

Public Document Pack



BLACKPOOL COUNCIL

Tuesday, 1 February 2022

To: The Members of Blackpool Council

Lady Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

You are invited to attend an INFORMAL meeting of **Blackpool Council** to be held via Zoom Conference Call on Tuesday, 8 February 2022 commencing at 6.00 pm to consider the Executive Member reports set out below.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Lewis'.

Director of Governance and Partnerships

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 either a

- (a) personal interest
- (b) prejudicial interest
- (c) disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI)

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 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

(Pages 1 - 26)

To consider the attached reports to Council from the Corporate, People and Place portfolios.

Members are reminded that:

- The Lead Executive Member has up to three minutes to present the report, after which there will be a period of no longer than 25 minutes per report for questions/comments (a green card will give a one minute warning, red for the end of the debate).
- There will be three minutes per question/ comment from any Councillor on anything within the portfolio and no limit to the number of times a Councillor can ask a question.
- There will be a period of up to 25 minutes for responses from any Cabinet Member on their area of responsibility at the end of the questions/ comments for each report.

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Sarah Chadwick, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser, Tel: (01253) 477153, e-mail sarah.chadwick@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.

Executive Member report to informal Council
8 February 2022

AGENDA ITEM 2(a)

CORPORATE PORTFOLIOS

The 'Corporate' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Lynn Williams – Leader of the Council
- Councillor Ivan Taylor – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Performance

The full details of the portfolio areas can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Your-councillors/Executive-members.aspx>

Strategic Issues

New Leadership for Blackpool Airport

The Blackpool Airport Operations Board has now made a formal offer for the appointment of a Chief Executive following a competitive exercise and the transfer of the licences to the Council Company. This comes at a positive time for the Airport, which saw a significant increase in activity in 2021. With over 40,000 aircraft movements in the last year, despite early months of the year being in lockdown, Blackpool Airport was one of the busiest in the country.

Blackpool Local Plan Examination – on track for Summer 2022 adoption

Final approval of the Local Plan Part 2 - Publication version has taken a significant move forward with the publication of the findings of the Independent Planning Inspector. A standard part of the process, the Inspector appointed by Government, Luke Fleming, held the Examination Hearings from 6 to 10 December 2021. As a result, he has requested further information to complete his examination. Officers are currently preparing this additional information to be forwarded to the Inspector by mid-February 2022.

Following consideration of the information we provide, the Inspector will issue a letter to the Local Planning Authority advising of any modifications that are required to make the Local Plan Part 2 sound. These would be subject to public consultation in March/April 2022, giving people and stakeholders the opportunity to make representations about the modifications before the Inspector issues his final recommendations. Assuming that the Inspector considers the plan to be sound, the Local Plan Part 2 would be brought before Full Council for adoption in early summer 2022.

Corporate Issues

Financial Year 2021/22 – Monitoring to 31 December 2021 (Month 9)

In-year pressures remain high. The latest full-year forecast for 2021/22 anticipates that working balances are expected to fall by £5,616k to a surplus of £677k by the end of 2021/22.

The 3 principal areas of overspending are:

- Children’s Services, which is forecasting an overspend of £4,707k. Having increased the Children’s Social Care budget by £8.17m in August 2020, further investment was required to cover increases in numbers and unit costs of Looked After Children (LACs), and also to develop the placements market and increase the capacity within internal fostering. Spending on placements is reducing, but not yet in line with the ambitions set out in the Children’s Services Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Strategic Leisure Assets, which is forecasting a pressure of £2,253k. The projected overspend on Strategic Leisure Assets of £951k (excluding Covid costs) will be carried forward and transferred to Earmarked Reserves. The forecast cumulative deficit as at 31st March 2022 is £15,886k. The Leisure Assets medium-term financial plan now forecasts the service to break-even, in-year, during 2025/26. This has increased from 2024/25 due to a delay in the Conference Centre income generation.
- Contingencies and Reserves is forecasting a pressure of £1,428k. There are savings from prior years that have not yet been met recurrently and these are currently showing a pressure of £1,412k, primarily corporate procurement savings (£662k) and non-essential spending (£750k). In addition there is an anticipated pressure of at least £1,500k relating to the pending pay award.

Whilst the overall forecast position represents a deterioration in the Council’s finances, things have improved over the last two months and plans are still being developed to address the in-year pressures besides progressing any outstanding budget savings that have been planned.

Covid Support to Council Wholly-Owned Companies

The Coronavirus pandemic led to a number of Council Wholly-Owned Companies (WOCs) facing significant income losses as a result of lockdown and subsequent social distancing restrictions.

In November 2020 the Executive approved the establishment of a £24m Covid Recovery Fund (PH46/2020), £20m plus a 20% contingency, ring-fenced for WOCs only, from within the existing Business Loans Fund.

To date there have been loan approvals of £13.3m against that facility of which £7.32m has been drawn down. £1.1m of this has subsequently been repaid. The Council's Business Loans Fund Panel monitors progress against the WOCs' respective recovery plans on a regular basis.

Non Covid-related loan support to WOCs

The Council also supports its WOCs' capital spending (capex) requirements where there is a robust business case demonstrating either a valid 'Spend to Save' initiative or an opportunity to spend to generate income. The Council's exposure to principal and capitalised interest in respect of such WOC capex loans is currently £41.02m.

Wholly-owned companies financial performance as at Month 9 2021/22

The consolidated forecast financial position of the Council's wholly-owned subsidiary companies is a loss of £1.13m based on their individual Month 9 financial monitoring reports. This represents an improvement of approximately £0.99m from the Month 8 position, resulting from some updates to forecasts for the 2021/22 financial year and the receipt of additional government funding.

Council Tax Collection

The Council Tax collection rate at the end of December 2021 was 74.78%, marginally down on the same time last year. An additional £6m has been collected in 2021/22 to date compared to 2020/21.

Welfare Support to our Residents

Funding has been made available to support Blackpool residents who are struggling to afford energy, water bills and other essential expenditure this winter. The Household Support Fund was recently announced by Central Government to help households most in need with food, energy, water bills and essential costs over the winter and up until March 2022.

The Household Support Fund can help by providing short term financial support to meet immediate needs and help residents who are struggling to afford energy, water bills and other essentials this winter. As funds are limited, we will prioritise costs relating to energy and water

bills but will also consider awarding a grant for other essential costs relating to keeping warm if there is an impact on the household budget. Details of how to apply can be found on our website and are not limited to residents who are in receipt of benefits.

Illuminations Extension and Christmas Campaign delivers record footfall across Blackpool

I am extremely pleased to report that the two-month extension of the Illuminations, coupled with Blackpool’s biggest ever Christmas campaign, has delivered exceptional footfall across the resort, with large increases across all four months of the autumn/winter season. This is a resounding endorsement of our decision to kick-start tourism recovery with large-scale investment in marketing and events.

The Christmas By The Sea campaign, which ran on the Tower Festival Headland from November 19 to January 3 and included a free skating rink, artificial snowfalls, light projection shows, log cabins, and large-scale light installations, resulted in a 75% increase in footfall on the seafront compared with the same period in the last pre-covid year.

The additional Christmas activity around St John’s Square and the Winter Gardens, combined with discounted parking, resulted in town centre footfall increasing by almost 28% over the same period, according to data from the Council’s footfall monitor provider Visitor Insights:

Promenade Footfall, September – December (full months)

	2021	2020	2019	2018
September	4,230,460	3,305,710	2,997,048	3,016,977
October	6,314,918	3,305,710	3,516,766	3,393,376
November	3,471,686	1,367,556	2,095,888	1,980,209
December	3,202,584	1,703,969	1,857,419	1,877,807
Total	17,219,648	9,682,945	10,467,121	10,268,369

Town Centre Footfall, September – December (full months)

	2021	2020	2019	2018
September	2,902,003	2,278,259	2,531,173	2,527,674
October	4,145,177	2,115,648	2,894,629	2,721,229
November	2,598,018	914,430	1,970,406	1,875,572
December	2,555,608	1,383,238	1,903,537	1,995,875
Total	12,200,806	6,691,575	9,299,745	9,120,350

Footfall during the Christmas campaign, November 19 to January 3

	2021-22	2019-20	% change from 2019-20 to 2021-22
Town centre	3,924,036	3,068,688	+27.9%
Promenade	4,966,570	2,835,421	+75.2%

The footfall figures are supported by record amounts of visitor interest recorded on the VisitBlackpool website over the extended Illuminations season, with all four months showing huge increases over 2019, and an overall increase in numbers of 140% and 99% respectively:

Unique Website Visits on VisitBlackpool, September – December (full months)

	2021	2020	2019	2018
September	366,224	263,529	179,004	183,415
October	408,025	262,361	194,366	214,405
November	231,564	66,381	73,108	74,828
December	179,213	98,763	45,808	51,893
Total	1,185,026	691,034	492,286	524,541

Page views on VisitBlackpool website, September – December (full months)

	2021	2020	2019	2018
September	1,030,044	765,971	611,544	697,654
October	1,239,013	696,907	722,253	821,841
November	651,865	141,859	232,075	249,597
December	457,825	232,786	131,575	161,607
Total	3,378,747	1,837,523	1,697,447	1,930,699

There is a similar picture on parking usage during the Christmas campaign, where the special £1 rate for three hours helped to increase Town Centre car parking by 37.5% to 37,893 vehicles, and Promenade parking up by 52.2% to 10,199. Discussions are already underway with various partners to build on this success in 2022.

Working with Partners

Town Deal Programme: from planning to delivery

I am delighted to report that we received confirmation from the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) that funding for the following 5 Town Deal projects have been approved, reflecting Central Government's continued confidence with Blackpool as a place which delivers on our commitments. The Department has provided up-front funding to move the following projects into the delivery phase:

- Illuminations Rejuvenation
- Enterprise Zone
- Youth Hub
- Revoe
- The Edge

The Department requested further information on the Multiversity and Blackpool Central Courts Relocation schemes, the latter of which has already benefitted from £1m of funding for

the acquisition of the former Devonshire Road hospital site, and final approval is anticipated soon.

The Council is the accountable body for the Programme, which benefits from additional oversight by the multi-agency Town Deal Board and its supporting Town Deal Investment Panel. It needs to comply with DLUHC mandatory monitoring and evaluation requirements, which will involve reporting twice a year on inputs, activities and outputs, to be signed off by the Council's Chief Financial Officer.

All seven projects have designated Project Leads and delivery teams, to which we have recently added representation from the Council's Climate Emergency Team. Each project will be subject to a Service Level Agreement, with a Memorandum of Understanding or Grant Funding Agreement to be put in place for Revue, Courts and Multiversity projects, as these include external partners.

Transforming Services

Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan

Following the approval of £50,000 from the Welcome Back Fund to revisit Blackpool's 2013 Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan, in November 2021 we appointed CBRE to undertake a full refresh of the document, ensuring it addresses the progress made in the interim, priorities arising from Covid-19 recovery, and to support delivery of our climate emergency action plan.

Engagement with town centre stakeholders is essential if the strategy is to address the right issues and have a deliverable action plan. Building on the extensive engagement undertaken on the Town Deal Programme, this will involve internal stakeholders and external stakeholders and continue into February. The aim is to have the new Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan completed by the end of March 2022.

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PEOPLE PORTFOLIOS

The 'People' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Kathryn Benson - Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Aspirations and Community Assets
- Councillor Gillian Campbell - Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Youth and Transience
- Councillor Jo Farrell - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health
- Councillor Jim Hobson - Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools

The full details of the portfolio areas can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Your-councillors/Executive-members.aspx>

Strategic Issues

Covid Update - Beating Back Omicron

The Public Health Team is continuing to make all efforts to support the national campaign against the Omicron variant, with support around contact tracing, vaccinations and community testing all making a real difference. The Single Point of Contact (SPOC) is a dedicated email and telephone number staffed on a rotation basis by the Public Health Administration Team, ensuring that anyone can contact the Public Health Team on anything to do with COVID-19 to get definitive answers and guidance. In addition, the Public Health Duty Desk operated by a mix of Public Health and agency staff with support from the Specialist Health Protection Nurses, liaises with schools, care homes and businesses to ensure a co-ordinated approach. The team meets daily with the contact tracing team leaders and Council colleagues from early years, schools, public protection and adult social care to discuss incidents and outbreaks. The Health Protection Consultant chairs the meetings and any Multi-Agency Outbreak meetings needed; he is also available for specialist advice and guidance on outbreak management.

The Contact Tracing Team consists of 3 Team Leaders and 17 staff from across Public Health and other council departments, and provides a seven-day service to ensure tracing is undertaken quickly and effectively. With extraordinary numbers of infections over Christmas, the National Team also dealt with some of our local cases for a temporary period. The main

focus of the team is on contacting those who have indicated they need support to isolate, as well as contacting all cases on Day 2 or 3 of their isolation period to see if any further support is needed which could include support on using online services or counselling.

20,000 People Catch the Vaccine Bus

One of the main ways in which we are supporting vaccine take-up is by reaching out to communities with relatively low take-up and the main way we are doing this is via the Vaccine Bus. As at mid-January 20,000 vaccinations have been delivered from the mobile vaccine service, showing its value in getting the maximum protection possible for everyone in our communities. We provide a non-judgemental place for people to ask questions, learn more about the vaccine and have their fears and anxieties allayed, get support on needle phobias, or just those who need the flexibility to turn up to a location without having to book. The bus also now serves 12-15 year olds.

This is supported by engagement work aimed at increasing vaccination and booster uptake. Housing Officers from Blackpool's main housing providers are talking with all tenants about issues around vaccination and offering support where needed.

Increased Community Testing – Still an Important Defence

As ever, we are grateful to our local businesses and visitor attractions for taking steps to slow local transmission of COVID-19. Helped by pro-active provision of lateral flow tests by our staff, most businesses have increased their testing regimes in light of the uptick in COVID cases. All locations with a positive test are contacted by the Public Protection team to check their processes, ensure regular testing is taking place, and to encourage them to do so if necessary. Our Community Testing Hub at the Hounds Hill remains open and popular for vaccinations and picking up Lateral Flow testing kits for individual or community use, although we continue to experience issues with the regular supply of testing kits to meet demand.

Remembering COVID Basics – Hands, Face, Space

We are continuing to reinforce to businesses the importance of staff and customers wearing face coverings where appropriate, with supplies of facemasks available for businesses at our Community Testing Hub in Hounds Hill. This is backed up with a continuing communications campaign operating across a variety of channels.

Corporate Issues

Children's Improvement Journey

In January 2022 OFSTED visited Children's Social Care to review the "front door" of the service, where all new referrals for help and support to strengthen families and safeguard the welfare of children in Blackpool are received. The focussed visit looked at the way that Social Care professionals, the Police, Health, Education and other key agencies work together to respond to concerns and requests for support and draw together information so that work with families is prompt and effective in addressing worries and risk.

The full written feedback from the visit will be published on 15 February by OFSTED and areas of learning will help to shape our continued improvement plans. In the verbal feedback at the end of the visit inspectors said that they continued to see improvement in Blackpool and told the partnership that they saw good evidence of sound and timely decision making to keep children safe. They noted particular strength in the support available from Early Help to work with families and to achieve change and sound, evidence based decision making when more structured interventions were required. They could see that the newly launched Early Help Strategy was designed to further strengthen partnership work and anticipate this having further positive impact in the future.

During their two day intensive visit to Blackpool they spoke with a number of staff, observed meetings, reviewed case files and oversaw the work of a variety of teams in Social Care and noted key areas of progress since their last visit. The team was pleased that they saw improvement in one of our most pressing and important challenges and an area of national concern, that of the recruitment, retention and professional development of social workers. They saw evidence of much greater stability in the workforce, increased staff morale and a real evident focus from leaders on our people. We were also pleased that inspectors commented on the visible embedding of the coproduced model of practice for children's services, "Blackpool Families Rock" across the partnership of professionals working in the front door.

Metropole Site

The Metropole Hotel site in Blackpool continues to be commissioned by the Home Office to support Asylum Seeking families. We have seen fantastic support from our local community to offer help to these vulnerable families for the short period they are accommodated in Blackpool while more appropriate dispersal accommodation is found for them. Donations of clothing, toys and books for children and winter coats have been very gratefully received by residents and we

are extremely thankful to the Salvation Army and third sector network for all that they have done to coordinate this response.

Whilst it remains our view that the use of hotel accommodation for this purpose is wholly inappropriate and should be brought to a close as soon as possible, we are working with the Home Office, SERCO and public sector partners to ensure that the immediate needs of the families at the hotel are being met and to facilitate links to the welcome support from third sector organisations. In particular we have been working with the site to support residents eligible for Covid vaccinations to access them promptly so that any risk of serious illness and the need for acute care is vastly reduced.

Adult Social Care

Recruitment and Retention Fund

Our social care workforce, supporting people in their own homes and in residential and nursing homes across Blackpool have been at the forefront of our battle to protect our most vulnerable population from COVID over the last two years. They have worked tirelessly under rapidly changing guidance and under incredible pressure to support people to maintain their independence and dignity and we are incredibly proud of them and grateful to them. We have been working hard with our providers across Blackpool to make sure that the money made available to us from the government for recruitment and retention in Social Care is used well to support the workforce. We know that our good providers and their carers work in one of the most difficult and challenging areas of work because it is their vocation, they want to make a positive difference to the lives of the people they support, and every day, they do. Making sure the recruitment and retention fund gets in to the hands of providers quickly so that it can be used flexibly by providers to deliver the kind of bespoke support they know their workforce needs and will benefit from has been our priority and as we progress in to planning for the coming financial year we have been able to work with providers to fund improvements to terms and conditions for staff. We continue to lobby nationally for greater recognition and support for carers, both paid and unpaid – they are an invaluable network enabling vulnerable people to live well.

Respite for Adults with a Learning Disability

The Coopers Way respite services for adults with a learning disability and complex needs has been a much loved and valued service for years in Blackpool, supporting individuals and their carers to access regular support with a home away from home. The need for this service has

grown and we forecast that with young people with additional needs moving though into adulthood it will continue to do so in the next five years.

We are really pleased to announce that after three years of development work, co-design with adults who use the Coopers Way service and their carers and with our partners in health we are due to double our respite capacity for carers with the opening of a new site which our partnership have chosen to call “Coopers@Ambleside”. This brand new bespoke development has been designed using the very best evidence to create an environment that is both stimulating and restful in equal measures and enables the delivery of personal care support in the least restrictive and most dignified way, and we are excited to welcome our first families in to the service in the coming weeks for their break with us. This is a significant ongoing investment in the delivery of support for adults with a learning disability, neuro diversity and complex health needs and demonstrated the commitment that the Local Authority has to ensuring that our partnership working delivers better outcomes for families in Blackpool.

Transforming Services

Libraries: Bringing Blackpool Stories to Life

Our libraries continue to be a mainstay of our local communities, and are starting to return to some of their usual programme of activities. Layton and Central Libraries recently took part in a national BookTrust pilot scheme called BookTrust Storytime, with songs, rhymes, stories and resources for the families to take home. Baby Bounce and Rhyme sessions have been launched at all libraries except for Library@TheGrange and Anchorsholme libraries, which are due to start shortly. Four libraries held Christmas Rhyme Times, where children received a book as a Christmas gift, and one attendee commented that: “Being able to come to sessions from such a young age has definitely made an impact...and books are one of his go-to things now”.

One of our tasks is to give children their own books and 300 children received a book as part of the celebrations around Layton’s Christmas lights switch on. Virtual assemblies were held from Layton Library with children from Devonshire and Layton Primary schools and work is ongoing with the Palatine Library team and Hawes Side and Baines Primary Schools. All children received a free book of their choice aligned to library memberships.

Upcoming projects for the library service includes StoryTrails, a unique immersive storytelling experience where untold stories of Blackpool’s past are brought to life through the magic of the 3D internet. A further project involves working with Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen library service on a pan-Lancashire project called Lancashire Stories,

commissioning twelve local writers, including Blackpool's Nathan Parker and Antonia Stack, to share and publish new short stories written about Lancashire. The project is ACE-funded and will include a Lancashire-wide programme of engagement activity, launching on Lancashire Day.

Local Artists in the Frame at the Grundy Art Gallery

Internationally recognised artist, Chila Kumari Singh Burman visited Blackpool prior to Christmas for a 'meet the artist event' at Grundy Art Gallery and a VIP tour of Blackpool's cultural gems. Her work, 'Blackpool Light of My Life' has been lighting up the façade of Grundy Art Gallery throughout winter to the delight of visitors from Blackpool and beyond. Work from the exhibition is now being acquired into our collection.

The Gallery's winter 2022 programme includes four separate exhibitions from over 70 artists, all linked by a commitment to showcase art made close to home. Our Annual Schools show presents work by local schoolchildren that has been made into a new digital art work by a professional artist, Nicholas Delap, whilst a solo exhibition of work by Patti Mayor (1872-1962) is on display to mark the 150th anniversary of the artists' birth. A joint exhibition by artists with and without a learning disability will present new works made over the last 12 months as part of the Arts Council funded project, the pARTnership, and finally the annual Open 2022 exhibition is showcasing work by Blackpool and Fylde Coast artists.

Live Longer Better – a New Active Lives Service Pilot

In December Active Blackpool, in partnership with Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS), Glenroyd Medical Centre and North Shore Surgery, launched the Live Longer Better pilot at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre. Forming part of the existing Exercise Referral programme, this pilot aims to increase social activities and improve health for over 55s who live in the Bispham area. There are a number of activities available including the Feel Good Factory, Swimming, Indoor Bowls, and social activities such as film club, book club and chess club to help reduce social isolation and loneliness.

Measure Your Leisure - Swimtag at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre

Swimtag allows swimmers to get detailed performance analysis on their progress, with users able to track statistics including the distance swum, different strokes and calories burned, as well as undertaking challenges and sharing your stats with friends. Having successfully

introduced Swimtag to Palatine Leisure Centre some years ago, the data gathered was key to achieving external funding to extend the offer to Moor Park. The aim is to encourage more people in Blackpool to get into the pool and track their activity levels and performance via simple technology. Active Blackpool are setting up beginner sessions as part of Get Out Get Active and Sport England's We Are Undefeatable campaign to encourage all ages and abilities to return to the pool and improve their overall health and wellbeing.

Working with Partners

A Kick Start for Swimming Teacher Academy success

Working in partnership with Swim England, Active Blackpool has set up a Swimming Teacher Academy to support local people to gain the qualifications and experience needed to become a qualified swimming teacher. Working with the Kick Start programme, which provides funding for employers to create 6-month work placements, the Swimming Teacher Academy provides participants with the opportunity to complete their Level 1 and Level 2 swim teacher qualification. At the end of the training participants have the opportunity to move into permanent employment regularly teaching children and adults how to swim.

The programme has generated some real success stories. Hayden, who started with the Swimming Teacher Academy in September 2021, said: "I had been unemployed for 18 months which was also causing a real struggle for my mental health. With support from Universal Credit I began to look at different career options, I had always wanted to get into teaching and saw the kick start funded post with Active Blackpool as a swimming teacher, and thought it would be a great stepping stone into teaching. I was successful in my application and started working for Blackpool Council 25 hours a week. During my employment I attained my swimming teacher level 1 and 2 qualifications with fantastic support from my colleagues and manager. I have enjoyed my new role so much that I no longer want to pursue teaching in a school setting. I have also secured further contracted employment at the end of my Kickstarter programme which I am delighted with".

Our People – Our Communities

We have some fantastic and dedicated people working with the Council and we are incredibly proud of everyone who works in and alongside our communities supporting our residents. An example of this valued workforce was celebrated in January when we celebrated the long

service of Lesley Owen who has been a School Crossing Patrol Attendant for 40 years, all of which she has served at Norbreck Primary School. Karen McCarter, Headteacher at Norbreck said "It's wonderful news and an amazing achievement that Lesley has worked for 40 years keeping the children in Blackpool schools safe as they cross roads to and from school every day. It has taken courage and dedication to stand out in all weathers always with a cheerful smile. We are all in awe of her dedication and service. What a lady!"

Lesley is a very positive and happy person who is clearly dedicated to the children of Norbreck School who she sees across the road safely in all weathers. She is now crossing over the children and grandchildren of people that she helped to cross the road in the early days. She is a fantastic asset to the team and is dearly loved by all of the students and their families at Norbreck School. We add our voice to those of all the children and parents who safely cross with her every day – "Thank-you Lesley!"

PLACE PORTFOLIOS

The 'Place' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Lynn Williams - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture
- Councillor Ivan Taylor – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Performance (Housing)
- Councillor Neal Brookes - Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Public Safety, Highways and Transport
- Councillor Jane Hugo - Cabinet Member for Climate Change
- Councillor Mark Smith - Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation

The full details of the portfolio areas can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Your-councillors/Executive-members.aspx>

Strategic Issues

New Conference and Exhibition Centre: Open for Business

This fabulous addition to the town's business tourism offer has welcomed its first meetings following its hand over to the Council and in turn to Blackpool Entertainment Company Ltd (the Winter Gardens). We are very much looking forward to attracting further major conferences to the town including the Conservative Party's Spring Forum.

Levelling Up

The UK Levelling Up Fund is a capital scheme which will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. This includes a range of high value local investment priorities, including transport schemes, urban regeneration projects and cultural assets.

Our bid, which covered three projects seeking a total of £20 million, was unsuccessful and there has been little feedback to date as to why. Blackpool is still eligible for two further bids and potentially a third transport-related bid, but until the Government publishes its proposed

Levelling Up White Paper and the guidance and timescales for Round 2 bidding, there is significant uncertainty with the process. Nevertheless, our officers have commenced early discussions on potential projects for submission in the next bidding round in order to be as prepared as possible. We have also committed to running a comprehensive consultation exercise with local residents and businesses in South Shore to understand what the priorities and challenges are for the area, despite not receiving government support. The Council will therefore have to put a full action plan in place to support the development of the community and environment of the area.

Climate Action Partnership underway

I am pleased to report to Members that Blackpool's first Climate Action Partnership meeting took place in January. The meeting included representatives from across the public, private and voluntary sectors learning of the plans put in place by the Council and Blackpool Teaching Hospitals, whilst a presentation from ATOS explored the attitudes of businesses in the town towards carbon neutral targets. Breakout sessions identified areas of common interest and joint work, which will all feed into our Climate Emergency Action Plan as it evolves.

Corporate Issues

Suspected Avian Influenza Outbreak at Stanley Park Lake

I am sad to report the death of over 20 wild birds so far, following the suspected outbreak in early December 2021. Although only one bird has been tested and confirmed as having the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza (AI), as the testing of sick or dead wild birds does not routinely take place, the other deaths meet the criteria for assuming the cause was Avian Influenza.

The Council has implemented a multiagency response, putting a biosecurity cordon in place around Stanley Park Lake to prevent visitors to the park walking in a potentially infected area. The cordon also included signage explaining to visitors its purpose and instructing not to breach it, supported by social media communications warning people not to touch birds or breach the cordon. Communications have also covered the need for anyone keeping birds to follow the Animal and Plant Health Agency advice, with a web page seeking the voluntary registration of flocks to receive further information in future. UKHSA has acknowledged that this is a sensible and proactive approach. The cordon will remain until a suitable length of time has passed following further deaths.

Showtown Museum Project on Target for Completion

The basebuild contractor, Conlons, have completed works including the interior walls and the acoustic lining of the museum, and are moving on to the installation of ducting and pipework for the mechanical and electrical first fix. Work has also started with the four main exhibition contractors, which includes the physical exhibition fit-out, the audio-visuals and the manual interactives – all the fun things which will make Showtown a roaring success!

A museum is nothing without an audience, and the team are making sure that public engagement continues throughout the build. This includes co-production activities working with community groups to create content that form part of the exhibition, truly making it a museum created with and by Blackpool people.

Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone: Delivering the Masterplan

The revised delivery plan and annual progress report on the Enterprise Zone will be presented to the Council's Executive in February 2022, reflecting updated modelling of the forecast retained business rates income, as a result of changed layouts and delayed delivery dates for built development.

Conlon's Construction commenced work on construction of the new changing pavilion site for the sports pitches in late September, part funded by a £250,000 grant from the Football Foundation, with completion expected by June 2022. Following the completion of the new sports pitches, a phased release of existing pitches will permit highway preparation works to progress. The existing Jepson Way changing facilities will continue in use for the interim period. Meanwhile, detailed design work is progressing for the design and construction tendering of the associated 3G pitch and rugby pitches, with a contract scheduled to be let in February/March to enable operation from Autumn 2022.

Construction of the remodelled junction at Division Lane West will commence in spring 2022 with the intention that this is completed prior to the main holiday season commencing in June. Further design work has continued for both the Eastern Gateway Access and the Common Edge Road junction upgrade, with further site investigations commissioned following the appointment of Wilde Consulting.

An application to the Blackpool Towns Fund for £7.5m toward the costs of an overall £18m project to provide new highways and enabling utility infrastructure and drainage has been approved by the Town Deal Board and the Council's Executive and also formally signed off by

DLUHC in December. This project will incorporate the remodelling of Common Edge Road between School Road and Division Lane incorporating traffic signalled junctions, the construction of the Eastern Gateway access road to link Amy Johnson Way and Common Edge opening a further 10.5ha land for commercial development. The project will also enable two new access points to be constructed from Amy Johnson Way to the Eastern side of the Airport to support development of new aircraft hangars.

Growing and Greening the Enterprise Zone

Practical completion of the Multiply development took place in August with contractors Eric Wright Construction continuing work on the internal fit out which is progressing well and on target to complete in January 2022, allowing the building to be fully operational by March. Meanwhile, the Aquacomms base station facility is operational, and three wayleaves for telecommunication companies agreed. There are presently seven enquiries for data centres that have been generated as a result of the EZ's enhanced connectivity, reflecting a surge in interest from this sector driven by our team.

Linking into our climate emergency ambitions, the intention is to promote Blackpool Enterprise Zone as the leader in "greening the data sector". This will be reflected in our marketing material and we are assessing the feasibility of a direct power connection from Walney Island wind farm to the Enterprise Zone, complementing the proposals for onsite solar power generation at the airport.

Overall demand for commercial property is far greater than the present availability of stock or development plots. Growth in the number of businesses is reflected in an increase of business rates relief applications, which expire on 31 March 2022. Sadly a national campaign looking to extend the benefits of the Enterprise Zone looks to have been unsuccessful, although lobbying continues. Several existing Enterprise Zone occupiers are also looking to move to larger units as they continue to grow. These enquiries will be confirmed and delivery accelerated as the detailed designs for the highways are completed. The owners of Squires Gate Industrial Estate continue subdividing and letting units to meet demand, with the team engaging the owners around opportunities for new development on limited areas of the site.

Since its Enterprise Zone designation in 2016, Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone has attracted circa £50m pounds of private sector investment, generating c.350,000 sq ft (32,516 sq m) of new commercial development, supporting over 130 new businesses to the site and 1,950 new jobs to date against a 25 year target of 5,000. Great progress for Blackpool.

Blackpool Airport: Exciting Developments Ahead

The Council has been successful in an application for consultancy and business advice to help with the redevelopment of the airport with the Airport Development Advisory Fund. This will help with commercial marketing activity to help secure new business, assess and identify viable routes, potential operators and partner airfields. The Council also sought advice on the potential suitability of new technology to support air traffic control, an airspace modernisation strategy, alternative power generation and electric aircraft operations, all of which are helping to inform the business plan and identify ways to improve the airport's sustainability from both a commercial and environmental perspective.

In March the airport announced the intention to take the operational Civil Aviation Authority licences back into its own name to help ensure the airport's long term future. Blackpool Airport Operations Ltd (BAOL) having direct control means that the airport can maximise opportunities for growth, with a greater level of control and flexibility to take investment decisions, and to be more efficient and cost effective.

Discussions have continued to base a new CPL training facility at the airport initially looking at cohort of 20 pilots per annum and potentially rising to 100. Similarly discussions are ongoing for provision of specialist helicopter pilot and engineering training facilities, with the airport looking to capitalise on opportunities to become a major centre for aviation industry training. Key to progressing development and securing additional business rests with the relocation of the existing control tower and provision of new and replacement hangar accommodation and apron predominantly within the Fylde Greenbelt.

Improving sea defences across the Fylde Coast

The Outline Business Cases for the Little Bispham to Bispham and Gynn Square to Cocker Square Coast Protection Schemes are nearing completion, ready for submission to the Environment Agency's Large Project Review Board by the end of January 2022. These schemes are crucial to prepare for the impact of climate change, which will bring further adverse weather conditions and higher sea levels. Two stakeholder meetings have been held to engage and inform all those involved with the projects, with future stakeholder meetings to come following the outcome of the Large Project review Board's appraisal and approval of proposed options.

The Council has also been successful in its application for £342,000 funding to prepare a study leading to the submission of an outline business case for Beach Nourishment Works, which

would provide additional natural protection for the shore. The Environment Agency has already allocated £12m for this proposed scheme.

Further down the coast in Fylde borough, Blackpool Council has been allocated £1 million by the Environment Agency to continue to improve the sand dune habitat from Starr Hill Sand Dunes to Lytham Green, providing a natural means of coast protection for 493 residential properties and 8 businesses.

Blackpool's successful bid for future funding from 2022 – 2027 means that work will continue following on the past nine successful years to improve the standard of protection. Delivered in partnership with Fylde Borough Council and the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, the works include fencing off vulnerable areas, thatching the dunes to help them grow using donated recycled Christmas trees, transplanting of Marram and Lyme grass, the removal of invasive non-native species, and the provision of pedestrian access routes aligned away from the prevailing wind direction. The funding will also help to continue community and volunteer engagement, and implement the recommendations of the Geomorphological Study undertaken in 2016.

Bathing water quality

Blackpool Council consistently complied with its duty to erect signage at its four bathing water sites to inform bathers during the 2021 bathing season. Blackpool still faces challenges due to sources of pollution but continues to work in partnership to better understand how the challenges can be mitigated collectively. The results for 2021 are as follows:

Blackpool South – Good

Blackpool Central - Good

Blackpool North – Sufficient (the Environment Agency has categorised this as a priority water so work can continue to establish the source of pollution in more detail.)

Bispham – Excellent

The council has applied to Keep Britain Tidy for Seaside Awards for all four bathing water sites.

Working with Partners

Blackpool Central: Another Major Milestone Reached

Following various planning approvals, the Council and developers of Blackpool Central (Nikal Ltd) have completed on the conditional terms of the Land Sale Agreement on 22 December

2021. This major milestone marks the start of not just the construction of the new 1300 space multi-storey carpark, but ultimately the delivery of one of the most exciting new leisure developments in Europe.

Work on the site will start in early February, with completion of the car park scheduled for summer 2023. Central Car Park will remain available for parking, but normal access from Seaside Way will be disrupted from early March this year, as the contractors take control of the site. We are working on appropriate traffic management measures to mitigate the impact of this, to include appropriate signage to alternative networks routes across the town.

During the delivery of the construction of the multi storey car park, the developers will be working hard to prepare for the detailed planning submission for the rest of the scheme. The Council have made the application to Government office for the Compulsory Purchase Order of all other remaining interests on the site, and we will be continuing to press forward with this over the coming months. In the meantime we are continuing to negotiate with the third party interests in effort to reach mutually agreeable terms where possible.

Talbot Gateway Phase 2: Hotel and Infrastructure

Robertson Construction Group Ltd continue to progress well on the construction works for the Hotel, Underpass and Temporary Car Park. The installation of the light-weight frame for the upper floors is almost complete, and work has started on the construction of the new underpass between the train station and the new tram terminus under High Street. Following the completion of the frame work will start on the facades and the internal fit-out works. The current hope is to test trams on the new track in February 2022.

Public Consultation on Stanley Park Golf Course Proposals

HIP/UKAP have undertaken 3 well attended public consultation sessions, seeking feedback to inform the final design. We expect a planning application to follow in 2022.

Preparing for the New Abingdon Street Market

Whilst Parkinsons continue to strip out the existing building, the Council is in discussions with a number of parties regarding the future operation of the market. This has resulted in some interesting proposals, which we are reviewing for the quality of the offer and the ability to attract more different types of customer.

Transforming Services

Supported Housing Review Pilot Concludes

The local area pilot has now concluded, with the Tourism Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee approving the report. The Committee recommended that the council endorses the Supported Housing Standards for Adults and separate Youth Standards and Charter, and that we continue to lobby the Government on regulation or legislation so we can enforce our approach to supported housing as set out in the agreed standards.

The pilot team is currently working to finalise the quality standards and the Council's market position statement, which will be published on the Council's website shortly. We will also be making a submission to a government's Select Committee enquiry alongside the other 5 pilot areas and the Local Government Association.

UK Housing Awards – Council of the Year!

I am very proud to tell you that that in November 2021 Blackpool Council was successful in winning the coveted "Council of the Year" award at the Inside Housing, UK Housing Awards.

The submission focused on our work together with our Housing Companies to keep building, intervening and keep people safe. Praising our "meaningful impact", the judges were impressed by investment to increase the quality of local housing and also noted that "The outcomes achieved during the pandemic, for example the number of families helped out of a homelessness emergency, through 'Everyone In', as well as interventions in the private rented sector to increase access to affordable tenancies, were impressive." Congratulations to all concerned!

New Housing Developments

Far from resting on our laurels, we continue to seek opportunities to develop quality new affordable housing for local people. Work at Troutbeck and Grange Park continues to progress well, despite challenges related to the pandemic and supply of materials. Site preparation and stopping up is well underway for Phase 1 at Grange Park, and so far 36 of the total 75 new homes at Troutbeck have been handed over for letting.

Homelessness: Current Position and Funding

There is significant continued pressure on our homelessness service, due to a combination of the continuing pandemic, the cold weather, and the impact of the ending of the eviction ban. Numbers in temporary accommodation are relatively stable at around 90 households, with a

flow of people moving into more permanent settings sadly balanced by high demand. Little additional funding will be available to tackle this in 2022/2023, with the annual Homelessness Prevention grant for 2022/2023 confirmed at the same level as 2021/2020 (£577k), although an additional £21k is available via New Burdens funding due to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and £90k is available for the “Protect and Vaccinate” scheme.

Project Amber: Reducing Potholes and Emissions

To date over 350 roads have received maintenance under Project Amber, with the innovative approach and materials being used delivering a carbon reduction of 90 tonnes from one contractor alone. Further projects scheduled during the year include Waterloo Road, Ashburton and Sherbourne, parts of Anchorsholme, Rosedale Avenue and Leopold Grove. Waterloo Road centre is scheduled to start in late February with works to be completed before Easter, whilst Red Bank Road which will be a “net zero carbon” scheme, will start on site in summer 2022.

Promising start for our Climate Emergency Action Plan

The Council has placed in the top 25% of Local Authorities in the UK for the quality of our approach to tackling the Climate Emergency. Detailed analysis by the not-for-profit campaigning group Declare A Climate Emergency UK considered how well our plan was integrated into other policies, the ambition of the actions and the strength of our commitment to tackling the problem, amongst other factors. We scored 61% - the highest in Lancashire - and were placed equal 6th amongst the most deprived authorities in the country. In particular, our approach to Community Engagement scored highly, with a score of 9 out of 9 demonstrating our commitment to putting our communities at the heart of addressing one of the most important issues of our time. I can also report that the September cut-off date for evidence means that we would now score even higher and we have firm plans in place to improve our scores in other categories.

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