

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL – COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN

Financial Management

Financial performance monitoring in the early part of 2014/ 2015 highlighted financial pressures emerging in Children's Services, Adult Services, Parking Services and Community and Environmental Services with estimated working balances forecast to fall by £3,109,000 against the budgeted position over the year. This fall is in the context of working balances at the start of the year of £5,869,000, an erosion of 53%.

If this forecast position became the actual outturn, then in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules within its Constitution the two specific conditions that excessive spending does not exceed 1% (i.e. £1.4m) of the Authority's net revenue expenditure and have the effect of reducing the Authority's reserves and working balances below 50% of their normal projected level (i.e. £3m) would be contravened. However, with seven months of the financial year remaining there should still be sufficient time to redress this position, though this will inevitably require a bringing forward of budget savings plans from next year.

As a supportive measure, the Director of Resources made a recommendation to the Executive at its meeting on the 8 September that it reconsidered its previous decision of 16 June that under spending services in 2013/ 2014 could carry forward their budget surpluses into 2014/ 2015. Instead that these under spends (with the exception of Area Forum and Ward Budgets) totalling £462,000 be redirected to bolster working balances. This would at least have the effect of taking forecast working balances to £3.2m and above 50% of their normal projected level.

The latest month three financial performance report for 2014/ 2015 was reported to the Executive on 8 September.

Revenues, Benefits, Invoices and Payments

Council Tax collection at the end of August was 43.9%, which is 1.7% less than the same period last year. The introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme has had a significant impact on collection. The Business Rates collection figure at the end of August was 42.3%, which is 2.3% less than the same period in the previous financial year. More customers are choosing to pay over 12 monthly instalments rather than 10 for both Council Tax and Business Rates and so a direct comparison with the previous year is not possible.

The Local Government Transparency Code recommends that from 1 September 2014 all councils publish spend over £250 on a monthly basis. Blackpool Council has been meeting these requirements and publishing this data monthly from February 2013.

Owing to the strict controls and procedures within the Creditors Team, a fraud was identified and averted preventing payments being made to a fraudulent bank account. The matter was reported to the police and the company thanked the team for its vigilance.

The average time to process new benefit claims and changes has increased to 32 days. Efforts are currently being made to reduce the backlog of outstanding work, but in order to achieve this, the Benefit phone line is periodically operating a reduced service. This is allowing more processing of claims to take place and payments to be made more quickly.

By the end of July 2014, 52% of the Central Government Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) allowance had been spent. Steps have been taken to ensure the remaining fund will remain available until March 2015, these include awards for shorter periods and for reduced amounts.

The Discretionary Support Scheme has had a total of 364 crisis applications (63% approved) and 109 community care grant applications (53% approved) during July 2014.

Discussions are still ongoing with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding the Local Authority's role when Universal Credit rollout begins in Blackpool.

Blackpool Fylde and Wyre Credit Union

This month Credit Union Savings are expected to reach £3 million as they welcome member number 5000. Work is well progressed on the opening of a high quality branch in the town centre to give greater accessibility to all of the residents of Blackpool. Supported by Blackpool Council, September saw the launch of a Junior Saver Account for all students entering year seven in Blackpool Schools giving them the opportunity to build a savings habit during their school years.

Risk Services

Work has commenced on the project to transfer the current Local Authority Benefit Fraud Investigation Staff to the Department for Work and Pensions as part of the Single Fraud Investigation Service. Staff consultation has commenced and a project plan is being developed to ensure the successful transfer of staff and to undertake a review of those tasks, which will remain the responsibility of the Council.

A bid has been made to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for funding for corporate fraud. The outcome of the bid will be known in October and if successful, it will result in increased resource to tackle a wide range of corporate fraud issues including reactive investigation and proactive prevention and detection.

Steps are being taken to prepare for the National Fraud Initiative 2014/ 2015. Council data needs to be submitted to the Audit Commission by October and the first set of data matches to be investigated is expected in January/ February 2015.

Steps are being taken to realign the Council's business continuity and risk management programmes to reflect the new organisational structure. As part of this, staff in Risk Services are engaging with Heads of Services and Departmental Risk Champions to help ensure that adequate arrangements are implemented.

Contracts and Purchasing

The 2014/ 2015 work programme for the corporate procurement team has been signed-off by all Departmental Management Teams. Tenders completed and contracts awarded since the last report include:

Service	Supplier
Hosted Electronic Solution for Administration of Disclosure and Barring Services	Complete Background Screening Ltd
Lightning Protection System servicing and maintenance	Horizon Specialist Contracting Ltd
Your Blackpool – Design and Print	Cambridge Newspapers
Your Blackpool – Delivery	National Leaflet Company
Provision of Groceries	Trevor's Warehouse (local)
Fire Alarms and Emergency Lighting	Automatic Alarms
Provision of Bedding Plants	Crosby's Nurseries

Service	Supplier
Social Action Project with Children's Universities	Julie Whalley
Winter Gardens Car Park Demolition	J P Tidsdale Demolition
Leaving Care	123 Supported Accommodation (local) Care & Community (local) Moving Up Care (local) Cherish UK Ltd (local) Next Step Care Management Fusion Care Ltd The Stepping Stone Project
Public Health Counselling Services	Fylde Coast YMCA (local)
Business Travel and Accommodation bookings	Click Travel
Tenancy Sustainment Service	Calico

Health and Wellbeing Board

Better Care Fund (BCF)

Following the submission of plans in April, key changes have been made to the policy framework underpinning the BCF. Whilst it has been recognised that most plans reflect the key ambition of the BCF, certain 'aspects' require further development:

1. More evidence of financial risk and performance metrics;
2. Sufficient provider engagement and agreement on the impact of plans;
3. Greater clarity around the alignment of the BCF plan to wider plans and policies, such as how BCF schemes will align with and work alongside primary care; and
4. More evidence of robust finance and analytical modelling underpinning plans.

National changes:

To ensure the 'aspects' outlined above are comprehensively addressed, NHS England has published new guidance and revised plan templates, which local areas will need to use to redraft their original plans. A new submission timetable is also in place which is underpinned by three 'progress' checkpoints (temperature checks) of 7 August, 28 August and 11 September. These checkpoints will allow NHS England's Central team to identify which local areas need support and crucially what they need support with, as well as providing a national picture of readiness for BCF. Additionally, the £1bn allocated to the Pay for Performance Framework (P4P) has been revised so that a reduction in non-elective admissions is now the sole indicator underpinning this element of the BCF, this is linked to a (nationally set) reduction of 3.5%. Local areas will need to demonstrate clearly how they will deliver the new metric in their redrafted plans. The national deadline for resubmission of BCF plans has been extended to 19 September. Ministerial sign off is expected in early October following an intensive two week review and assurance process commissioned by the national BCF Programme Team.

Local progress:

At the end of the July, members of the Health and Wellbeing Board and BCF Programme Board met with representatives from NHS England Area Team to discuss the new requirements in relation to Blackpool's original plan. Whilst the core vision and ambitions remain the same, a BCF Task and Finish group has been set up to redraft the plan. Activity is also underway to develop an understanding of the implications of delivering a 3.5% reduction in emergency admissions in 2015/ 2016. Furthermore, the results of Blackpool's progress checks to date, indicates that there is sufficient confidence centrally, that our plan we will meet the national conditions of BCF, but would benefit from further structural support to embed joint working principles and the governance arrangements which underpin them and further technical assistance around evidence based assessments, benefits

mapping and financial planning. The additional support required has now been arranged. An overview of changes to BCF policy and progress in revising the plan was presented to the Board in early September 2014.

Items also considered this quarter:

The Board approved an improvement plan, which will support the transition from the current Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy to a refreshed version, to be developed in late spring 2015. As part of the plan, the Board has identified and agreed a reduced set of priorities to focus on in the longer term.

A thematic debate on social isolation and loneliness was held in June 2014. Given the nature and complexity of the issues, the Board has established a task and finish group to explore this in more detail, the findings will be received by the Board's subgroup, the Strategic Commissioning Group in September 2014.

The Board endorsed the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Strategic Plan 2014- 2019, which sets out the structure and delivery of healthcare in Blackpool over the next five years.

The Board reviewed the new legislation set out in the Care Act and Children and Families Act and considered the implications of the new requirements and how this will be implemented locally.

The Board received the outcome of Learning Disability Health Assessment and will receive a further update on areas requiring improvement in December 2014.

The Board received the draft Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) for Blackpool and will oversee formal consultation, which will run from October - December 2014. The PNA is a statutory requirement for all Health and Wellbeing Boards, who must ensure the documents are produced and published by April 2015.

The Board finalised and approved the Annual Report 2013- 2014, which will be published in early September 2014.

Forthcoming agenda items include the new Tobacco Control Strategy, Housing Strategy, Blackpool CCG's New Models of Care and the Looked after Children Action Plan.

Staff and Public Communications

The latest issue of 'Your Blackpool' was published in September with a double feature on water management, neighbourhood news and key announcements such as the better start funding and Blackpool's Back tourism campaign. The next issue will be distributed mid-October.

Over summer months, Blackpool has been the focus of a number national tourism stories, which has generated positive publicity for the town. Interviews have been carried out with national and regional BBC radio stations as well and national newspapers and regional TV news programmes. The completion of Talbot Gateway Phase One has also featured in a number of trade publications.

The focus of public health marketing will be the annual Stoptober campaign aimed and helping people to quit smoking. This begins in late September and will be backed up by national advertising. There will also be a local road show event and dedicated website to encourage local people to stop smoking.

In October, a communications campaign will begin to inform residents, businesses and visitors of the diversion routes, which will be in place when Yeadon Way closes in November.

Communication of the Council Plan is continuing to be rolled out this month with the focus being on illuminations under the council priority of economic prosperity.

Customer First

Customer First now cover the reception at Number One, Bickerstaffe Square. The reception facility is provided Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm and Progress House reception will be closed from 16 September 2014.

The new Corporate Meeting Room booking system is now being used. The new system enables users to view availability of the rooms, the facilities in each room and they can then send a booking request through the system.

The Corporate Post Team based at Municipal Buildings also operate from Bickerstaffe House at various times throughout the day to ensure internal and external post is processed as quickly as possible.

Channel shift to online services is being encouraged at every opportunity in order to reduce customer contact.

Council Efficiency Programme

The Budget for 2014/ 2015 required total savings to be found of £15.8 million. As at 30th June 2014 (month 3) 64% of the 2014/ 2015 savings target had already been delivered. The current full-year forecast predicts that 62% will be achieved by the year-end, which takes into account new in-year pressures and savings and work is underway to close this gap further with alternative savings plans.

The full-year effect of the 2014/ 2015 savings in 2015/2016 amounts to 92% of the £15.8 million target. This is a very encouraging position after only three months.

Fairness Commission

The Fairness Commission structure is currently under review, to ensure it continues to be as effective as possible. Public consultation meetings have already taken place and the Steering Group will meet in mid-September guided by colleagues from Edge Hill University who have recently completed a national review of Fairness Commissions.

The Fairness Commission will host the first Loneliness day of action on Grange Park on 18 September, facilitated by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The work aims to tackle issues of social isolation and loneliness on the estate. Following the successful evaluation of the pilot on Grange Park, the work can be delivered in other areas.

The Community Engagement Team is facilitating the Council Couch, which goes on tour for seven weeks from 10 September to communities all over Blackpool. Senior Council Officers will be available on the Couch to talk to members of the public about their views and aspirations for Blackpool and their communities.

Fairtrade fortnight has taken place, over 3500 people were given Fairtrade messages and Bruce Crowther from the International Fairtrade Centre at Garstang gave a compelling presentation on the benefits to individuals, communities and business of Fairtrade. Blackpool will continue on its journey towards Fairtrade Town status.

We continue to work towards creating a Dementia Friendly Blackpool and a day of action is scheduled for 30 September when members of the Public, Private, Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector will come together to form a Dementia Alliance for Blackpool.

Blackpool Museum Project

Work is now progressing on the Blackpool Museum project, following the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant award of £1.24m earlier this year. The grant has enabled the team to begin a development phase, which will lead to a full-scale application for £20m of funding being submitted towards the end

of 2015. The HLF has assigned to the project a monitor who has substantial experience in developing heritage-related capital projects. There are three major contracts to award during the development phase project management, architect design team and interpretative design team. The Council's Procurement Team is supporting this process and it is anticipated these contracts will be awarded by the end of the year.

Nine new posts in relation to the project have been advertised. Interviews are taking place during September with a view to the team being in place late autumn. The Blackpool Museum, planned for the Winter Gardens building, will tell the extraordinary story of the world's first working-class seaside resort, celebrating its contribution to British and Western popular culture. As well as displaying the council's own nationally-significant collections in an imaginative, immersive way, there will be quality space for temporary exhibitions, co-created with communities, the V and A and others.