

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

Highways Maintenance – potholes, carriageway and footway repairs.

Highway Consultative Forum

The work of the Forum is helping to tackle some of the key highway issues that are important to the town's residents and businesses. Already, a number of alterations have been made to junctions in the town to assist drivers. Other proposals, which have been tabled at the group, include the Coronation Street two-way scheme and the plan to improve crossing facilities in a number of areas.

Highways Asset Management Plan

Due to Project 30, approximately 20% of Blackpool's highways are more resilient to damage from wear and tear, ageing, increasing traffic and severe weather. This does, however, mean that if our highways are going to continue to provide the service for which they were built, there must be a sustainable approach to highway maintenance to make the best possible use of available funding. If not then the highways condition will decline, with a return to defects like potholes and increased liability due to tripping claims. Approximately £1m savings have been made over the last four years in tripping claims due to the combined approach of Project 30 and sustaining a viable Section 58 defence of highway safety inspections and repairs.

The current tough economic climate poses big challenges to Blackpool Council to make the best use of limited resources in providing an acceptable highway service to the public, yet critically to maintain the integrity of our highways for future generations. A recent national public opinion survey (NHT) 2014, reported that Blackpool was the only local authority with increased public satisfaction in road condition in the UK. Blackpool Council was given an award in this respect.

However, there are some decisions to be made on the levels of funding required to sustain the good work of Project 30. To assist the Members with these choices, the Highways Asset Management Plan is currently being reviewed and will be released later this year. A Highway Asset Management Board is being established to meet regularly to agree on highway investment decisions. In particular, using the savings made on highway liability tripping claims to re-invest into the highway network.

Project 30 has allowed the Council to understand the current state of its entire carriageway and footways and the rate of deterioration and the best treatment options that can be planned at the right time to have the most beneficial effect with regard to prolonging life at a point when the treatment is most cost effective (i.e. maximum value for money).

Highway Asset Management will assist the Council in prolonging the positive effect of Project 30 and maximise future highway maintenance investment. Strong leadership and commitment from Elected Members and Chief Officers is vital in maintaining this approach, therefore the various stakeholders (including risk management, finance, communications, legal and highways projects) of the Project 30 Board will now transform into a Highways Asset Management Board.

Yeadon Way Refurbishment Scheme 2014

The work commenced on Monday 10 November 2014 and is planned to be completed by end of March 2015. Galliford Try has been appointed as the construction contractor for the major repair works. Presentation boards have been taken to all the Area Forums explaining the reason for the need to carry out this work and alternative arrangements for travel and a dedicated webpage has been set up to keep everyone up to date on progress.

Growth Deal Announcement

The Strategic Outline Business Cases are currently in preparation for the schemes given programme entry in July this year, which will help to secure the next stage of funding approval. The transport schemes in Blackpool included were:

- Integrated Traffic Management, providing an intelligent transport system to better manage traffic and parking in the town (starting 2015/ 2016)
- Maintenance of bridges, to repair a number of defective structures on key corridors (starting 2015/ 2016)
- Green Corridors, improving gateway and arrival points to the town centre (starting 2016/ 2017)
- Blackpool-Fleetwood Tramway Extension, to North Station (Business Case being developed by 2015/ 2016 and statutory powers sought by 2016/ 2017)

Street Lighting PFI

December 2014 will see the completion of the five year core investment period with over 16,000 new lighting columns and associated apparatus installed in the town and 90 signal junctions.

Following residents and Member requests and by negotiating with the Service Provider, street lighting will be provided in a number of vulnerable areas, these include Claremont Park, Moor Park and Acre Gate allotments.

Plymouth Road roundabout and Watson Road traffic signal junctions continue to be monitored, with the results and any changes being presented to the Highway Consultative Forum meeting.

Parking Services.

Blackpool Council and the Blackpool Town Centre BID have joined forces to launch two festive car parking offers ahead of the Christmas shopping period. The first offer, aimed at helping local firms and encouraging visitors and residents to discover Blackpool's wide variety of small shops on national "Small Business Saturday", will see free parking offered at all Council car parks on Saturday 6 December. The offer is available throughout the day and evening.

The second offer will see shoppers offered parking for a pound in four town centre car parks West Street, Central, Talbot multi-storey and East Topping Street. This offer will run on the four Thursday late night shopping events on 27 November and 4, 11 and 18 December from 5pm until midnight and on four Sundays 30 November 30, 7, 14 and 21 December. The Houndshill Shopping Centre car park will also be a pound to park from 5pm-midnight on the four Thursdays.

Equality and Diversity

Faith Engagement and Interfaith cohesion

The Council Leader has met with the Bishops of Blackburn and Lancaster with the aim of deepening strategic engagement between the Council and Churches and other faith groups active in Blackpool's social regeneration agenda. In consequence a series of initiatives are now being explored based on the recent "Good Neighbours" research of the Church Urban Fund into highly deprived communities. I have hosted a meeting of Blackpool Faith leaders in order to initiate local interfaith dialogue.

Hate Crime/ Incidents

The Council is working together with a locally based social enterprise, the Lancashire Hate Crime Hub, to run a series of pilot training workshops in Blackpool High schools to challenge the attitudes that can lead to Hate based incidents and Crime. This work will also provide important qualitative data on the extent and type of discrimination issues prevalent among young people in Blackpool.

Equality Objectives - strategic performance review

Under the Equality Act 2010, Blackpool Council along with all public bodies was required to publish one or more objectives to proactively further the aims of the statutory equality duty. An extensive consultation process was held during late 2011/ early 2012 focused on workshops with our key equality stakeholder groups. Four objectives were agreed by the Council in April 2012, in line with the statutory timetable.

Since these objectives have now been in place for two and a half years it is timely to reflect on how we are progressing. Consequently we are preparing a report that will examine both what we've achieved and what more needs to be done. The review report will be published and will inform the future development of our policy in Equality and Diversity.

Manager e-learning course

We are currently piloting a new advanced training course aimed at Managers and other Officers who require a detailed knowledge of equality law and practice.

Consultation

Consultation was concluded in October on a number of Highway schemes. These included resident parking in Layton and Park Wards, 20 mph zone in Waterloo ward and the introduction of traffic calming measures in Marton ward. Consultation included increased use of social media, publicity with local community groups and individuals as well as local businesses, schools, libraries, key community locations such as pubs and at the Area Forums. Relevant partners including the Police and Fire Service have also been consulted to ensure schemes are promoted as widely as possible.