras and Saunas.

HIV self-sampling

Pilot projects, testing innovative ways for individuals to take their own saliva or blood sample and return it to a laboratory for analysis, have found that the approach is successful at reaching significant numbers of individuals who have not tested before and individuals who are HIV positive.

The pilots have shown that home sampling is feasible and acceptable, especially to gay men and the process is likely to be cheaper than clinic-based testing. Blackpool plans to introduce HIV self-sampling this year, which would potentially be a major contribution to increasing uptake of HIV testing.

Winter flu season 2014/ 2015 has begun

Public Health England has alerted that influenza surveillance data published 11 December 2014 supported the view that influenza was now circulating in England. Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigues. Flu can be mild to life threatening to individuals at risk of severe complications (pregnant women, over 65's, those with serious heart or chest conditions (such as asthma, kidney or liver disease, diabetes, history of stroke, multiple sclerosis or lowered immunity)). Health Care Workers and Social Care Staff working with the elderly and in residential settings have been reminded that early recognition of these symptoms and that early referral to the GP are extremely important. It is important that outbreaks of flu in Care Homes are reported to Public Health England. In Blackpool Council, all employees have been offered a free flu vaccination by the Occupational Health team, uptake this year is excellent with over 600 employees receiving a flu jab.

New life expectancy figures released

Life expectancy at birth is one of the key indicators of health in a population. It is defined as the average number of years a human is expected to live if they experience the current age-specific mortality rates of a particular population throughout their lives. Life expectancy data are updated on an annual basis and this note presents Blackpool's latest figures. Life expectancy at birth for men in Blackpool is 74.3 years (2011/ 2013) and remains the lowest of any local authority in England. Women can expect to live longer than men do, life expectancy at birth for women is 80.1 years (2011/ 2013) and this is the second lowest in England. Residents in the town continue to experience some of the worst health in the country. Over the last decade, there has been a slight improvement in life expectancy. However, the gap between Blackpool and the rest of England and Wales continues to grow and there has been very little change in life expectancy for those in the most deprived areas of the town. Life expectancy for men in the town is 5.0 years below England and Wales and 3.7 years below the North West. For women in Blackpool, life expectancy is 2.9 years below England and Wales and 1.7 years below that for the North West (2011/ 2013).

Smoking in Pregnancy – Working with Tommy's

The Smoking at Time of Delivery (SATOD) rate in Blackpool has been the highest in the country since 2010 with rates over double that of the rest of England as whole. Both England and the North West have shown a decline in the rates from 13.5% in 2010/ 2011 to 12.7% in 2012/ 2013 for England and the North West region a similar trend with the rate falling from 17.7% in 2010/ 2011 to 16.4% in 2012/ 2013. The SATOD rate in Blackpool however, has less of an obvious trend. In 2011/ 2012 the rate fell to 29.7% from 33.2% the previous year. However, in 2012/ 2013 there has been a rise to 30.8%. Most recent figures show that we are currently at 27.5% however more needs to be done in order for us to catch up with national and regional trends.

A detailed SATOD action plan exists at a pan-Lancashire level, which aims to improve further on this figure, and we have been taking forward a number of areas of work to develop the pathways and support to women who may wish to quit. This includes an opt out smoking in pregnancy pathway, regular carbon monoxide (CO) monitoring and a training needs analysis of midwives and health care staff at the hospital trust.

Colleagues in the Public Health directorate are working with Tommy's, a national charity which funds research into pregnancy problems and provides information to parents. This work with Tommy's is to development and test an intervention that is relevant and reactive to women's needs and circumstances in Blackpool.

Blackpool has been chosen (alongside Kent) to take part in this national piece of research with the aim to develop a stop smoking intervention that is a) targeted specifically at young pregnant women, b) non-judgemental, c) convenient and cost effective and d) sustainable. This research is fully funded by Department of Health Innovation Excellence and Strategic Development Fund and just requires a commitment from the Council and wider partners to support the process of engagement and learning at a local and national level.

We are currently in the scoping phase of this work and Activmob (a Community Interest Company that specialises in asset based community development work) are visiting Blackpool to undertake a shallow dive for their insight. This initial insight work continued up until Christmas and they talked to many women and families, plus stakeholders to gain their views and experiences of smoking in pregnancy. Activmob will return in January/ February 2015 to undertake a deeper dive of their findings, to increase their understanding and clarify the meaning of some of the key issues raised.

It is expected that the development of an intervention programme will be ready for market testing late 2015, with comprehensive research and evaluation of its success (or failures) before a final report with findings is published in 2016.

Schools Catering Services

From September 2014 school lunches have been provided free of charge to all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 throughout all schools in England and Wales. This is a Government initiative aimed at ensuring a good quality, nutritional lunch is available to all pupils and it is anticipated that this scheme will be run on an ongoing basis for the foreseeable future.

As confirmed in the October 2014 census, the take up figure in Blackpool for the Universal Infant Free School Meal is in excess of 88%.

Overall there has been an increase of 34% from the October 2013 uptake. Whilst some of this is due to the introduction of the Universal Free School Meal there has also been an increase in the number of Key Stage Two pupils taking a school meal.

In order to meet legislative requirements Allergen information is available in each school kitchen.

All the meats used are being sourced from British animals and are Red Tractor certified or have Farm Assured certification, ensuring total traceability.

Pupils continue to have a choice of hot meals available every day, complemented by a salad bar, featuring a wide range of produce, a bread basket and a selection of tasty desserts.

A new menu is being introduced by Blackpool Catering Services in January 2015, which is fully compliant with the new standards.

Child Poverty

Work to establish the £45m Better Start partnership and programme continues, with the formal partnership expected to be signed off early in January and a robust governance structure being agreed. A delivery timetable for the £45m project aimed at 0 to 3 year olds and their parents in our most deprived wards is now in place. There is a project to extend the Family Nurse Partnership programme underway and the development of new play spaces in parks, an outdoor education programme, Parenting Programmes for Toddlers and the setting up the Food Dudes project to follow amongst many other initiatives in 2015.

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CABINET MEMBER FOR STREET SCENE AND THE ENVIRONMENT – COUNCILLOR CROSS

Cleansing, Bins and Litter Management

Street cleansing services has introduced frequency cleaning to residential areas, which offers a cleaning cycle to those streets which fall below minimum standards, this will improve the cleanliness across the borough as a whole.

Blackpool Council is prosecuting a prolific Fly-Tipper with the first court hearing on the 10 December 2014 resulting in two offenders being given bail until the 22 December 2014 following representation of 19 known offences. The bail conditions will not permit either offender to be in a vehicle as a driver or passenger carrying household and general waste. The court was shown CCTV video footage of an act of blatant fly tipping from the rear of a moving vehicle. Statements and evidence collated by the Council's Local Environmental Action Force over the past few months will hopefully result in a successful prosecution and substantial sentence.

In the first six months of last year we had 2,585 incidents reported and collected 384 tonnes. We recorded a similar number of incidents in the same period this year, but there was a reduction in the tonnage collected.

Domestic Waste (including refuse collection and recycling)

Each year Keep Britain Tidy holds an award ceremony to celebrate the success of projects that aim to improve the environment in which we all live. This year Rover has been selected as a shortlisted finalist at the Diamond Jubilee Awards. The winner will be announced in February at the Annual Conference in Liverpool.

The Rover service continues to perform well collecting over 72 tonnes of waste to date. In its first year, it collected 117 tonnes of waste from 6,500 visits. The ReNew workshop has prepared 2,610 items (50 tonnes) for reuse and sold these to the local community at much reduced cost or used them for the social fund.

Waste collected at the kerbside has amounted to 27,431 tonnes in the first six months of 2014, 37.9% of which was glass, plastic and tins, paper and cardboard and garden waste all of which was recycled. This is a slight increase on the same time last year.

Overall waste has increased by 2.3% with a recycling rate at provisionally 43% (year to date), Blackpool's highest ever recycling rate. We have seen an increase in recycling both at the kerbside and the Household Waste Recycling Centre.

Commercial Waste Services

The service market share is currently 52.8% with tonnage collected for the period April – September 2014 was 3,257, up by 4.8% on the same period last year with 54% being diverted away from landfill.

Commercial glass collected from the hospitality sector was 143 tonnes, down on the same period last year with 100% of material collected recycled.

A large local service user has expressed an interest in utilising Blackpool Councils confidential waste service on their sites in Wyre and Fylde.

Household Waste Recycling Centre

Business and Service Plan initiatives successfully introduced at the HWRC during 2013/ 2014 were:

- Continuation of the rubble/ hard-core permit scheme has resulted in a further annual saving of £10,400 on the previous costs of disposing and transporting this non-household waste.
- The Reuse Shop, which opened in March 2013, is a huge success realising £61,000 income from sales of 40 tonnes of materials brought to site and from the Rover and ReNew services much of which would have previously gone to landfill.
- In relation to the HWRC the rate of recycling is still high at 70%.

Lancashire Waste PFI

The waste treatment plants are currently diverting 54% of all waste that enters the plant away from landfill. This is being sent to off takers as low-grade plastics for recycling or other material that can be used for Refuse Derived Fuel, which is a fuel, used to power cement kilns. The huge task of assimilating the waste company into an arms-length company is well underway with the establishment of the Board of Directors with Councillor Jackson representing the Blackpool's interests on the Board. Both waste plants are currently working on developing and implementing individual work programmes that will result in improved productivity and greater efficiency in diverting waste from landfill. The improved change processes will be rolled out over the next 12 months in order of priority with green waste processing being assigned the primary function to be addressed to be operational for the spring of 2015.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE – COUNCILLOR WRIGHT

Libraries

The library service had a very busy final quarter of 2014, with many activities across several libraries including activities and games, storytelling and a Dr Who club. Dan Worsley, a local storyteller delivered seven sessions to 120 children. The service worked closely with the Grundy Art Gallery on the Big Draw which saw 52 children participating in drawing and storytelling activities.

To develop the library staff further there was a change in the way that the Christmas activities were organised. Each team leader was invited to submit a bid for their Christmas activities, resulting in an excellent diary of events. These included Christmas Caboodle, Lego Christmas grotto, a Dickensian Christmas and some festive family fun days. A special Bookstart Bears Christmas Caper was held to encourage the promotion and sharing of books and reading with pre-school children and their families. There are many benefits of the Bookstart scheme, all of which fit in with the Council's priorities.

Closer relationships are being forged with the marketing team at the Grand Theatre. They are providing libraries with free tickets for relevant shows such as Twelfth Night, Mousetrap and Regeneration that we can use as competition prizes. Library staff have been devising the competitions and marketing them across social media. This is having a huge positive impact via social media. For November 2014, the Facebook interactions doubled from 4579 to 8798.

The Twitter book club has been cited within the North West as an excellent example of social media practice. The average number of tweets per directed discussions has averaged 140. This method is a "high impact, low maintenance" approach to providing service.

Staff training has been completed for Universal Credit, which was rolled out at the Blackpool Job Centres on 8 December 2014. The library service has seen some demand already, both with simple access (helping the customer to get online), or complex (supporting customers with the application).

Grundy Art Gallery

The new Collections Manager for the Grundy took up her post on 12 January. This is a new position which is a joint venture between the Heritage Service and the Grundy Art Gallery. It is a fixed-term appointment for three years externally funded in its entirety by The John Ellerman Foundation.

Blackpool Council owns a number of nationally significant collections relating to our seaside heritage. There have been significant improvements over the last few years in the way in which these collections are stored and looked after. This new post will enable us to extend that good practice consistently to all of the collections meaning that we can safeguard the physical wellbeing of our nationally significant historic collections into the future. It will also enable us to know more about the collections by bringing together information through a unified computerised data base and improve public access to the collections both physically and virtually.

This new development is well timed as, although it is separate from the museum project, it compliments it perfectly as we need to know more about our own collections as we plan the new museum. The museum will also be the ideal place to display collections.

The Grundy has also welcomed two other new members to the team in January. The Education Officer post is being taken up by Hannah Gaunt who will be joining us having previously worked at the Milton

Keynes Gallery. LeftCoast are also funding a part-time marketing officer to work with the Grundy on promoting their exhibitions and public programme as part of the new audience development plan. An internship for the gallery, funded through LeftCoast and the national Creative Employment programme is also about to be advertised.

Arts

The award-winning 'Under The Town' Festival for 2014 saw four young people from Blackpool working towards their Gold Arts Award (the nationally recognised qualification), plan and deliver a fantastic showcase of dance, music, film and art. The event, held at the Spanish Hall in the Winter Gardens, welcomed almost 300 audience members. They were able to share in the high-quality work produced by young people taking part in the year-long Arts Award programme delivered by the Arts Service. Other talented young people were also given an opportunity to showcase their work. Twenty four of the young people involved in working towards their Bronze, Silver and Gold Arts Award will have their portfolios moderated by an external assessor in January 2015 and a special award ceremony will take place in the spring.

Grand Theatre

The Grand Theatre learned in October 2014 that its application for £700,000 to Arts Council England to support the refurbishment of parts of the theatre had been successful. Building works will begin towards the end of January 2015. The theatre will be open and trading as normal during the refurbishment, as the works mainly affect peripheral areas such as dressing rooms, offices and the foyer, but not the theatre itself. When the work is complete the theatre will be more accessible to wheelchair-users, have improved and rationalised dressing room layouts and added a new, small-scale workshop and meeting facility on the second floor. The Project Management is being delivered by Blackpool Council's Property and Asset Management Division, with Preston-based architects, Cassidy and Ashton and local building contractor, Parkinson's. The works are planned to be completed by the end of September 2015.

Report to:	COUNCIL
Relevant Officer:	Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Blackburn, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	21 st January 2015

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2015/ 2016

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the recommendation of the Executive from its meeting on 14th December 2014 relating to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To agree that the reduction applied to Working Age claimants remains at 27.11% for the 2015/ 2016 Scheme and that the main elements and method of calculating awards previously agreed by Council on 22nd January 2014 will remain the same.

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

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is approved by 31st January 2015 avoiding the financial risk 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:

There are no other options as the Council must approve a Council Tax Reduction Scheme each year.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council priority is "Safeguard and Protect the most vulnerable".

5.0 Background Information

- 5.1 The Executive at its meeting on 14th December considered a proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2015/ 2016. The Executive was informed that the Government grant for Council Tax Reduction Scheme is equal to less than 90% of the Government forecast funding levels had Council Tax Benefits continued. This was expected to leave a shortfall in funding of £3.22million based on estimates of demand and assumptions regarding the basis of calculation for the central Government grant. The level of Government support is fixed and 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 and this remained the case in 2014/ 2015.
- 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 38% 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 is then applied at the end of the assessment.
- 5.4 The value of the percentage reduction must be established each year. The percentage is determined by reference to the level of Government grant, caseload, growth / reduction in caseload.
- 5.5 The decision notice from the Executive meeting is attached at Appendix 5 (a).

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 5(a) – Executive Decision Notice EX/55

6.0 Legal considerations:

- 6.1 A resolution by the full Council to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme is required by 31st January 2015. The Scheme will take effect from 1st April 2015. The Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy has been clarified and updated to reflect recent government legislation and is attached at Appendix 2(a) of the Executive agenda.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 7.1 Existing staffing resources within the Council's 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 resource

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 The Council carried out a detailed and robust Equality Analysis and in order to mitigate part of the impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on some households, a discretionary hardship fund has been made available through the adoption of a Discretionary Discount Policy.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 For 2015/ 2016 it is proposed that the percentage reduction made at the end of the assessment for working age claimants shall be 27.11%. 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. 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 until 2017. 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 Council Tax collection costs have risen as approximately 15,000 households in Blackpool have to pay more Council Tax compared to the position prior to the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Some previously received full Council Tax Benefits and therefore were not liable for any Council Tax. Collection rates fell by approximately 2.4% at the end of 2013/ 2014 as a consequence of the Council trying to collect from low income households. Demand on both face-to-face and telephones within the Customer Contact Centre has increased and this adversely affects the waiting times for customers and overall response times.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Consultation has taken place with the major preceptors as required by Department for Communities and Local Government guidelines. 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. It is not proposed to carry out further consultation in relation to the 2015/ 2016 Scheme because the main elements and method of calculating awards will remain the same.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 There are no additional background papers to this report.

Notice of:	Executive
Decision Number:	EX55/2014
Relevant Officer:	Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Simon Blackburn, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	15 th December 2014

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2015/2016.

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To seek approval for the proposals for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2015/2016.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To recommend to the Council that the reduction applied to Working Age claimants remains at 27.11% for the 2015/2016 Scheme and that the main elements and method of calculating awards previously agreed by Council on 22nd January 2014 will remain the same.

2.2 To recommend to the Council 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.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is approved by 31st January 2015 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 in every year.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

“Safeguard and Protect the most vulnerable”

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 1st April 2013.

5.2 The Government grant for Council Tax Reduction Scheme is equal to less than 90% of the Government forecast funding levels had Council Tax Benefits continued. This was expected to leave a shortfall in funding of £3.22million based on estimates of demand and assumptions regarding the basis of calculation for the central Government grant. The level of Government support is fixed and 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 remained the case in 2014/2015.

5.3 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 38% of the caseload.

5.4 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 is then applied at the end of the assessment.

5.5 The value of the percentage reduction must be established each year. The percentage is determined by reference to the level of Government grant, caseload, growth / reduction in caseload.

5.6 It is proposed that for 2015/2016 the value of the percentage reduction for working age claimants should remain at 27.11%.

5.7 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.8 List of Appendices:

Appendix 2a: Council Tax Reduction Scheme

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 A resolution by the full Council to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme is required by 31st January 2015. The Scheme will take effect from 1st April 2015. The Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy has been clarified and updated to reflect recent government legislation and is attached at Appendix 2a, to the Executive report.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 Existing staffing resources within the Council's 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 resource

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 The Council carried out a detailed and robust Equality Analysis and in order to mitigate part of the impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on some households, a discretionary hardship fund has been made available through the adoption of a Discretionary Discount Policy.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 For 2015/2016 it is proposed that the percentage reduction made at the end of the assessment for working age claimants shall be 27.11%. 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. 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 until 2017. 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 Council Tax collection costs have risen as approximately 15,000 households in Blackpool have to pay more Council Tax compared to the position prior to the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Some previously received full Council Tax Benefits and therefore were not liable for any Council Tax. Collection rates fell by approximately 2.4% at the end of 2013/2014 as a consequence of the Council trying to collect from low income households. Demand on both face-to-face and telephones within the Customer Contact Centre has increased and this adversely affects the waiting times for customers and overall response times.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Consultation has taken place with the major preceptors as required by Department for Communities and Local Government guidelines. 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. It is not proposed to carry out further consultation in relation to the 2015/2016 Scheme because the main elements and method of calculating awards will remain the same.

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: 19/2014

14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days?

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: 5th December 2014 Date approved: N/A

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1 None

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1 The Executive resolved as follows:

1. To recommend to the Council that the reduction applied to Working Age claimants remains at 27.11% for the 2015/2016 Scheme and that the main elements and method of calculating awards previously agreed by Council on 22nd January 2014 will remain the same.
2. To recommend to the Council 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.

18.2 Date of Decision:

15th December 2014

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:

To ensure a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is approved by 31st January 2015 avoiding the financial risks associated with the Government imposed default scheme.

19.1 Date Decision published:

16th December 2014

20.0 Executive Members in attendance:

20.1 Councillor Jackson, in the Chair

Councillors Cain, Collett, Cross, Jones and Rowson

Apologies were received from Councillor I Taylor who was otherwise engaged on Council business.

21.0 Call-in:

21.1

22.0 Notes:

22.1

Report to:	COUNCIL
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Place
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gillian Campbell, Cabinet Member for Housing, Public Safety and Enforcement and Councillor Blackburn, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	21 st January 2015

CREATION OF A WHOLLY OWNED HOUSING REGENERATION COMPANY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the recommendation of the Executive from its meeting on 14 December 2014 relating to the establishment of a wholly Council owned housing regeneration company to lead housing market change within Blackpool and source investment to facilitate local housing market change.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To authorise the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services to take the necessary steps to form a wholly owned company of the Council, including:
- To incorporate the company under the Companies Act 2006, as a private company limited by shares.
 - To appoint Directors to serve on the Board of the company and constitute a Shareholder's Panel, in line with the Council's Governance Code of Practice.
 - To identify the need and then carry out any staff transfers as appropriate.
 - To prepare articles of association for the company setting out its objectives and governance arrangements.
- 2.2 To agree that the Director of Place be authorised, following consultation with the Director of Resources, to develop financial options to support the furtherance of the company's objectives and to report back to the Executive in due course.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 Housing market failure within Blackpool is considered to have significantly adverse impacts on the health and wellbeing of residents and on the overall economic vitality of the town. The establishment of a wholly owned housing company will enable a more pro-active approach to be taken to help secure a stronger housing market that meets Blackpool residents housing needs.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No, but this is a new proposal as the Council has not previously agreed for this to be undertaken through a wholly owned company (outside of the Council) and therefore Council approval is required.

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

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:
Not to proceed with the proposed company.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priorities are:

- Improve health and well-being especially for the most disadvantaged
- Attract sustainable investment and create quality jobs
- Improve housing standards and the environment we live in by using housing investment to create stable communities
- Create safer communities and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

5.0 Background Information

5.1 The Executive at its meeting on 14 December 2014 considered the proposal for the establishment of a wholly Council owned housing regeneration company to address the fact that private rented sector has an increasingly important role in meeting Blackpool's housing needs.

5.2 The recently announced Growth Deal for Lancashire included a section on Blackpool. Within this section provision was made for Blackpool Council to develop a proposal for housing market intervention and possibly attract funding to assist. In order to do this the Council must create a company along with an appropriate and deliverable business case that satisfies analysis by the Treasury. This will only be achieved through a comprehensive set of interventions including and initiatives including working with existing Landlords to improve stock, developing new higher quality housing and intervening in market that is providing poor quality accommodation. Whilst the Council can continue to pursue the first two of these without the establishment of a company that can operate outside of the direct constraints of the Local Authority and its provision of "Council" housing the Council will not be able to move this forward; hence the reason for the recommendation to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle - a Housing Company.

5.5 The decision notice from the Executive meeting is attached at Appendix 6(a).

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 6(a) – Executive Decision Notice EX/56

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 The Council may use its General Power of Competence under Section 1 of the 2011 Act to acquire housing for rent in the General Fund, either directly or through an SPV. Although there is a requirement under section 4(2) of the 2011 Act that if the exercise of the Section 1 power is for a "commercial purpose" then the Council must use a company to do so.

6.2 On the face of it the acquisition of House in Multiple Occupation and continuing to let that housing at market rents however would be pursuing a "commercial purpose". Whilst there is no legal authority yet on what a "commercial purpose" is taken by the Court to mean it is likely that acquisitions would be deemed to be for a "commercial purpose" in which case the Council would need to acquire these properties through a special purpose company.

6.3 Consideration has been given to the most appropriate form of special purpose company for the Council to pursue. An analysis of the options has been set out in the report and it is recommended the most appropriate vehicle is to establish a wholly owned local authority company limited by shares of which the Council has 100% ownership. This has the advantage of allowing the Council to retain full control of the company and its strategic direction.

6.4 The Council has clear powers under sections 24 and 25 of the Local Government Act 1988 to provide financial assistance (which includes the making of a loan) to the Housing Company.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 It is recommended that the transfer of any staff to the Company be considered and determined by the Chief Executive through normal procedures.

7.2 Consultation will take place with Trade Unions and any affected employees

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 The Council has a wide ranging statutory responsibility under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, known as the “Public Sector Duty” to have “due regard” in decision making to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different (defined) groups

8.2 The recommendations in the report have been examined to understand the scope of possible impacts on people because of the protected characteristics of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Pregnancy and Maternity

8.3 The creation of a wholly owned Company to deliver Housing regeneration as set out in the report would not, in itself, have an adverse impact on these equality characteristics. Both positive and negative impacts would be possible, dependent on the approach the company takes to these policy issues once established.

8.4 It can also be concluded at this stage, that the development of better quality housing in the town does have potential to positively impact on equality of opportunity and community cohesion through the creation of more stable communities in the inner wards.

- 8.5 It will be important to secure the ongoing commitment of the company to the Council's equality ethos and to continue to deliver the specific "due regard" requirement under the Equality Act.
- 8.6 To guarantee this, it is recommended specific clauses are included in the company's articles of association. These could cover both the requirement to have due regard in decision making, advance – where appropriate the Council's Equality Objectives and take account of equality issues in the composition of the Board.
- 8.7 Since the Council is not able to delegate its ultimate responsibility for the Public Equality duty, the client oversight functions will need to take reasonable steps to ensure this approach is implemented.

9.0 Financial considerations:

- 9.1 As outlined in the recommendations, the Director of Place will after consultation with the Director of Resources, develop the financial options available to support the furtherance of the objectives set out above and report back to a future Executive meeting.
- 9.2 As the company will be wholly owned by the Council and will provide the substantial part of its services to the Council, the Council can benefit from the Teckal Exemption, which enables the Council to procure the services of the local authority controlled company directly without the need for carrying out a procurement process. If the company is to have any private ownership/ interest in the future, the Council will be required to carry out a procurement exercise in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules depending on the role of the private partner and the purposes of the joint venture.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Housing needs change and the demand for properties of this nature change.

To a degree this is what the Council is seeking to achieve, however the proposal is to develop a portfolio of higher quality stock which will be much more resilient to market change than property of a lesser quality. Further mitigation is however possible by broadening the target occupier group, as well as the option to sell property if required.

10.2 Redevelopment costs consistently exceed anticipated costs.

Robust financial monitoring and contract management systems will be established and monitored by the company board and company senior management team.

Acquisitions will start slowly to ensure cost assumptions are deliverable before large numbers of properties are acquired. Major cost variations in refurbishment projects tend to become apparent during the early stripping out phases of construction will be enable opportunities to reduce costs elsewhere through scope of works if absolutely necessary to avoid significant cost over runs.

10.3 Anticipated rental returns are not achieved.

Rent targets are based on Local Housing Allowance rates so are more likely to be affordable by tenants claiming benefits. Clients referred by Housing Options will in most cases be entitled to have their rent paid direct to the housing company reducing the risk of arrears. The housing provided will also be higher quality than many other choices available meaning that the company is more able to attract tenants who are able to pay and less likely to fall into arrears. A robust rental income monitoring system will be established by the company to identify and respond to instances of rent arrears early in order to avoid escalation. Risk assessments will also be made of potential tenants before granting a tenancy to reduce risk of anti-social behaviour, arrears and damage.

The company is expected to establish a market position of being a landlord of choice amongst tenants. This will enable lists of potential tenants to be developed to minimise void periods.

10.4 Repair costs are higher than expected.

Property will mostly be subjected to extensive refurbishment. This will ensure that the stock is at a good condition and future repair costs are minimized. A proactive programme of routine maintenance and future major repairs has been allowed for within the business model.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 The Council is developing an ethical policy to systematically approach ethical issues as it develops policies and during operational decision making processes. This is based on the Council's conviction all human beings have inherent needs, (which clearly include housing) and that local government has a moral obligation to pursue policies around fairness and social justice.

11.2 It is likely that the framework will aim to ensure the Council's policies and day to day decision-making are built on ethically sound principles, promote social justice and are focused on our core priorities. It is therefore appropriate that these concerns are built into the constituting articles of the new company.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Consultation has been undertaken internally within the Council, including, finance, legal and Human Resources advice. Expert legal advice has also been sought from Trowers Hamilns.

12.2 At the time of writing the report, arrangements have been made to consult with Trade Unions and staff who may be TUPE'd by these proposals.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Health and Wellbeing Board – Market Rental Report

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Notice of:	Executive
Decision Number:	EX56/2014
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Place
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gillian Campbell, Cabinet Member for Housing, Public Safety and Enforcement
Date of Meeting:	15 th December 2014

CREATION OF A WHOLLY OWNED HOUSING REGENERATION COMPANY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the establishment of a wholly Council owned housing regeneration company to lead housing market change within Blackpool and source investment to facilitate local housing market change.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

To recommend Council as follows:

- 2.1 To agree the business case as set out in this report and to recommend the Council to authorise the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services to take the necessary steps to form a wholly owned company of the Council, including:
- To incorporate the company under the Companies Act 2006, as a private company limited by shares.
 - To appoint Directors to serve on the Board of the company and constitute a Shareholder's Panel, in line with the Council's Governance Code of Practice.
 - To identify the need and then carry out any staff transfers as appropriate.
 - To prepare articles of association for the company setting out its objectives and governance arrangements.
- 2.2 That the Director of Place be authorised, following consultation with the Director of Resources, to develop financial options to support the furtherance of the company's objectives and to report back to the Executive in due course.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 Housing market failure within Blackpool is considered to have significantly adverse impacts on the health and wellbeing of residents and on the overall economic vitality of the town. The establishment of a wholly owned housing company will enable a more pro-active approach to be taken to help secure a stronger housing market that meets Blackpool residents housing needs.

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:

Not to proceed with the proposed company

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priorities are:

- Improve health and well-being especially for the most disadvantaged
- Attract sustainable investment and create quality jobs
- Improve housing standards and the environment we live in by using housing investment to create stable communities
- Create safer communities and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Context

The private rented sector has an increasingly important role in meeting Blackpool's housing needs. It is growing rapidly and there are many examples of good quality and well maintained properties providing safe, warm and secure homes for many people. Blackpool's coastal legacy however has led to a substantial concentration of small poor quality rental units as guesthouses have been converted into flats and Houses in Multiple Occupations. Most accommodation seeks to meet the most basic standards to comply with the Housing Act 2004 requirements, but is not desirable accommodation. These properties offer a low standard of accommodation and are often poorly managed. The result is that it is a housing choice of last resort for people with few housing options available to them.

- 5.2 The proportion of homes in owner occupation in Blackpool dropped from 71% of all homes in 2001 to 62% of all homes in 2011, compared with an England average of 64%. This has been a dramatic shift in tenure whilst the proportion of social rented has remained at just under 11%, compared with a national average of 18%. The proportion of homes in the private rented sector however jumped from 18% in 2001 to over 26% in 2011, compared with an England average of 17%, a rise of nearly 5,500 homes.
- 5.3 Over 80% of homes in the private rented sector are rented to people receiving Housing Benefit, compared with around 30% nationally. There is a concentration of private renting in Blackpool's inner wards – 50% of all households in the defined inner area live in a privately rented home, equivalent to 6,887 households.
- 5.4 The dominance of poor quality private rented accommodation in inner neighbourhoods is the overriding cause of high levels of transience in these areas. Poor quality housing is generally only accessed by households who are unable to access better housing choices, and there is continuing demand from people attracted to the town from deprived urban areas in other parts of the UK. This means that many people moving into the area have no real association with the community and are likely to quickly move on again. Analysis of new Housing Benefit claimants has shown that 85% of new claimants come from outside the borough – around 4,500 households each year – and that 70% of these move into rented accommodation in the inner wards.
- 5.5 This transient dynamic leads to intense concentrations of deprivation and an environment that fosters poor health and a lack of opportunity for residents. Low life expectancy and mental health problems in these areas are amongst the worst in the country. The poor environment and endemic social problems in the inner town have a serious negative effect on tourism, which continues to be the town's major economic sector. Investment is reduced and skilled individuals who could drive investment in the local economy live elsewhere.
- 5.6 This leads to the Council and other public services having to commit significant resources in responding to social care, health and educational needs and to ensure properties meet basic minimum standards. In spite of this little progress is being made to stem the high levels of social deprivation and poor housing conditions in large parts of the town's inner areas.
- 5.7 There are continuing financial incentives for property owners to use former guest houses as rented accommodation let to people on Housing Benefit because of continuing long term decline in demand for traditional guest house accommodation from holiday makers and the high yields associated with letting rented property to Housing Benefit claimants in Blackpool. The initial returns are greatest for small flats and where investment in the quality of accommodation is minimised
- 5.8 A recent HSBC market analysis showed Blackpool's private rented market to have the highest yields in the UK when average property prices are compared to average rents

and yields can be very much higher still for Houses in Multiple Occupation accommodation

- 5.9 Not only does this economic model deliver unstable communities constantly seeing a change of population it also exerts a massive strain on public services as new residents drawn to the ready supply of accessible accommodation bring with them a range of embedded and enduring problems that get referred to public services already under strain.
- 5.10 Intervening in the housing market to change the current dynamic is essential if the efforts of public services to improve the life chances of residents and to transform our deprived inner areas into thriving neighbourhoods are to be successful. This has been recognised by Central Government through the Growth Deal announcement in July of this year. The Council has been offered financial assistance to intervene directly in the housing market. The details of this offer have however yet to be determined and Treasury approval will be required before this offer can be taken up.
- 5.11 What is the Council already doing?
- 5.12 The Council, through concerted effort has gained a good understanding of how the Fylde Coast housing market works and has been able to bring to bear some measures that are starting to make a difference; albeit slowly. A key element of the Council's housing strategy is to reduce the supply of poor quality rented stock and to increase supply of higher quality homes for rent and for sale. This strategy has led to:
- 5.13 Selective and additional licensing: Following its introduction in South Beach the Council is now able to compel landlords to comply with basic standards, reasonable management practices and ensure landlords pass a fit and proper person test. The scheme is now being rolled out to the Claremont area and will progressively be used across the inner wards. This programme will help us establish a baseline minimum standard and will provide an incentive for landlords to improve.
- 5.14 Robust enforcement: allied to the selective licensing the Council's Public Protection teams aim to take a robust and proactive approach to housing and planning enforcement and work with partner agencies to target the worst offenders. Blackpool's teams are among the most productive and effective in the country but like all local government services find themselves under increasing financial constraints.
- 5.15 The Transience Programme has been established to identify and address unmet social care and health needs within the town's inner areas. Working alongside housing teams, skilled support workers are assessing housing needs within poor quality private rented accommodation. Low level preventative support is offered to prevent needs escalating to the point where statutory services are required and referrals are made to wider support services where required. The programme is working also making links with local community networks in order to increase community resilience. The Council has recently been invited by Government to make

a bid for additional revenue funding to roll out this programme across the rest of inner Blackpool over the next 3 years.

- 5.16 Support services are being redesigned to deliver more effectively into deprived communities. In particular to work in a way that focuses on prevention rather than cure and to ensure services are more accessible. The work of the pilot in South Beach has shown that communities can be stabilised and change can be delivered for individuals but again the ability of public services in the current climate to scale up this activity is limited by lack of finance.
- 5.17 New planning policies have been established requiring higher standards for new conversion of guest house accommodation to residential use, which has been successful in helping to drive up the standards of new conversions.
- 5.18 Providing financial assistance to property owners to encourage high quality residential conversions, including grant assistance targeted in particular streets such as Crystal Road, and the Clusters of Empty Homes programme which is bringing 100 new homes into use from empty buildings in the inner area.
- 5.19 Provision of new homes: Blackpool has recognised the need to provide new affordable accommodation that raises the standard for residents and provides an alternative to the poor quality rented sector. The pump priming of the Rigby/Tyldesley Road development has required the Council to invest with the private sector in a 400 home development on the edge of the town centre at a time when councils across the UK have had to scale down capital programmes. The creative use of the Council's own public sector stock has also led to the demolition of poor quality tower blocks that were adding to the problem replacing them with new affordable family homes for rent and sale.
- 5.20 What more needs to be done to support housing market change?
- 5.21 Despite the steps the Council has taken and the multi-faceted approach it has to changing the housing market; the inner core of Blackpool still has 3,000 Houses in Multiple Occupation and a ready supply of struggling guest houses for which the next most economically viable step is to enter the private rented sector at the lowest end of the market.
- 5.22 To secure sustainable change the nature of the housing market within the town's inner areas must fundamentally change. The housing supply must be diversified; the current supply of poor quality privately rented accommodation must be reduced and a broader range of decent housing choices are required. At the same time the core social problems within the town's inner neighbourhoods need to be addressed and broad place-making programmes are required to develop inner areas that are safe and desirable places to live. An environment is needed that encourages people to stay and settle supporting the creation of strong and vibrant communities.

- 5.23 What is the proposed approach?
- 5.24 The recently announced Growth Deal for Lancashire included a section on Blackpool. Within this section provision was made for Blackpool Council to develop a proposal for housing market intervention and possibly attract funding to assist. In order to do this the Council must create a company along with an appropriate and deliverable business case that satisfies analysis by the Treasury. This will only be achieved through a comprehensive set of interventions including and initiatives including working with existing Landlords to improve stock, developing new higher quality housing and intervening in market that is providing poor quality accommodation. Whilst the Council can continue to pursue the first two of these without the establishment of a company that can operate outside of the direct constraints of the Local Authority and its provision of "Council" housing the Council will not be able to move this forward; hence the reason for the recommendation to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle - a Housing Company.
- 5.25 With regard to the Special Purpose Vehicle delivery option, the main advantages are:
- 5.26 The Council's legal powers to establish the Company to acquire and let properties are clear under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.
- 5.27 The Council would retain a long term stake in the properties through the Special Purpose Vehicle, which would not be the case if the properties were let by a Registered Provider; this goes to the heart of the Council's desire to create sustainable communities.
- 5.28 The properties let by the Special Purpose Vehicle would create a long term cash revenue stream for the Council, probably by way of regular dividend payments by the Special Purpose Vehicle and by making reasonable surpluses on loan charges, supplies and services.
- 5.29 The properties (or the shares in the Special Purpose Vehicle) are a potentially tradable asset – not only could individual dwellings be sold on a case-by-case basis but also the Special Purpose Vehicle itself could be sold to an investment company or an institutional investor at some later stage.
- 5.30 It is significantly easier and more tax efficient to dispose of the Special Purpose Vehicle as a single entity than it is to dispose of individual dwellings and exit strategies for the Council are significantly simplified in the use of an Special Purpose Vehicle.
- 5.31 It is therefore proposed that the Council develops a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to acquire and remodel properties and then rent dwellings at market rents.

- 5.32 An Special Purpose Vehicle could be set up as;
- A company limited by shares,
 - A company limited by guarantee, or
 - Possibly as a limited liability partnership (LLP).
- 5.33 A company limited by guarantee is a company where the general members do not hold shares, but instead each member undertakes to pay a nominal figure (usually £1) in the event of the company becoming insolvent. If the Special Purpose Vehicle is to be a wholly-owned subsidiary, the Council would initially be the sole member; but a company limited by guarantee can have many members and different categories of members with different voting rights. Changing from a single member company to one with many members is also simple.
- 5.34 A Limited Liability Partnership has to be set up with a view to profit. The principal advantage of using a Limited Liability Partnership over a limited company is the way in which it is treated from a tax perspective. The Limited Liability Partnership is treated for tax purposes as a traditional partnership, and members are also treated as traditional partners. Therefore, unlike a limited company, it is tax transparent and any trade, profession or business carried on by a Limited Liability Partnership with a view to profit will be treated as if the Limited Liability Partnership was a conventional partnership. Since the tax status of the partners determines how much tax is paid, the Council's share of any profits should be corporation tax free. A Limited Liability Partnership requires a minimum of 2 partners so the Council could not have a 100% interest. It should be noted that the Council cannot set up the Special Purpose Vehicle as an Limited Liability Partnership solely for the reason of tax efficiency; there must also be a commercial reason for using an Limited Liability Partnership. Furthermore, since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 Council's powers to participate in a Limited Liability Partnership are far from clear. This option has therefore been discounted from further consideration.
- 5.35 A company limited by shares is the type of company with which most people are familiar. Existing Council companies such as the Blackpool Entertainment Company, Blackpool Transport Services and Blackpool Operating Company are all companies limited by shares. The corporate structure is tried and tested and is underpinned by an established body of law and practice. In terms of overall ownership and also financial and tax planning, the structure of a limited company provides considerable flexibility through the creation of different types of share and loan capital. It is also simple to admit equity shareholders if the Council wishes to make the Special Purpose Vehicle a joint venture vehicle in the future, possibly to introduce a RP partner or perhaps with the aim of taking the Special Purpose Vehicle off the Council's balance sheet.
- 5.36 In conclusion it is recommended the most appropriate vehicle is to establish a wholly owned local authority company limited by shares of which the Council has 100% ownership. This has the advantage of allowing the Council to retain full control of the company and its strategic direction.

5.37 It is proposed that the company;

- Develops a stake in the private rented market in Blackpool and increases the supply of good quality housing with the view to becoming a private sector landlord of choice.
- Operates in a commercial way to produce a revenue return that requires little or no Council subsidy over time and is ultimately economically attractive to private sector institutional investors.
- Provides supportive management of tenants to ensure they can maintain a tenancy and reduce their need for public sector support over time.
- Secures increased and higher quality private sector investment to accelerate the diversification of the towns housing supply.
- Enables the delivery of future public and private sector housing development programmes such as Queens Park and Foxhall Village.
- Provides a delivery solution for dealing with empty properties.
- Creates social value through creating and encouraging, apprenticeships, training and local employment opportunities through all development initiatives.

5.38 Longer term goals are to;

- To support a genuine housing market within inner Blackpool whereby a broader range of quality housing choices are available and the areas are no longer reliant on Housing Benefit.
- To work with the Council and other agencies to reduce transience, create stable resilient communities with improved environmental quality.
- Reduce public sector costs of managing social need.
- Be the landlord of choice across Blackpool for tenants seeking to access market rented property but with a clear focus on the inner areas.
- Create an influential supply of quality desirable homes within inner Blackpool.
- Initiate competition within the private rented market whereby other private landlords need to improve the quality of their offer in order to secure tenants.

- Increase capacity and skills in local building firms and increase employment and training opportunities for local residents.
- Increase the capital value of acquired stock over time through good maintenance and the regenerative impact of improved housing

5.39 Company Structures and Governance

If the recommendations are agreed, then Articles of Association for the proposed company will be drawn up in accordance with Blackpool Council policy, as will a memorandum of agreement between Blackpool Council and the company. These articles and working arrangements will be in line with the principles of those approved by the Executive in October 2012 (EX35/2012) when it adopted the Governance Code of Practice for other Council owned companies. These would be subject in due course to a separate officer decision.

It is proposed that the company will initially test and validate this model and then engage with private and public sector funding bodies to seek funding opportunities. Council officers will continue negotiations with Treasury in respect of funding offered to Blackpool as part of the wider Lancashire LEP Growth Deal

5.40 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.41 **List of Appendices:**

None

6.0 **Legal Considerations:**

6.1 The Council may use its General Power of Competence under Section 1 of the 2011 Act to acquire housing for rent in the General Fund, either directly or through an SPV. Although there is a requirement under section 4(2) of the 2011 Act that if the exercise of the Section 1 power is for a "commercial purpose" then the Council must use a company to do so.

6.2 On the face of it the acquisition of House in Multiple Occupation and continuing to let that housing at market rents however would be pursuing a "commercial purpose". Whilst there is no legal authority yet on what a "commercial purpose" is taken by the Court to mean it is likely that acquisitions would be deemed to be for a "commercial purpose" in which case the Council would need to acquire these properties through a special purpose company.

6.3 Consideration has been given to the most appropriate form of special purpose company for the Council to pursue. An analysis of the options has been set out in the report and it is recommended the most appropriate vehicle is to establish a wholly

owned local authority company limited by shares of which the Council has 100% ownership. This has the advantage of allowing the Council to retain full control of the company and its strategic direction.

- 6.4 The Council has clear powers under sections 24 and 25 of the Local Government Act 1988 to provide financial assistance (which includes the making of a loan) to the Housing Company.

7.0 Human Resources Considerations:

- 7.1 It is recommended that the transfer of any staff to the Company be considered and determined by the Chief Executive through normal procedures.

- 7.2 Consultation will take place with Trade Unions and any affected employees

8.0 Equalities considerations:

- 8.1 The Council has a wide ranging statutory responsibility under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, known as the “Public Sector Duty” to have “due regard” in decision making to the need to :

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct

Advance equality of opportunity

Foster good relations between different (defined) groups

- 8.2 The recommendations in the report have been examined to understand the scope of possible impacts on people because of the protected characteristics of:

Age

Disability

Gender Reassignment

Race

Religion or belief

Sex

Sexual Orientation

Pregnancy and Maternity

- 8.3 The creation of a wholly owned Company to deliver Housing regeneration as set out in the report would not, in itself, have an adverse impact on these equality characteristics. Both positive and negative impacts would be possible, dependent on the approach the company takes to these policy issues once established.

- 8.4 It can also be concluded at this stage, that the development of better quality housing in the town does have potential to positively impact on equality of opportunity and community cohesion through the creation of more stable communities in the inner wards.

- 8.5 It will be important to secure the ongoing commitment of the company to the Council's equality ethos and to continue to deliver the specific "due regard" requirement under the Equality Act.
- 8.6 To guarantee this, it is recommended specific clauses are included in the company's articles of association. These could cover both the requirement to have due regard in decision making , advance – where appropriate the Council's Equality Objectives and take account of equality issues in the composition of the Board.
- 8.7 Since the Council is not able to delegate its ultimate responsibility for the Public Equality duty, the client oversight functions will need to take reasonable steps to ensure this approach is implemented.
- 9.0 **Ethical considerations**
- 9.1 The Council is developing an ethical policy to systematically approach ethical issues as it develops policies and during operational decision making processes. This is based on the Council's conviction all human beings have inherent needs, (which clearly include housing) and that local government has a moral obligation to pursue policies around fairness and social justice.
- 9.2 It is likely that the framework will aim to ensure the Council's policies and day to day decision-making are built on ethically sound principles, promote social justice and are focused on our core priorities .It is therefore appropriate that these concerns are built into the constituting articles of the new company.
- 10.0 **Financial considerations:**
- 10.1 As outlined in the recommendations, the Director of Place will after consultation with the Director of Resources, develop the financial options available to support the furtherance of the objectives set out above and report back to a future Executive meeting.
- 10.2 As the company will be wholly owned by the Council and will provide the substantial part of its services to the Council, the Council can benefit from the Teckal Exemption, which enables the Council to procure the services of the local authority controlled company directly without the need for carrying out a procurement process. If the company is to have any private ownership/interest in the future, the Council will be required to carry out a procurement exercise in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules depending on the role of the private partner and the purposes of the joint venture.

11.0 Risk management considerations:

11.1 Housing needs change and the demand for properties of this nature change.

To a degree this is what the Council is seeking to achieve, however the proposal is to develop a portfolio of higher quality stock which will be much more resilient to market change than property of a lesser quality. Further mitigation is however possible by broadening the target occupier group, as well as the option to sell property if required.

11.2 Redevelopment costs consistently exceed anticipated costs.

Robust financial monitoring and contract management systems will be established and monitored by the company board and company senior management team. Acquisitions will start slowly to ensure cost assumptions are deliverable before large numbers of properties are acquired. Major cost variations in refurbishment projects tend to become apparent during the early stripping out phases of construction will be able opportunities to reduce costs elsewhere through scope of works if absolutely necessary to avoid significant cost over runs.

11.3 Anticipated rental returns are not achieved.

Rent targets are based on Local Housing Allowance rates so are more likely to be affordable by tenants claiming benefits. Clients referred by Housing Options will in most cases be entitled to have their rent paid direct to the housing company reducing the risk of arrears. The housing provided will also be higher quality than many other choices available meaning that the company is more able to attract tenants who are able to pay and less likely to fall into arrears. A robust rental income monitoring system will be established by the company to identify and respond to instances of rent arrears early in order to avoid escalation. Risk assessments will also be made of potential tenants before granting a tenancy to reduce risk of anti-social behaviour, arrears and damage.

The company is expected to establish a market position of being a landlord of choice amongst tenants. This will enable lists of potential tenants to be developed to minimise void periods.

11.4 Repair costs are higher than expected

Property will mostly be subjected to extensive refurbishment. This will ensure that the stock is at a good condition and future repair costs are minimized. A proactive programme of routine maintenance and future major repairs has been allowed for within the business model.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Consultation has been undertaken internally within the Council, including, finance, legal and Human Resources advice. Expert legal advice has also been sought from Trowers Hamilns.

12.2 At the time of writing the report, arrangements have been made to consult with Trade Unions and staff who may be TUPE'd by these proposals..

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Health and Wellbeing Board – Market Rental Report

14.0 Key decision information:

14.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 18/2014

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: 5th December 2014 Date approved: N/A

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1 None

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1 The Executive resolved:

To recommend Council as follows:

1. To agree the business case as set out in this report and to recommend the Council to authorise the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services to take the necessary steps to form a wholly owned company of the Council, including:

- To incorporate the company under the Companies Act 2006, as a private company limited by shares.
- To appoint Directors to serve on the Board of the company and constitute a Shareholder's Panel, in line with the Council's Governance Code of Practice.
- To identify the need and then carry out any staff transfers as appropriate.
- To prepare articles of association for the company setting out its objectives and governance arrangements.

2. That the Director of Place be authorised, following consultation with the Director of Resources, to develop financial options to support the furtherance of the company's objectives and to report back to the Executive in due course.

18.2 **Date of Decision:**

15th December 2014

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:

Housing market failure within Blackpool is considered to have significantly adverse impacts on the health and wellbeing of residents and on the overall economic vitality of the town. The establishment of a wholly owned housing company will enable a more pro-active approach to be taken to help secure a stronger housing market that meets Blackpool residents housing needs.

19.0 **Date Decision published:**

16th December 2014

20.0 Executive Members in attendance:

20.1 Councillor Jackson, in the Chair

Councillors Cain, Collett, Cross, Jones and Rowson

Apologies were received from Councillor I Taylor who was otherwise engaged on Council business.

21.0 Call-in:

21.1

22.0 Notes:

22.1

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Report to:	COUNCIL
Relevant Officer:	Lorraine Hurst, Head of Democratic Governance
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Blackburn, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	21 January 2015

PROPER OFFICER DESIGNATIONS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the updating of Proper Officer designations and appointments to certain positions in the health sector relating to Lancashire and Cumbria.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To confirm the Proper Officers as outlined in this report, with effect from 21 January 2015.
- 2.2 That the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services be authorised to update the Constitution accordingly.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To update the Council's records to enable referrals to be made to the correct officers.
- 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:

To not agree to make the proper officer changes or name different proper officers. However, this is not recommended as these are the relevant officers recommended by Public Health England with the appropriate experience and qualifications.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council priority is ‘improving health and well being especially for the disadvantaged.’

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Recent personnel changes in the Cumbria and Lancashire Public Health England Centre health protection team have made it necessary to update arrangements for proper officer functions for local authorities in Cumbria and Lancashire.

5.2 The consultant level staff in Cumbria and Lancashire Public Health England Centre are listed below at paragraph 5.3 and should be appointed as proper officers (as defined under sections 48, 61, 62 and 74 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984) and also as port medical officers due to Blackpool having an airport.

5.3 Proper Officer nominations:

- Kate Brierley (reappointment)
- John Astbury (reappointment)
- Kenneth Lamden (reappointment)
- Nicola Schinaia (reappointment)
- Grainne Nixon (new appointment)

5.4 Public Health England has advised that unitary and upper tier local authority public health teams should have nominated lead officers who will coordinate the investigation and care management arrangements in complex cases where section 47 orders might be considered. The nominations for that role are as follows:

- Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health
- Lynn Donkin, Public Health Specialist
- Judith Mills, Public Health Specialist

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

None

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 The Council’s Constitution provides for the authorisation of Proper Officers to undertake certain duties.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 There are no additional Human Resources considerations.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 There are no equalities considerations.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 There are no additional financial considerations.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Failure to update the Proper Officers records would put the Council at risk of not fulfilling its statutory duties.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 There are no ethical considerations.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Notification has been received from Public Health England of the changes.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Letter from Public Health England dated 25 November 2014

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Item 8 - Notice of Motion

To consider the following motions which have been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 12.1 :-

a) SUN BED OPERATORS. Councillor Williams to propose.

“In 2014, the Council undertook a test purchasing project in Blackpool, which found in a number of sun tanning salons, instances where there was harmful exposure of sun beds emitting higher than recommended levels of ultra violet light, which could cause serious health implications. Another safety concern highlighted was use by under-age individuals.. More robust powers to Local Authorities are needed in regard to the enforcement and prosecution of operators, through a stringent licensing scheme.

The Chief Executive is therefore requested to write to the Secretary of State for Health to request the introduction of such a scheme, to include minimum levels of staffing, staff training and age policies”.

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