

DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR URBAN REGENERATION – COUNCILLOR JACKSON

Sea Water Quality

The 2014 bathing water season is now underway with sampling taking place once a week. During the 2013 bathing season, Blackpool Council were approached by the Environment Agency to trial short term pollution warning signs to advise the public that due to the weather conditions bathing would not be advised. Due to the success of the trial and the potential to discount the results to reflect the advice to the public, Blackpool Council will now apply short-term pollution warnings throughout the 2014 bathing season.

The warning signs will only be presented when the Environment Agency advise of a potential pollution events. In addition, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have asked Blackpool Council and other North West bathing water controllers to trial their electronic warning signs, Blackpool Council have agreed to trial the electronic signage for the 2014 bathing season.

This year Blackpool Council was successfully in its application to Keep Britain Tidy for the prestigious Seaside Awards for all four bathing waters, this is recognition of the fact that all four bathing waters passed the current bathing water standards last year and for the excellent facilities provided to residents and visitors to our beaches.

Coastal Defence Schemes

Balfour Beatty, the contractor for the coastal sea defence works, started on site on the 17th February 2014 and the first southern 300m of piling has been completed as planned at Anchorsholme. Piling resource has been demobilised from site and will return for the next phase of piling (north of the pumping station).

Princes Way between Little Bispham and Anchorsholme Lane West is now closed both ways to southbound traffic until October 2015. Traffic management is now in place and a visitor centre is open at the entrance to the site compound at Little Bispham to allow the Contractor to update the public on progress and listen to any concerns from residents and visitors.

Security is in place and is regularly being amended to suit the needs of the site. Particular attention is being given to ensuring that lighting to the site is not intrusive.

Extensive and ongoing consultation has and is being held with residents, which has been extremely successful, particularly in relation to highway management.

Fylde Peninsula Water Management Partnership

Turning Tides Partnership and the Fylde Peninsula Water Management Partnership are focusing their action plans this year on ensuring that business are engaged in the Love my Beach campaigns and in delivering an education pack to schools across the North West. There will also be a strong focus throughout the season on positive communications and ensuring that the public understand the effect of the new standards and the investment being carried out by partners such as United Utilities and the Environment Agency.

Blackpool Council has been awarded funding of £50,000 from the Environment Agency to continue to

assist in the delivery of the partnership objectives.

Building and Building Cleaning Services

Building Services has recently gained the Construction Industry Standard for health and safety. The Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme (CHAS) award proves competence and monitoring within health and safety. Building services are forging new links with Danfo, who manage our public conveniences, working closely with them on four new schemes in Blackpool, Lancaster and Glasson Dock.

Capital Projects (Architects and Quantity Surveyors)

The Capital Projects team has recently been awarded consultancy services contracts for The Grand Theatre, for Project Management, Quantity Surveying and CDM-c (Health and Safety). These contracts were awarded in competition against other consultancy companies on best value and quality of service.

Getting People into Work

The Council's lead adult employment services team, Positive Steps into Work, recorded its most successful year to date in 2013/ 2014, helping 382 long-term unemployed customers into work across all of its programmes, the majority coming from its Work Programme delivery. The team secured two Public Health-funded specialist work-focused contracts providing targeted advice in South Beach, and to residents looking to move on after recovery from drug and alcohol dependency, or HIV. A further National Careers Service contract helped 221 people with information, advice and guidance on career options, including 61 Council beneficiaries at risk of redundancy. Advice to Council staff included support to create or update their CV, attend mock interviews, short training courses, as well as money advice and self-employment options.

Positive Steps set up a new Council-wide Work Experience scheme called 'Chance2shine' in late 2013 aimed at providing one-month placement opportunities for 16-18 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and older long-term unemployed (sourced from Connexions and Work Programme customers who lack relevant experience). Of 73 referrals to the end of March 2014, 25 completed their placement by the end of the year. Placements have been offered in a variety of Council departments including Office Moves, Cleaning, Recycling and Waste Management, Streetscene, Solaris Café, Grundy Art Gallery, Children's Centres, Adult Care and the Credit Union. This year, the team is hoping to achieve 15 new work placement starts per month and are currently on target to do this.

Energy and the Environment

United Utilities Automatic Meter Reading project update:

In connection with the automatic meter readings installation, 98% of the meter replacement works are completed and 70% of the meters, 82 in total, have been handed over following final validations.

Gas supply Contract

Following final tender evaluations, the gas supply contract for the initial period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2017 was awarded to Corona Energy Ltd. The portfolio comprises 198 meter positions with an annual consumption of 48.5 giga-watt hours.

In 2013/ 2014 Blackpool Council introduced a proactive strategic approach to gas procurement in 2006 with the introduction of flexible contracting rather than taking the conventional fixed price-fixed term option. It has been identified through the use of flexible contracting with the ability to make multiple purchasing decisions over more economically advantageous timeframes, significant reductions could be realised.

Despite initial concerns for 2013/ 2014 over gas price direction surrounding supply margins and national and international issues, Blackpool Council was able to take advantage of the marketing softening and achieve a significant reduction from initial contract prices, particularly in the period January to March 2014 due to the milder weather. In financial terms a 12% reduction was achieved in the delivered gas price compared with the conventional fixed price-fixed term approach.

Planning and Land Use

The Core Strategy has reached the next stage of its preparation and was considered by Executive on 16th June with the recommendation to approve the document, along with the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment and other supporting evidence base documentation, for publication stage consultation and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State. It is anticipated that this next stage of consultation will take place during July and August this summer for eight weeks. Following this, representations will be considered and submitted along with the Core Strategy and supporting documents to the Secretary of State in December 2014. The Secretary of State will appoint an independent Planning Inspector to examine the Core Strategy. This is expected to be in the spring of 2015. Following the examination the Inspector will publish his report on the plan and if found sound by the Inspector, the Plan can then be adopted by Council, which is likely to be around September 2015.

A significant amount of additional work has had to be undertaken prior to preparing the Proposed Submission Core Strategy in response to new government requirements and to update certain aspects of the evidence base. This additional work has included updating the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which informs the housing requirement in the Core Strategy along with additional economic work to link job growth to the housing requirement; undertaking a viability assessment of the policies in the Core Strategy to ensure that the policy requirements in the Core Strategy do not cause development to be unviable, updating the Employment Land Review and the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. These pieces of work needed to be completed to ensure that the Inspector at Examination would find an up to date evidence underpinning key policies in the Plan.

Blackpool Council is working jointly with Fylde and Wyre Councils to update the 2007 Fylde Coast Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Show People Accommodation Assessment. Consultants Opinion Research Services have been commissioned to undertake the update and were appointed in late October 2013. The commission involves consultation with various stakeholders and the Gypsy, Traveller and Show people communities to determine their future accommodation needs. The final report is expected late summer 2014. It is likely that a need for additional sites across the Fylde Coast will be identified and Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Councils will work together to accommodate this need. For Blackpool, the location of any new sites within the borough will be considered when we prepare Part Two of the Blackpool Local Plan, anticipated to commence in September 2015.

Economic Development

The Government has introduced three schemes to support businesses affected by flooding caused by the adverse weather between 1st December 2013 and 31st March 2014. These include Business Rates Relief for a three month period, a Business Support Scheme which allows grants of around £2,000 for unrecoverable costs from other sources (e.g. insurance) and loss of business and a Repair and Renewal Scheme providing grants up to £5,000 to pay for additional flood resilience measures. Local access to the scheme will be via the Council's Business Support Team within Economic Development who will be administering the application and grant payment process. Some 46 businesses in Blackpool have already been identified as being potentially eligible and will be invited to apply from early June. Others not identified may also be eligible to apply if the case can be proven.

A grant of up to £1m from the Government's Employer Ownership Pilot has been awarded to local employers wishing to establish a Blackpool Tourism Academy, aiming to improve skill levels in the local tourism industry. Over 5,000 training places will be supported, including over 100 new apprenticeship

opportunities. One of the key aims is to introduce WorldHost standards in customer service and eventually gain WorldHost recognition for the resort as a whole. WorldHost is an international standard and was used to train volunteers at the London Olympics. The first WorldHost trainer training programmes commenced in June involving 21 participants from the six founding Academy employers, including Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Merlin, Blackpool Zoo, Blackpool Transport Services, Sandcastle Waterpark and Cuerden Leisure. Once trained, they will start to roll out customer service training across their businesses to over 1,200 frontline staff.

Working with Blackpool Private Sector and Business including the Business Improvement District (BID)

The Blackpool Business Leadership Group staged its May meeting in the new Council offices at Bickerstaffe Square. More than 100 businesses attended the meeting, which included a presentation by Muse on the Talbot Gateway regeneration scheme. It also included a presentation on how businesses can help Blackpool to become a Fair Trade town.

Youth Employment

The number of 16 to 18 year olds NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) was 380 (7.3%) at the end of April 2014 compared with compared with 461 (8.8%) at the end of April 2013, a reduction of 17.5%. Key contributions include the one to one support and short learning programmes provided by the Connexions Service and Blackpool and The Fylde College moving more towards a roll on roll off model of delivery for vulnerable young people.

The Youthability Hub (one stop shop for 16 to 24 year olds unemployed) is currently being evaluated with report being available in July 2014. The Council is also developing a more coherent approach to including the recruitment of apprentices as a social value condition in appropriate contracts.

Phones and IT

Windows 7 Upgrades and device Deployment

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

Data Centre- Migration and collaborative working

The new data centre at Bickerstaffe House is now operational. In June/ July this will become the primary data centre for all Council data as well as hosting services for schools, third sector and Fylde and Rochdale Councils. The new data centre is a highly resilient facility with back up power and cooling. The high quality facility is unrivalled on the Fylde Coast.

Schools IT

Digital Media Awards

Digital Media Awards were held at the Odeon Cinema on Wednesday 11th June at 9:00am. Entries were submitted from Primary and Special schools in five categories including Animation, Best Film and E-safety Film.

Social Action with Schools

In June we will be engaging with the Secondary Schools regarding the BT – Digital Champions initiative.

Each student taking part will volunteer to spend at least one hour with someone in their local community helping them to get online, for example using the internet, email, Google or YouTube. The programme aims to recruit 10,000 BT Digital Champions from schools in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to get involved.