

Public Document Pack

Blackpool Council

30 September 2022

To: Councillors Brookes, Campbell, Farrell, Hobson, Hugo, Smith, Taylor and L Williams

The above members are requested to attend the:

EXECUTIVE

Monday, 10 October 2022 at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room A, Town Hall, Blackpool

A G E N D A

ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC TO COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Head of Democratic Governance has marked with an asterisk (*) those items where the Committee may need to consider whether the public should be excluded from the meeting as the items are likely to disclose exempt information.

The nature of the exempt information is shown in brackets after the item.

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 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

(Pages 1 - 32)

To consider the newly developed Community Engagement Framework, coproduced across departments, stakeholders, members and residents.

3 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING AS AT MONTH 4 2022/23 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 - 2026/27

(Pages 33 - 38)

To report the level of spending and exposure against the Council's Revenue budgets and reserves and balances for the first 4 months to 31 July 2022. The report also includes an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2026/27.

*** 4 DISPOSAL OF LAND NORTH OF BLACKPOOL TOWN CENTRE**

(Pages 39 - 48)

This report and appendix is currently exempt from publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is considered on balance that the public interest would not be served by publishing information at this stage as this information would undermine the Council's position in future negotiations and could risk the scheme not being able to proceed.

*** 5 INVESTMENT IN TOWN CENTRE**

(Pages 49 - 58)

This report and appendix is currently exempt from publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is considered on balance that the public interest would not be served by publishing information at this stage as this information would undermine the Council's position in future negotiations and could risk the scheme not being able to proceed.

Venue information:

First floor meeting room (lift available), accessible toilets (ground floor), no-smoking building.

Other information:

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Manager, Tel: (01253) 477157, e-mail lennox.beattie@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.

Notice of :	EXECUTIVE
Relevant Officer:	Antony Lockley, Director of Strategy
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Jo Farrell, Cabinet Member for Adult Services, and Community Health and Wellbeing
Date of Meeting	10 October 2022

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the newly developed Community Engagement Framework, coproduced across departments, stakeholders, members and residents.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To approve the Community Engagement Framework for use within the Council for 5 years until 31 December 2027, with a review after a maximum of two years to address any lessons learned or changes to local, regional or national approaches/ requirements.
- 2.2 To request the Group Company Secretary to raise the framework with all the Council's wholly owned companies.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To clarify the Council wide approach to engagement with communities and develop a consistent framework within which services can work when seeking to engage with the community.

A lack of consistency of approach, and understanding of the tools available was a weakness highlighted by an Audit in 2018.

The framework has been developed with key partners who asked that it be an accessible, practical tool to help them to ensure that they were taking the right approach.

- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1 The Executive could not adopt the framework which would mean that the audit concerns remain unaddressed.

5.0 Council priority:

- 5.1 The relevant Council priority is: “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”

6.0 Background information

- 6.1 The 2018 Audit of community engagement highlighted disparities between the type and quality of engagement undertaken within the Council. It was recommended that an approach be developed to streamline engagement and a steering group developed to have oversight of activity in order to influence and shape.
- 6.2 Initially, a strategic document was developed and socialised in a number of forums. As part of the structured feedback stakeholders asked that the document be reshaped in to a practical supportive framework to aid delivery, and members asked that there be greater community input evident in the process of development.
- 6.3 This feedback was taken, and the framework developed that is now presented. Particular input came from HealthWatch Blackpool who gathered rigorous independent feedback (Appendix 2c) and constructive challenge to inform the final iteration.
- 6.4 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 2a: Community Engagement Framework
Appendix 2b: Engagement Planning Checklist
Appendix 2c: Feedback on the Community Engagement Framework from Healthwatch Blackpool

8.0 Financial considerations:

- 8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations:

- 9.1 Community engagement is not a substitute for formal Consultation – which has a formal and defined meaning and is sometimes a requirement of Council business. Should the matter be referred for further consideration, any legal matters arising will be covered.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 Engagement if undertaken poorly can be detrimental to organisational reputation. This document and associated documents have been created to reduce the risk of that and ensure staff are properly supported

11.0 Equalities considerations:

- 11.1 Care has been taken to ensure that the Community Engagement framework encourages engagement with all communities and in particular, those who are seldom heard.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

- 12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

- 13.1 Consultation took place through the Voluntary Community and Faith Sector via a Community briefing meeting in April 2022 and through direct consultation with Healthwatch. A number of Focus Groups were held included at Cherry Tree Community Centre, Kilmory Community Centre, Revo Hub, @TheGrange, Boston Way Community Centre in May 2022 Resident Drop in sessions were held at Blackpool Sports Centre, Anchorsholme Library, Palatine Sports Centre, @TheGrange, Moor Park Library, Moor Park Leisure Centre, Palatine Library also in May 2022

14.0 Background papers:

- 14.1 None.

15.0 Key decision information:

- | | | |
|------|---|---------|
| 15.1 | Is this a key decision? | Yes |
| 15.2 | If so, Forward Plan reference number: | 10/2022 |
| 15.3 | If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? | No |
| 15.4 | If yes , please describe the reason for urgency: | |

16.0 Call-in information:

16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process?

No

16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 30 September 2022 Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1

19.0 Summary of Discussion:

19.1

20.0 Executive decision:

20.1

21.0 Date of Decision:

21.1

22.0 Reason(s) for decision:

22.1

23.0 Date Decision published:

23.1

24.0 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

24.1

25.0 Executive Members in attendance:

25.1

26.0 Call-in:

26.1

27.0 Notes:

27.1

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Blackpool Community Engagement Framework

Blackpool Council



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Background

Following an internal audit of Blackpool Council's Community Engagement function in 2018, it was recognised that the quality and delivery of community engagement work varied greatly across Council departments. A number of recommendations were suggested to reduce duplication, promote best practice and support stronger links with residents and agencies throughout the town.

As a result of those recommendations this document has been created to improve the quality and consistency of engagement activity undertaken by the Council. The document has been developed with input from Council departments and local groups and organisations covering the public, private and third sector in Blackpool. In addition the Council has sought feedback from local residents via an online survey, focus groups and through the provision of drop in sessions covering a range of times, dates and locations across the town.

Whilst there is a legal duty on the Council to engage and involve residents as services users in decisions on the way our services are delivered, it is recognised that working with our communities to go above and beyond that legal duty would ensure resident satisfaction and the success of Blackpool Council's Plan – creating stronger communities and increasing resilience by undertaking joint work with residents and involving them in the design and decision making – in order that we are 'Making Blackpool Better' together.

Introduction

Blackpool Council recognises the importance of working with residents and communities in order to shape the delivery of our existing services, develop new and exciting initiatives, and ensure that we understand and meet the needs and opportunities that exist within our communities. This allows us to be proactive and responsive to feedback from communities in a way that improves the quality and accessibility of our services in both an appropriate and locally sensitive way; 'Making Blackpool Better'.

Across Blackpool many residents and communities are already leading activities and shaping change, either independently or through partnerships and collaboration with the Council and its partner agencies. This includes groups such as the Open Spaces Network, service user forums or third sector led groups such as Blackpool Youth Network. These groups are vital to effect change and are essential in ensuring positive delivery of services across the town. We recognise the contributions that each individual or group brings and want to encourage wider involvement, making engaging with the Council easier for all.

In order to achieve these ambitions we need to work together with communities and aim to respectfully reach out to our residents in order to remove any barriers to engagement that may exclude them, reimbursing them for any expenses they may have encountered wherever possible.

This document has been written to support the Blackpool Council Plan 2019-2024 and will provide a framework highlighting the key principles for community engagement which can be applied and used by organisations wider than the Council.

Scope

Each department within Blackpool Council is responsible for their own engagement activity. This document will provide guidance for departments, highlighting various levels of engagement, considerations to be made and supporting documentation will showcase local case studies to provide examples of how others have engaged with residents successfully. This document covers all Blackpool Council's community engagement work, including wholly owned companies and any work undertaken in partnership with Blackpool Council.

While community engagement can include a range of approaches and methods this document will not dictate what should be done, but rather provide the necessary information for informed planning and decision making. This may include reference to communications but for further insight see the Council's Communications framework

This document outlines Blackpool Council's ambition to work together with organisations across the town in order to achieve a coherent and consistent approach to community engagement; which includes the language we use to explain the different types and levels of engagement.

The Community Engagement framework is a Blackpool Council document intended for internal use. However, good engagement is something that all organisations can benefit from and as such this document can be used across Blackpool by any group or organisation. In this case Blackpool Council will hold no authority over the organisation adopting the framework and it is the adopting organisations responsibility to ensure that they are working to the latest version of the framework.

This document does not supersede or provide guidance on specific legal requirements and should be used in tandem with relevant legislation. Where a staff member is unclear regarding legislation advice should be obtained from the legal team. It should also be recognised that while Blackpool Council encourages community engagement there may be occasions when the Council may not follow this guidance, for example where failure to make a decision urgently would result in unreasonable or significant damage to property, risk to people's health and safety or the loss of a substantial opportunity to achieve the Council's strategic objectives.

Aims

There is robust evidence to show that involving people in engagement activities, to share the power and resources of decision making, builds the skills, experience, confidence and resilience of residents and communities.

“There is good evidence that community engagement improves health and wellbeing. A recent review suggested that community engagement interventions are: 'effective in improving health behaviours, health consequences, participant Community engagement: improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities^{1 2}

In line with the above evidence and the Council's desire to create stronger communities and build resilience, Blackpool Council will: -

1. Make a commitment to involving communities in the planning, design and development of services and activity across the town.

Community engagement is recognised as essential to ensuring that a service is fit for purpose, supported and valued by the communities it is intended to serve. This framework sets out various levels of engagement outlining the council's commitment within each level; while setting clear ambition for future activity.

2. Set clear definitions of what is meant by community engagement and the benefits it can have to operational delivery.

Community engagement terminology can be complex and easy to misunderstand. This document will act as a clear reference document to ensure all who work to it are able to communicate clearly about engagement activities, creating one language.

3. Clearly outline the expectations Blackpool Council has of commissioned services to the community.

For organisations looking to work in partnership with the Council, this document will highlight the various levels of engagement and how and why engaging communities in service design and delivery is important to Blackpool Council.

4. Increase community confidence through improved awareness and better connected services and organisations available to our residents throughout the town.

Time spent involving and building relationships with our residents and communities has a number of benefits to all; including increased uptake of services, advice and support, less issues with community cohesion and less anti-social behaviour within communities while developing trust between people and organisations.

5. Increase resident satisfaction and build resilience.

Residents that have been involved in the shaping of services are more likely to support those services and act as local advocates to their success. Community engagement and development can also act as a way to increase resilience and empower residents to act.

6. Improve transparency in decision making.

Understanding the wider view of residents and organisations via community engagement ensures that local communities are able to influence and feedback, in line with local needs and supporting the democratic process.

¹ Community engagement to reduce inequalities in health: a systematic review, meta [1]analysis and economic analysis O'Mara-Eves et al. 2013

² Community engagement: improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities | Guidance | NICE, 2022) Pg 21

Objectives

At Blackpool Council, we acknowledge the need to co-ordinate engagement activities more effectively in order to prevent duplication, reduce engagement fatigue and ensure we are able to provide the best service possible for residents and communities.

We have high ambitions, but realise that not everyone is an expert in how best to do this. For example, there are many recognised and credible ways to ask people's views and share information so they can comment on plans and developments; but that is not the end and often only the beginning of any engagement work. As a minimum we must feedback the results of our engagement activities and do more to ensure local people know what we have done with the information gathered, how we have used this information and how this has changed the service decisions.

In order to achieve this we must do more to evaluate our engagement activities in an open and inclusive way in order to reflect, learn and take steps to change and improve what we do. Community engagement work does not always go to plan, if this is the case, we need to know the reasons why and learn from them.

Our Community Engagement framework has been built around five key objectives focusing on:

- Ensuring there is a clear understanding of, and commitment to involving communities in achieving local ambitions.
- Ensuring we offer opportunities for the views and expertise of local people to help set priorities, influence strategy and support decision making.
- Ensuring engagement activity is effective, inclusive, well-coordinated and meets high quality standards.
- Providing clear and timely feedback following all engagement activity in a way that is relevant to the audience, easily accessible and available in more than one way.
- Achieving continual improvement via the evaluation of community engagement activity.

In addition to the above all engagement activity should align with the Council's values as identified in the Council plan. For more information please see Appendix.

Levels of Engagement

The Council has used the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum as a base and developed it to reflect the Blackpool community. The below levels of engagement run through different engagement approaches on a spectrum from providing information through to community coproduction. When undertaking engagement activity departments should always aim to engage on the highest level of the spectrum and should state which level they are working to.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Co-produce
Community Participation Goal	To provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain community feedback on the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.	We will work directly with communities throughout the process to ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To work in partnership with communities in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution.	To work together in equal partnership with communities, placing final decision making in the hands of those communities.
Commitment to the community	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input has influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will work with you to implement what you decide.

Action Plan

Objective	Why	Action	Lead	Timeline
Ensuring there is a clear understanding of, and commitment to community engagement throughout the Council including both staff and members.	To ensure that the Council works in a way that is responsive to our community's needs. To ensure residents are aware that we will actively seek and value their input and strengthen the Council's democratic accountability.	Promotion of the Community Engagement Framework via key internal stakeholders such as the Senior and Corporate Leadership Teams.	Community Engagement Manager	2022
		Add a page on the internal intranet to promote and encourage community Engagement including links to guidance and best practice.	Community Engagement Manager	2022
		To work with the E-Learning team to develop some engagement training.	Community Engagement Team	2023
		To work with Adult Learning in order to provide a short session on 'engaging with the council' to help build resident confidence where that is the barrier to engagement	Community Engagement Team	2023
Engage with partner agencies to ensure we join up our CE activities and share any findings and learning	To minimise engagement fatigue and provide a consistent town wide approach to engagement and the understanding of engagement	Work with the CCG to agree local phrases and wording	Public Health Consultant	2022
		Share the promote the framework externally with community organisations	Community Engagement Manager	2022
		Gather a clearer view of council wide engagement activity taking place via the creation of an internal Community	Community Engagement Team	Ongoing

		<p>Engagement Practice Development Group</p> <p>Work with the data protection team to understand when and where we are able to share findings of engagement activity.</p>	Community Engagement Team	2023
Ensure the views and expertise of local people help set priorities and influence framework and decision making.	<p>Working alongside local communities and utilising their combined opinions and expertise will ensure that the Council is able to respond to local need and provide services best fitting.</p> <p>To build trust with our communities and ensure residents feel the council is acting in the best interest of Blackpool.</p> <p>To increase public participation in decision making and help the council to understand the impact of its strategies, policies, programmes and services on the wellbeing of communities and localities.</p>	<p>Ensure that Engagement is evidenced through the decision making process through the addition of an Engagement element in corporate reports.</p> <p>Add an engagement element to reports going to CLT for approval</p> <p>Create a suite of documents sharing best practice to help support engagement at all stages of decision making.</p> <p>To develop sustainable opportunities for residents to be involved in key areas of Council core business, either in a voluntary or paid capacity.</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>Community Engagement Team</p> <p>Community Engagement Team</p> <p>All departments</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2022</p> <p>2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Ensure engagement activity is inclusive, well-coordinated and meets high quality standards.	To ensure that engagement is representative of the local community/impacted area, Paying particular attention to mitigating barriers to	Include information on planning and delivery of activity including practical support on removing barriers to engagement.	Community Engagement Manager	2022

	<p>involvement such as language, caring responsibilities and work commitments.</p> <p>Supports all residents an opportunity to engage and feed into decision making, addressing barriers to engagement wherever possible.</p> <p>To ensure that engagement is carried out competently, to a consistently high standard and in a professional and ethical manner. In doing this we will ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge to undertake engagement activities and to ensure that all activities are outcome focused. This will involve engaging with communities at the earliest opportunity and making it clear what can and cannot be influenced by activity.</p>	<p>Reports to CLT to evidence how communities have been involved in the proposed plans.</p> <p>Strive to adapt our approach, where necessary, to facilitate the involvement of affected residents, taking account of the different needs of geographical communities and communities of interest and identity and particularly those groups at risk of disadvantage to ensure that they are represented and included.</p> <p>To plan, coordinate and review the results of engagement across the Council.</p> <p>Where appropriate undertake joint activities with partners, to minimise the potential for consultation fatigue and to reduce costs and other resources.</p>	<p>Community Engagement Team</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>Community Engagement Practice Development Group</p> <p>ALL</p>	<p>2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Provide clear and timely feedback following all engagement and consultation activities.	To ensure that the results and outcomes of engagement are fed back to the community and disseminated to the public, Members and relevant stakeholders in an accessible manner.	<p>Include information on the required feedback as part of the guidance.</p> <p>Ensure consultation results are fed back in a timely manor</p>	<p>Community Engagement Manager</p> <p>Infusion Research team</p>	<p>2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

	Build trust in the engagement process through timely feedback.	Ensure feedback is provided via various means and is relevant to the audience engaged	ALL	Ongoing
Achieve continual improvement via the evaluation of all significant engagement activity.	To encourage departments and officers to comprehensively and robustly monitor and review their engagement activity, using the information to ensure continuous improvement and learning. We will also share 'lessons learnt' gathered from engagement activities within the steering group to raise awareness of issues and improve standards across the council.	Include information on evaluation as part of the engagement process.	Community Engagement Manager	2022

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - Definitions

Community: the 'community' of Blackpool comprises of:

- a) All residents of the Town
 - b) All users of Council services
 - c) Those who work or own a business in the town
 - d) All young people who live/go to school in the town
- All voluntary, community, faith organisations clubs and societies as well as groups of organisations representing sections of the community.

It should be recognised that communities are likely to vary with different projects and activities and consideration should be given to ensure that the focus of activity is aimed at the community most interested and impacted by it. This includes considering an appropriate method of involvement for the community's needs and any barriers that might stand in the way of their involvement.

Communication – Communication can be one way such as posters, leaflets etc. and falls under the definition of 'informing' or providing information to communities. Two way communication is more conversational and ongoing. Two way communication has a focus on relationship building. Both methods are important and have their place.

Consultation – Consultation is defined as a specific process of engagement defined by case law and guidance, and in some instances via legislation around specific topics such as planning, or processes such as defining new strategic approaches. Generally we only consult where there is a legal or ethical obligation to do so. If consultation isn't legally required then good practice would be to undertake some engagement activity to ensure local views are heard and used to influence.

For Blackpool Council Officers - if you are unclear whether consultation is required please speak to the council's Infusion Research team who will assess on a case by case basis.

Engagement – is the process of building relationships with and working alongside communities. The term community engagement in Blackpool is defined as a process of involving the community to help form opinion and shape decisions. This can cover a variety of processes including planned communications, consultation and broader engagement activity such as focus groups and survey work.

Activism – is the process by which people come together through shared purpose to bring about change either socially, politically, economically or environmentally e.g. campaigning is a form of activism.

Co-production – is the process of working together in an equal partnership to a common end goal. The idea of co-production is to devolve power from decision makers into communities and to work together to find a mutually beneficial outcome.

Community Development – this is the process of working with communities to develop them. This could be through skills swaps, upskilling or providing training and resources. The aim of Community development is to provide the community with the ability to lead and be sustainable.

APPENDIX 2 - Legal Context

Where there is no legal duty to engage or involve communities it is seen as a positive process and is encouraged where possible. The process supports increased trust, positive relationships and ultimately leads to better policies, strategies and service delivery.

Where external organisations choose to adopt this document, it is their organisations responsibility to ensure guidance is followed. Blackpool Council accepts no responsibility for the engagement activity of other organisations across the town.

APPENDIX 3 - Statutory Obligations for Consultation

Local Authorities are bound by a number of statutory obligations with regards to engagement. These include:

1. **Health** – In health and social care, such requirements exist in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Section 14Z2, which states that “the clinical commissioning group must make arrangements to secure that individuals to whom the services are being or may be provided are involved (whether by being consulted or provided with information or in other ways).”
Health and Social Care Act 2012, Accessed 8 December 2016
2. **Environment** – In consultations relating to the development of environmental strategy, Environmental Impact Assessments must be carried out, to determine potential effects on the natural environment. ³
3. **Equality** – The Equality Act 2010 states that public bodies must have “due regard” to a variety of Equalities objectives (Equality Act 2010, Section 149) and consequently, Equality Analysis (formally Equality Impact Assessments) must be carried out to demonstrate that decision-makers are fully aware of the impact that changes may have on stakeholders. The concept of “due regard” was reinforced in 2012 during the review of the Public Sector Equality Duty which “requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities”⁴
4. **Best Value Duty Statutory Guidance** The Best Value Duty applies to how “authorities should work with voluntary and community groups and small businesses when facing difficult funding decisions.” It states that authorities are to “consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision.” To reach this balance, prior to choosing how to achieve the Best Value Duty, authorities remain ‘under a duty to consult representatives of a wide range of local persons.’ This duty to consult is not optional. Section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999 provides details on those who should be engaged in such consultations. ⁵
5. **Doctrine of legitimate expectation (common law)** This is rapidly becoming the most important aspect of the law of consultation. It is now seen as common law, whereby the

³ Environmental Impact Assessment, Accessed: 13 December 2016

⁴ Equality Act 2010, Accessed: 13 December 2016, Review of public sector Equality Duty 2012, Accessed: 13 December 2016

⁵ Ibid (p.4) Ibid (p.5) Revised Best Value Statutory Guidance 2015, (p.5) Accessed: 13 December 2016, Local Government Act 1999, Accessed: 13 December 2016

courts recognise consultees' rights to expect a fair process which incorporates guidance and management promises. The legitimate expectation applies:

- a. when there has been a clear promise of consultation
- b. where official guidance or policies imply a promise to act in a particular way
- c. where there is a withdrawal of a benefit with significant impacts to be considered
- d. where the nature of the relationship would create unfairness if there were to be inadequate consultation.

Essentially, where people have come to legitimately expect a process of consultation, for example, with local authority budget cuts or healthcare changes, there are grounds for a judicial review should a public consultation not take place. Similarly, a consultation must be conducted properly should the choice be taken to embark on one (whether a legal requirement exists for it or not). This is part of ensuring that the consultation process remains a fair one.

APPENDIX 4 – Governance and Accountability

Community Engagement is everyone's business and is basic best practice. At Blackpool Council all departments are responsible for undertaking and following best practice and including communities in decision making where practicable. It is considered best practice for organisations throughout Blackpool to involve their communities and as such this document and the supporting community involvement toolkit has been developed for Blackpool wide use.

Where additional support is required, the Blackpool Council 'Engagement practice development group' can provide advice and signposting.

Blackpool Council – Blackpool council officers will work in line with this guidance and where practicable involve communities in decision making. The level of community engagement should be appropriate for the decision/service being considered and accessibility and barriers to engagement should be considered. Guidance on the level of involvement can be found in the toolkit.

Community Engagement Manager – The Community Engagement manager can provide advice and guidance to Blackpool Council staff from all directorate areas and to elected members on planning and delivery of engagement projects. The toolkit will also act as a self-help guide and should act as the first port of call for engagement queries.

The toolkit is designed to help services ensure that good quality engagement occurs, avoiding duplication and contributing to community confidence in the council. It seeks to ensure a consistent and inclusive approach across all services.

Infusion Research Team – Are the council's internal consultation specialists and are able to provide advice and guidance to all services. They can run consultations for departments on a cost-recovery basis.

Communications – The communications team can support with the planning of effective communications and marketing as part of an engagement activity. It is recommended that services speak to the communications team at the earliest possibility and work to involve them in any and all activity.

Equality & Diversity – The Equality and diversity manager can advise to ensure all community engagement activity follows E&D legislation including The Equality Act 2010, and the Public Equality duty.

Data Protection – All activity must comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. This includes but is not limited to the completion of a data protection impact assessment where necessary, processing personal data in a secure manner, the application of retention and the provision of privacy information. The Information Governance service, based within the Governance and Partnerships Directorate can advise where necessary.

The Community Engagement framework works in tandem alongside Blackpool Council's 5 year plan. The framework will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis by the Community Engagement Practice Development Group.

APPENDIX 5 - Community Engagement Practice Development Group

A Community Engagement Practice Development group has been developed to support, advice and have oversight of potentially contentious issues seeking to undertake engagement activity. Projects can be taken to the working group who will meet quarterly to seek advice and feedback. The working group will include representative officers from each directorate. This will include but is not limited to; Community Engagement, Equality & Diversity, Communications Team, Infusion Research Team and other interested parties at their request.

Blackpool Council Community Engagement Practice Development Group Terms of reference

1. Purpose

The Blackpool Council Community Engagement Practice Development Group will provide strategic direction and leadership to ensure the consistent delivery of Community Engagement across Blackpool Council activity in line with the Community Engagement framework. The group will provide guidance and support to departments undertaking activity and advising on best practice standards and act as advocates for resident involvement.

2. Term

This Terms of Reference is effective from April 2022 and will be ongoing until terminated by agreement between the parties.

3. Membership

The Community Engagement Practice Development Group will comprise the engagement officers (or equivalent) from the following departments:

- Public Health
- Communications
- Legal
- Equality and Diversity
- Parks
- Leisure
- Adult Social Care
- Adult Education
- Libraries

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Members of the group have a responsibility to:

- Attend 75% of meetings, having read all papers beforehand.
- Act as 'engagement champions', disseminating information and good practice as appropriate.

- Feedback key points from meetings to their own teams.
- Submit papers for distribution at least five working days before the meeting.

5. Meetings

A meeting quorum will be 4 members or 50% of current membership.

Meeting agendas will be provided at least 2 working days in advance and minutes will be provided within 2 working days.

Meetings will be held quarterly for 2 hours at any Blackpool Council building or via a digital platform. If required subgroup meetings will be arranged outside of these times at a time convenient to subgroup members.

6. Amendment, Modification or Variation

This Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing if required following updates to the Blackpool Council Community Engagement framework or following discussion and agreement by Group members.

APPENDIX 6 – Council's Values, extract from the Council Plan 2019-2024

Everyone at the Council is expected to share the following common values:

- **Accountability:** We take responsibility for delivering on the promises we make, and can be challenged if we fall short.
- **Compassion:** We'll be caring and understanding and try to help. We'll also always consider both individual and wider community needs.
- **Quality:** We take pride in our services, and will always seek to deliver the best service possible.
- **Trustworthiness:** We will be honest with you about what we can and can't do and the decisions we make. We will only make promises that we can keep, and we will make sure that your information is kept confidential and securely.
- **Fairness:** Everyone will receive a service appropriate to their circumstances, which treats them with respect.

Our approach to equalities is closely linked to our values. Our equality objectives are as follows:

1. We will deliver **services** that are fair – with more people telling the council that they experience fair treatment by council services.
2. We will ensure that **our staff** are more representative of the community the council serves and equality and diversity is embedded in our culture.
3. We will involve people from diverse backgrounds in **decision making** at every level.
4. We will **celebrate the growing diversity** in Blackpool and increase respect and understanding for all.
5. We will work with partners to help reduce **economic inequality**.
6. We will work with partners to help reduce **health inequality**.

APPENDIX 7 - Community Engagement Guidance Documents

This document is supported by information and links to best practice and various resources through the Blackpool Council Staff Intranet. Where additional support is required the Community Engagement Practice development group can provide support and advice. Delivery of the activity remains the responsibility of the primary organisation.

APPENDIX 8 – Stakeholders

This document has developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders covering the public, private and community sector to ensure it is reflective and representative of Blackpool and local ambitions. This includes:

- Various internal departments including: Public Health, Communications, Parks, Leisure, Transport, Libraries, Legal and property services.
- NHS Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group (Blackpool CCG)
- Lancashire Constabulary
- Wholly owned companies
- Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre CVS
- VCFS Leaders Group
- Community groups
- Residents

Appendix 2b: Community Engagement planning checklist

The below checklist provides a list of things to consider when planning engagement activity. It is not comprehensive as each situation will vary but should provide a basic guide to help shape plans and delivery.

1. Planning Stage

- ☐ Why are you engaging? What is your objective? What is the benefit to you and to your customer in working together? What is the question you want answering?
- ☐ Who are you engaging? This needs to be specific. Consider location, demographics (age, gender etc.) There might be an ethical consideration to make here also, i.e. if service users need support of an advocate to get involved.
- ☐ Where are your target customer? I.e. if you're looking to engage with a dog walking community, look at popular dog walking locations. Consider both physical location and digital. i.e. are they the main demographic for Facebook or tiktok?
- ☐ How are you going to engage? Which of the 5 levels of engagement are you aiming for? And what engagement are you going to do to meet that level? I.e. focus groups, surveys, public meeting, workshops, citizens juries and citizens panels.
- ☐ What barriers might your customer face when engaging? This could be things such as understanding of language, confidence, access to the engagement if across town or online.
- ☐ How can you mitigate the barriers to engagement? I.e. can you cover transport costs? Offer residents some training to build confidence? Ensure face to face activity is spread across the town?
- ☐ What is within and outside of scope? If there are aspects of the design/planning process that have to stay in place what are they and why? This needs to be made clear to customers to manage expectations.
- ☐ What is your timeframe?
- ☐ How are you going to feedback the outcome for those interested? (consider GDPR)
- ☐ Can you ask someone from your target group to help shape the engagement activity to ensure it is at the right level for your customer? i.e. proof read any text or documentation.
- ☐ How're you going to promote the activity? This should be relevant to your audience – if digitally savvy use the website, email, video calls and socials, if not look at advertising, Your Blackpool, posters, bin tags etc.
- ☐ What does good look like to you? Consider how many responses or what level of feedback you'd like and how you plan to reach that level.
- ☐ Consider collaboration – are there other departments or local stakeholders that might be interested in supporting your activity.
- ☐ Develop an Action Plan

2. Delivery Stage

- ☐ Ensure you've risk assessed the activity
- ☐ If collecting data ensure it complies with the necessary and relevant data protection rules.
- ☐ Consider personal safety i.e. can the engagement be in a public place? Do you need a second staff member with you?

- ☐ What to do with irrelevant feedback – in many cases residents will bring up issues and concerns that fall outside of your area of responsibility but as a Council employee it's expected that you would go away and try to find the answer where possible. Residents don't care if that's 'not your area' – you're a representative of the council and a public servant.
- ☐ Consider how you will engage as in individual. i.e. in many cases when engaging with residents for feedback formal clothing itself can be a barrier. Consider what you're going to wear, what language you're going to use and how you're going to build rapport with residents.

3. Feedback and Evaluation

- ☐ Report feedback in a method that is relevant to your audience. This could include a 'You said, we did', a report, a visual comparison/graphs etc. This could be feedback via email, phone call, newsletter, posted letter, added to the website etc. but it should be relevant to your audience and consider their individual barriers.
- ☐ Feedback should be provided in a timely manner (within 4 weeks). Where there are delays this should also be communicated with an expected completion date and reasons why.
- ☐ In some cases it might be relevant to have an independent party review the feedback and report recommendations.
- ☐ Where relevant it should include next steps for the project and how people can keep informed.
- ☐ There may be occasions where feedback provided is negative. It's important to remember that this feedback isn't intended personally. Try not to respond defensively.

HELPFUL HINTS

Build engagement in: don't bolt it on

Effective community engagement should be thought about at the beginning of a project, not at the end. Engaging with people at every stage of the process will improve the quality of your work and create a sense of ownership amongst the people you have included.

Start early

Engagement takes time. It cannot be arranged, carried out, or used if you hurry. The most common outcome of rushed engagement is a poor one. It will make you feel that you wasted your time, and the public will feel the same.

Don't rely on apathy

Despite a widespread belief that people aren't interested, the reality is that they do care about the issues that affect them.

Be clear about the constraints

Don't promise things you can't deliver. This is a common failure of community engagement. Be clear where the boundaries are, who makes the final decisions and what resources are available.

Engagement is a marathon not a sprint

Delivering change can take a long time. Be prepared for the long haul; everyone gets disheartened if things take forever to happen, so be realistic about timescales

Communicate, communicate, and communicate

Keep people informed. Everyone you involve needs to receive feedback so they know what is being done as a result of their involvement, especially if you eventually chose to do something differently. Show what has been achieved. It builds ownership and enhances reputation.

Have a champion

The most successful strategies have someone – or often lots of people at different levels – who really believes in the cause pushing them forward. If community engagement is important, make sure it's included as part of people's roles.

Make it meaningful

Remember that any plans you make should lead to action. Everyone gets bored of taking part when nothing actually happens.

Assess your goals at every stage

Keep asking "is what we are trying to do realistic?" Targets should be clear and achievable. Have milestones along the way. If the direction of your project does change, make sure you tell everyone why.

Use what already exists

Don't reinvent the wheel. Find out what groups, research or ideas already exist and use them.

Good practice

Look at what other people are doing to build on good practice.

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Community Engagement

Themes from Blackpool Council Consultation & Best Practice recommendations informed by local feedback.

Introduction

The need for organisations to engage is enshrined in law (Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Care Act 2014). During any change process, it is vital that the public are involved in the journey.

Blackpool Council have completed an engagement activity on their community engagement framework. The Council asked Healthwatch Blackpool to independently provide themes and recommendations as a result of the consultation process carried out.

Themes

Blackpool Council engaged with over 150 residents in Blackpool through an online survey and focus groups across Blackpool's community venues.

Feedback gained was mixed, however there appears to be an overall emphasis on communication and trust being key to effective engagement across the town.

Interest

63% of respondents are interested in engaging with Blackpool Council. Feedback suggests that residents consider health, improvement, climate change and coproduction to be important. Young peoples experience and a holistic view from those who access local services are deemed to be significant.

Where respondents are not interested to engage with the Council, feedback was given. There is suggestions that the Council 'doesn't care' and there being an understanding that 'feedback is sought following decisions rather than in the planning stage'. One respondent noted that the voices being heard aren't those within Blackpool who are struggling with the financial cuts.

Barriers

Participants were asked if there would be any barriers to engaging with the Council, 36% noted time to be a barrier. This was closely followed by confidence, cost, location of event and transport. Childcare was also acknowledged within the feedback.

Where those provided further information, some comments were made such as:

"Wheelchair access"

"Conflict of interest, I work within the Council"

"There is no point in consulting ... as they do what the biggest brown envelope wants"

"Lack of confidence in being heard"

"Too many written documents, not easy to read"

Things to consider

Participants were asked if they think that there is anything else to consider when the Council is looking to undertake engagement. Feedback themes include:

- Accessibility
- Equal engagement across Blackpool boundaries
- Being able to evidence benefits of engaging
- Transparency and sharing of information
- Having a common contact that residents can provide feedback to
- Community venues
- Reasonable adjustments so that everyone can engage
- Inclusion and engagement with hard to reach groups

Trust

There is an overarching theme within the feedback that evidences a lack of trust with the Council. Some examples of feedback include:

"Resilience, they mean if we don't like it we will have to learn to suck it up"

"Feedback is listened to out of courtesy and ignored"

"I have filled in this form in the hope that one person takes note. Do we think the Council are going to act upon our views.. Not at all"

Aims of the framework

Participants were asked if they agreed with the aim of the overarching framework. Of those who responded, 75% agreed with all aims and 22% agreed with some. There was an opportunity for participants to provide comments if they felt that the framework had something missing.

Where participants provided comments, resident feedback was noted and put into questions:

- How do you ensure an equal partnership?
- How do you ensure consultation isn't purely a tick box exercise?
- What resource will be in place to make sure engagement happens?
- How will the Council simplify engagement and only promise what you can deliver?
- Will the Council use easier language and meet with the residents face to face?
- Can the Council skill up the community to lead on co design and coproduction?
- How will the Council do what they say they will?
- How will the Council make language easier to understand?
- How do you ensure that engagement is resident focused rather than suiting a Council narrative?

On the whole

Engaging with Blackpool Council is something that participants would like. Some respondents have particular interests, so this must be considered. Where respondents have acknowledged barriers, it must be noted that time and accessibility are rated the biggest barriers to overcome. Throughout the feedback there is a common theme that suggests the need for transparency and inclusion when carrying out engagement. There is an acknowledgement of the need to promote wider engagement and make reasonable adjustments so that all can participate.

Implementation and actions as a result of engagement has been noted within the feedback. Respondents have stated that the document needs to acknowledge the methods to engagement and the many ways in which the public will be kept informed.

Trust will be an ongoing issue to overcome when carrying out engagement.

Reflections and recommendations on good engagement?

- The framework and ongoing action plan should continue to be developed with public/users.
- Acknowledge a public commitment to working in a partnership between users, carers the public and professionals.
- Decision making routinely informed by patient/user, carer and public feedback.
- Be open and honest from the top down, involve people in identifying the issues and the solutions.
- Be clear on the parameters that may have an impact on the overall outcome of engagement.
- Understand the makeup of the community it serves: diversity of the user, carer and public is recognised and valued with evidence of targeted effort to engage people in the development and improvement of services.
- Proposals for new services or improvement need to include a demonstration of how they have been developed in partnership with patients/users, carers, public and professionals.
- Engagement is developed as an ongoing conversation and relationship with users and public, not started or revisited only when a consultation might be needed.
- Frontline staff encouraged, supported and trained to engage with public and users on specific service changes.
- Regularly review engagement action plan, adapting it with learning from successes and challenges.
- Demonstrate the importance and the difference that engagement can make.
- Be prepared to act on what you hear.
- Promote inclusion and accessibility.
- Build on community assets.
- Work to develop trust with the public and help people to communicate the truth.
- Use the right language and avoid jargon where possible.
- Know and use a range of methods to engage.
- Use existing networks to share intelligence and work with front line staff to support ongoing engagement.

Feedback from Blackpool Council

The survey and engagement work undertaken on the proposed Community Engagement Framework has taken place over a 6 week period, across many areas of Blackpool. Activity has been by a mixture of methods; including a digital survey, focus groups and drop-in sessions that have taken place across the town covering a choice of days in the week and times of the day. This activity has been led by the Community Engagement and Partnership Manager within Blackpool Council and supported by a number of voluntary and community sector partners. Healthwatch were asked to review the feedback received to ensure it was independently scrutinised and reviewed.

The subsequent report will be used to shape the revised Community Engagement Framework and ensure the document meets the needs of local people.

Thank you to Healthwatch for undertaking this activity on our behalf and providing us with a clear understanding of key themes, barriers and areas for consideration.

This reference document will be made available as an appendix within the Community Engagement Framework, published online and shared directly with the focus groups that helped provide some of the feedback referenced within the report.

The role of Healthwatch

Healthwatch was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

We exist on a national and local level, working towards the same goal of enabling people to have a voice about their health and social care systems.

Report to:	EXECUTIVE
Relevant Officer:	Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	10 October 2022

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING AS AT MONTH 4 2022/23 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 – 2026/27

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To report the level of spending and exposure against the Council's Revenue budgets and reserves and balances for the first 4 months to 31 July 2022. The report also includes an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2026/27.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To note the report.
- 2.2 To require the respective directors and Director of Resources to continue to closely monitor and manage service financial and operational performances, specifically Children's Services, Treasury Management and Growth and Prosperity.
- 2.3 To prompt the Scrutiny Leadership Board to continue to independently review the financial and operational performances of the services listed in 2.2.
- 2.4 To continue to lobby central government (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Department for Health and Social Care and Department for Education in particular) along with local authority peers and networks and the Local Government Association for the funding necessary to cope with the burdens and demands presenting as a result of exceptional inflationary pressures and demographic demands upon statutory services.
- 2.5 To approve that the £135,000 funding gap for the Library/Grundy Art Gallery roof will be met by additional surplus top-slice funding.
- 2.6 To work towards increased target working balances of £8m from £6m with formal effect from the start of financial year 2023/24.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To ensure financial performance against the Council's Revenue Budget and its reserves and balances is kept under timely review by members.

The Council's Revenue Budget for 2022/23 set a target level of General Fund working balances of around £6m. However, given the current economic climate it is recommended that this is increased to £8.0m from 2023/24 as part of the setting by the Council of the Revenue Budget for 2023/24 as this would represent of 5% of the net requirement.

- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

- 4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

5.0 Council Priority:

- 5.1 The relevant Council Priority is: "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool".

6.0 Background Information

- 6.1 See reports and appendices circulated to members under separate cover.

- 6.2 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

Report
Appendix 1 - Revenue Summary
Appendix 2a - Chief Executive
Appendix 2b - Governance and Partnership Services
Appendices 2b/c - Ward Budgets
Appendix 2d - Resources
Appendix 2e – Communications and Regeneration
Appendix 2f - Strategic Leisure Assets
Appendix 2g – Growth and Prosperity

Appendix 2h - Community and Environmental Services
Appendix 2i - Adult Services
Appendix 2j - Children's Services
Appendix 2k - Public Health
Appendix 2l - Budgets Outside the Cash Limit
Appendix 2m – Wholly-owned companies
Appendix 3 – Budget Savings performance
Appendix 4 - Capital Monitoring
Appendix 5 - Cash Flow Summary
Appendix 6 - General Fund Balance Sheet Summary

All circulated to members under separate cover

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 See reports and appendices circulated to Members under separate cover.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Impact of financial performance against approved Revenue budgets and upon Council reserves and balances.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was produced as a part of the budget-setting process and remains relevant.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None directly from this report.

13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

15.0 Key decision information:

- 15.1 Is this a key decision? Yes
- 15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 17/2022
- 15.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? N/A
- 15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

- 16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No
- 16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 30 September 2022 Date approved: N/A

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1

19.0 Summary of Discussion:

19.1

20.0 Executive decision:

20.1

21.0 Date of Decision:

21.1

22.0 Reason(s) for decision:

22.1

23.0 Date Decision published:

23.1

24.0 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

24.1

25.0 Executive Members present:

25.1

26.0 Call-in:

26.1

27.0 Notes:

27.1

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Notice of	EXECUTIVE
Decision Number:	EX41/2022
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation
Date of Meeting:	10 October 2022

INVESTMENT IN THE TOWN CENTRE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider proposals for the future letting of the former Debenhams unit (N4) within the Houndshill Shopping Centre, Blackpool.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 To agree to use the Council's Prudential Borrowing Powers to fund the fit out.
- 2.2 To authorise the Head of Legal Services to prepare legal documentation and enter into and complete appropriate documents/contracts as necessary to complete the transaction/s.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

- 3.1 Like many towns and cities the departure of Debenhams from the UK high streets and shopping centres has left a major void within the Blackpool Council owned Houndshill Shopping Centre. In other towns we have seen former Debenhams stores let for health, leisure, residential and retail, and indeed, many of the former Debenhams stores remain vacant, and without a significant capital contribution from the landlords that situation is highly unlikely to change.

For the Houndshill Centre, as the primary shopping centre in Blackpool Town Centre it is vital to retain this store for retail use, a position confirmed by the Council's retail consultants, and finding a replacement department store to anchor the Centre has been a critical part of the strategy. This will not only re-anchor the Houndshill but also strengthen the wider town centre offer and will help grow occupational demand for space and rental growth within the Houndshill and wider town centre. For Blackpool residents this will provide new employment

opportunities and also provide for a wider choice of products previously not available in the locality, thus increasing the attractiveness of the town centre. It will also provide for additional reasons for residents to visit the town centre including additional and/or new visitors from out of town.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

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

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1
- (a) To do nothing is not an option which can be recommended, as the unit represents one third of the space within the Houndshill and would not only continue to be detrimental to the centre but would also represent a void cost of over £600,000 (Service Charge, NNDR, Insurance) per year.
 - (b) Convert the space into smaller units; this was considered for which the cost is estimated to be at a broadly similar level with no guarantee that the spaces would be let, nor let for anchor type uses and therefore presents a greater risk.
 - (c) To seek alternative retailers to take most/all of the space; the following were considered TK Maxx, B&M, Boots, Matalan, Range and Next. Some of these would create void challenges in other parts of the town, and also these would not be able to produce the turnover levels expected on a contribution cost benefit ratio.
 - (d) Change the use to leisure/food hall; this was considered however not progressed as again it would require significant re-modelling and capital contribution. In addition, this proposal would not support anchoring the retail and fashion element of the Houndshill and town centre and therefore would be less favourable.

The proposed option in paragraph 6.4 is the best option, is deliverable in a timely manner, and is unequivocally recommended by Ellandi who manage the Houndshill for the Council as the best option to pursue to make the biggest positive impact on the Shopping Centre and the Town Centre.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool".

6.0 Background information

6.1 The Council purchased the Houndshill Shopping Centre in 2019. At that time it was evident Debenhams nationally was in trouble and had already been through a Company Voluntary Arrangement. The price the Council paid reflected this risk and from that time officers were aware forward planning for the future would be required.

- 6.2 Through the Council's recent procurement and appointment of new Asset and Property Managers for the Houndshell, one of the main questions addressed was the replacement options for the Debenhams store. Consistently the message was to re-anchor the Houndshell with a fashion-led scheme and to replace the department store with the party with which the Council is now engaged.
- 6.3 The Council's consultants have actively been marketing the former Debenhams space and have spoken to many retailers and other end users. They have been engaged with the proposed business for many months to reach a commercial deal which the other party's Board have now signed off the terms. By the time the Executive meets the Agreement for Lease will have been signed, conditional on this report being approved which would release the capital contribution required to complete a high quality store fit out. This transaction is in-line with other similar deals in other towns/cities and recommended by the Council's consultants.
- 6.4 The key terms for the proposal are for a new 15 year Lease with a turnover only rent and other charges. Fit out is expected to commence early in 2023 with the store opening in late 2023 allowing for a circa 8 month fit out programme. The department store will have as part of its offer, beauty and perfume counters, high-end luxury designer clothing and other goods, sportswear, and high street fashion. Whilst the letting does not make a good economic case in its own right it does however, significantly elevate the Blackpool retail offer and provides for a very strong anchor proposition which will strengthen the Council's position when renewing leases or arranging new deals and which will strengthen the position of the whole town. It is also a stronger overall financial offer than any alternative.
- 6.5 The Council's consultants have benchmarked this proposal against a town in the West Midlands where a similar store opened in 2021. The results are positive, the town has gone up in the national rankings by 13 places (according to CACI, the data specialists). The town now attracts a higher footfall and there has been a shift in visitor profile. The ratio of key higher spending Mosaic groups visiting the town has increased from 26% to 33%. Therefore, the evidence suggests the wider benefits outweigh the immediate financial pressure by taking a wider town centre view. This investment also adds to the commitment the Council has already made including delivering one of the largest cinema screens in the UK and one of only 80 towns/cities in the UK and Ireland to have a full IMAX experience.
- 6.6 This report is currently exempt from publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is considered on balance that the public interest would not be served by publishing information at this stage as this information would undermine the Council's position in future negotiations and could risk the scheme not being able to proceed.
- 6.7 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? Yes

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 5a – 10 year cash flow
(not for publication)

8.0 Financial considerations:

- 8.1 Refer to Appendix 5a for 10 year cash flow comparisons.

The fit out contribution is to be paid in two instalments, proposed as follows;

- a) Payment 1: 50% to be paid when the Lease is signed and access is commenced, subject to a full shop fit proposal having been formally approved by the Council (assumed to be early 2023).
- b) Payment 2: 50% on completion of the pre-agreed fit-out and the unit opening for trade.

9.0 Legal considerations:

- 9.1 By the time the Executive meets the Agreement for Lease conditional on the Council providing the fit out contribution will have been signed. The Lease will be completed once the condition is satisfied subject to Executive approval.
- 9.2 The Head of Legal Services is to complete any agreement and contracts as necessary to facilitate the letting.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 No payments will be made until the Lease is signed and thereafter the Council's consultants will monitor the fit out programme to ensure the works are being completed, on time, and as per the agreed fit put plan.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

- 11.1 There are no anticipated equalities issues with the proposals outlined. Full equalities and accessibility requirements will be taken into account at the design stage and in line with building control requirements.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

- 12.1 The fit out proposal will include new mechanical and electrical installations, this will help towards reducing energy use within the unit. This will assist towards reducing the impact of climate change and ensuring sustainability has been taken into account through the design stages.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

- 13.1 Internal - Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, Head of Investment, Growth and Prosperity Board.

External – Ellandi, Barker Proudlove, Lunson Mitchenall, CBRE, DAC Beachcroft.

14.0 Background papers:

- 14.1 Advice from Ellandi (exempt)

15.0 Key decision information:

- 15.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

- 15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 1/2021

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

- 15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

- 16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

- 16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 30 September 2022 Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1 None.

19.0 Summary of Discussion:

19.1 Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration, presented the report to the Executive. Mr Cavill emphasised that this option had been unequivocally recommended by Ellandi who manage the Houndshill for the Council as the best option to pursue to make the biggest positive impact on the Shopping Centre and the Town Centre. The need to ensure an anchor tenant for the vacant Debenhams unit was emphasised along with the costs of holding that unit empty and the potential impact on the rents achievable from other tenants along with car parking income. The potential positive impact on the town centre was also noted.

The Executive expressed positive support for the recommendation noting the need to ensure the town centre remained sustainable. In response to questions, Mr Cavill emphasised that due diligence had been undertaken and the tenant was considered a relatively low risk.

20.0 Executive decision:

20.1 The Executive resolved as follows:

1. That the public and press be excluded from the consideration of Agenda Item 5 Investment in the Town Centre. This is on the grounds that this item contains the likely disclosure of information not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. This information contains details of ongoing negotiations with third parties and the public interest would not be served by making this information public at the point, once the negotiations are concluded parts of that information would be published.
2. To agree to use the Council's Prudential Borrowing Powers to fund the fit out.
3. To authorise the Head of Legal Services to prepare legal documentation and enter into and complete appropriate documents/contracts as necessary to complete the transaction/s.

21.0 Date of Decision:

21.1 10 October 2022

22.0 Reason(s) for decision:

22.1 Like many towns and cities the departure of Debenhams from the UK high streets and shopping centres has left a major void within the Blackpool Council owned Houndshell Shopping Centre. In other towns former Debenhams stores have been let for health, leisure, residential and retail, and indeed, many of the former Debenhams stores remain vacant, and without a significant capital contribution from the landlords that situation is highly unlikely to change.

For the Houndshell Centre, as the primary shopping centre in Blackpool Town Centre it is vital to retain this store for retail use, a position confirmed by the Council's retail consultants, and finding a replacement department store to anchor the Centre has been a critical part of the strategy. This will not only re-anchor the Houndshell but also strengthen the wider town centre offer and will help grow occupational demand for space and rental growth within the Houndshell and wider town centre. For Blackpool residents this will provide new employment opportunities and also provide for a wider choice of products previously not available in the locality, thus increasing the attractiveness of the town centre. It will also provide for additional reasons for residents to visit the town centre including additional and/or new visitors from out of town.

23.0 Date Decision published:

23.1 11 October 2022

24.0 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

24.1 The Executive considered the following alternative options:

- (a) To do nothing is not an option which can be recommended, as the unit represents one third of the space within the Houndshell and would not only continue to be detrimental to the centre but would also represent a void cost of £688,000 (Service Charge, NNDR, Insurance) per year.
- (b) Convert the space into smaller units; this was considered for which the cost is estimated to be at a broadly similar level with no guarantee that the spaces would be let, nor let for anchor type uses and therefore presents a greater risk.

- (c) To seek alternative retailers to take most/all of the space; the following were considered TK Maxx, B&M, Boots, Matalan, Range and Next. Some of these would create void challenges in other parts of the town, and also these would not be able to produce the turnover levels expected on a contribution cost benefit ratio.
- (d) Change the use to leisure/food hall; this was considered however not progressed as again it would require significant re-modelling and capital contribution. In addition, this proposal would not support anchoring the retail and fashion element of the Houndshill and town centre and therefore would be less favourable.

However it noted that these four alternative option all had significant issues and were not supported by Ellandi who manage the Houndshill for the Council.

25.0 Executive Members in attendance:

25.1 Councillor L Williams, in the Chair

Councillors Brookes, Campbell, Farrell, Hobson, Hugo and Smith

26.0 Call-in:

26.1

27.0 Notes:

27.1 The following non-Executive member was in attendance: Councillor Hunter