

PLACE PORTFOLIOS

The 'Place' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Gillian Campbell - Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture
- Councillor Neal Brookes - Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform
- Councillor Jim Hobson - Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment
- Councillor Mark Smith - Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation

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

Strategic Issues

Getting Building Fund - £8.6 million for new Blackpool schemes

Part of the government's response to the economic impact of the pandemic was to award funds to accelerate capital projects within local growth programmes, which could generate new development activity within 18 months, to help create jobs and raise overall demand in the economy, providing a quick boost, post COVID-19. In response, Blackpool submitted two projects at relatively advanced stages via the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, both of which had been included in our Future High Streets Fund bid. The first is to deliver the next phase of the Houndshell Shopping Centre development via an extension allowing the private sector to invest in a new cinema, two restaurants and support the relocation of Wilko, with the second being an overhaul of Abingdon Street Market to deliver an improved retail and food hall offer, diversifying its appeal to more types of customer.

On 4 August, Government confirmed allocations to these two projects totaling £8.634 million, with full approval of this funding subject to the Enterprise Partnership undertaking a project bid appraisal, giving Board approval and contracting, a process that is underway. This is potentially a fantastic result, which will accelerate our plans and proves the value of having a continual "pipeline" of new projects, which can be developed quickly if suitable funding opportunities arise.

Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) submission and confirmation of projects

The Council submitted a final £25m bid to the Future High Streets Fund in July, seeking to deliver projects which improve the high street and transport links and help the town centre adapt to changing technology. Assuming that the Getting Building Fund money is confirmed by the LEP, the Wilko, cinema and market projects would now not be included in any award given, with the final list of projects consisting of:

- Former Post Office Acquisition and redevelopment - a development led by the private sector involving the delivery of a boutique hotel development, with FHSF monies being used as gap funding.
- King Street Rejuvenation through Property Acquisition - to acquire eight vacant properties on King Street to support the location of the planned major office development (the development of which is currently subject to a Non-Disclosure Agreement).
- Creative Business Incubation - to acquire and refurbish three vacant units in the town centre, creating new retail/maker units for small businesses including pop ups and art and culture businesses.
- Adelaide Street transport hub and access improvements - including bus shelters, taxi, cycle and pedestrian access facilities, directly supporting the Houndshill, Sands Hotel and Showtown developments.
- Innovation Partnership - using private sector expertise and contacts to introduce innovative digital retail technologies into high street businesses as pilot testbeds and benchmarks. These would directly support customer attraction and retention.
- Digital infrastructure - a scheme that works to deliver the gap in provision, where there is substantial digital infrastructure on the fringes of the town centre, but high street businesses are not currently able to access the bandwidth.
- Monitoring and Analytics Applications - support to consolidate and enhance existing footfall monitoring and analysis activity in the town, building a rich picture of retail and leisure visitors across the town to support funding bodies, the local authority, potential investors and local businesses.
- Fylde Coast Rail Study – a technical feasibility study and outline business case to support an extension of the current Blackpool-Fleetwood line to increase frequency and improve connectivity through a train or tram loop across the Fylde Coast and beyond.
- Application technology marketing and promotion – to introduce a town centre gift card and loyalty programme to stimulate economic activity through increased footfall and local spend.

A decision on the FHSF application is due in September or October 2020.

Town Deal

After approval by the Town Deal Board, the Council also submitted final plans for a Town Deal in July. The extensive community engagement process, which involved an online map tool plus outreach work to people not online, has been praised by the government's advisors as best practice and the Council has been invited to discuss its work with other authorities submitting their bids in future funding tranches. Over 30,000 people read about the Town Deal, with over 6,600 visiting the bespoke website, of which 1,119 chose to make detailed comments. A further 101 telephone interviews were carried out to ensure the proposals are grounded in an understanding of what local residents and stakeholders believe is needed for Blackpool to continue to grow and prosper and will be followed by more extensive engagement activity if our bid is accepted.

The bid included a Town Investment Plan covering wider investment beyond the value of the funding bid and covered both the context and strategic approach and the individual projects, which would drive the achievement of the overall objectives. It set out investment priorities, which build on Blackpool's assets and partnerships, whilst considering the regional context and its fit with the government's clean growth objectives.

The Town Deal Board supported schemes to a value of £50m for inclusion in the bid towards the following projects, set out under the five themes used in the engagement exercise.

- **Place** - includes the relocation of Blackpool magistrates court to enable the £300m Blackpool Central private sector development to take place and a feasibility study to look at the capital investment required to transform the Grundy Art Gallery into a 21st century, sustainable facility.
- **Economy and Enterprise** – includes the delivery of new road and access improvements to open up the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, reducing congestion on surrounding access roads and delivering associated investment to realise the potential of the Aquacomms new Trans-Atlantic fibre optic cable; an Innovation Partnership delivering a digital technology programme targeted at all sectors, but in particular for retail, leisure and public transport services and The Edge - Incubation Office Space in Stanley Buildings, the provision of high quality, high tech managed workspace for start-ups and small businesses within the Town Centre.
- **Communities** – the establishment of a community sports village in Revoe, with leisure, education and residential uses including property acquisition/demolition to support private sector development.
- **Skills** - feasibility work and acquisition of land to create the “Multiversity” - a new university experience that facilitates higher level upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning within the Town Centre, also freeing up an existing College site for residential development and repurposing a town centre community hub to provide a new Youth Hub, acting as a focus for skills training and employability support for young people and vulnerable groups outside the labour market.
- **Infrastructure:** modernisation of the Blackpool Illuminations to drive visitor numbers, with exciting and innovative new features.

Beyond the £50m of funding being sought, the bid also included “asks” of government in the form of a £500m Town Deal. The principle of the deal is that the government would commit to enabling other measures beyond funding through its policy and legislative programme. Our asks include ensuring the development of further town centre office space, asking for support to maximize the potential of Blackpool's high speed fibre connection to the North Atlantic Loop, extending the Opportunity Area programme and funding until 2030, extending the Enterprise Zone's fiscal benefits till 2026, investing and support the Fylde Coast Tram Loop, piloting intensive neighbourhood schemes in certain Blackpool wards and work with the town to rebuild the economy, reduce unemployment and tackle mental health following the COVID-19 crisis.

The Government will consider the priority schemes outlined for investment and respond within the next four to six weeks to confirm which schemes can be pursued. This will start the process of developing a full business case for each project and is the next step towards realising the funding.

Corporate Issues

Climate Assembly - preparations underway

After a lot of hard work behind the scenes, we are pleased to report that we will be holding Blackpool's first climate emergency event before the end of the year. An independent company will be recruiting approximately 50 residents from all walks of life. They will work with experts to learn about the issues and then consider how the Council and Blackpool as a whole can slash our carbon emissions down to a net zero position by 2030. This would represent a real achievement and would be more than pulling our weight in contributing to the national target to do this by 2050.

Alongside this work, we will be undertaking an exercise with leading experts to understand the most effective and economic way of reducing emissions quickly. We already know we can only achieve this if we can get everyone – individuals, businesses and other organisations – to play their part. To this end, we will shortly be establishing a Climate Action Partnership and inviting leading local organisations to take part, working together on innovative solutions we can share across Blackpool and further afield. We look forward to developing and announcing some exciting schemes on this front in future!

Transforming Services

Enjoy Summer Safely

VisitBlackpool was awarded £150,000 of funding to promote the resort as part of the Government's "Enjoy Summer Safely" campaign. The award, which was secured through a VisitEngland and Cabinet Office bidding process, funded a marketing campaign across parts of the north of England and included press advertising, digital and social media activity. The Blackpool campaign adopted a Welcome Back theme, focusing on the resort's family attractions and setting out the extensive work that has been undertaken by tourism businesses across the resort to create a COVID-safe environment. These measures include reduced capacity, allocated time slots, managed queuing areas, enhanced cleaning regimes, and extensive staff training.

Illuminations Switch-On

We may not have been able to get together for what is always one of the highlights of our year, but we did see a huge amount of national media coverage and we are sure you all logged on to see our first Virtual Switch-On event, which generated more than 225,000 views with people watching from all around the globe. The freely-accessible streamed show, which culminated in seven of the UK's Corona Heroes switching on the lights, created the biggest ever audience for a switch-on event. At one point, the show was trending at number six in YouTube's top ten

videos with people watching in Australia, Brazil, Netherlands, France, Ireland, Cyprus and America. Around 86,000 people watched the stream on the YouTube channel, a further 141,000 on Facebook.

The Switch-On moment was the centrepiece of an hour-long streamed event produced by MTV, which included “at home” performances by Melanie C, Becky Hill, Fleur East, Tom Grennan, Joel Corry, as well as an exclusive performance by Diversity and a live performance in the ballroom by Blackpool-born singer-songwriter Rae Morris.

2020 Illuminations

Blackpool’s 2020 Illuminations also feature a special tribute to the heroes of COVID-19 with a dazzling display of hearts and rainbows along the Golden Mile. The section includes the faces of 50 nominated “Corona Heroes”, paying homage to the extraordinary efforts of the NHS and other key workers from around the UK during the pandemic. They were selected from several hundred nominations by the Illuminations’ Creative Curator, Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen.

The Illuminations, which are being presented under a theme of Bring on the Light, will run from Friday 4 September through to 3 January 2021 – the first time the lights have shone over the Christmas and New Year period. Other new features in the 2020 display include a replica Spitfire, illuminated with search lights and video-mapped laser show on the Gynn roundabout. The replacement of all of the lighting on the Blackpool Tower has also been completed in time for this year’s display, meaning all four sides are fully lit for the first time in two years.

Highways

We reported at the last Council meeting that highway investment works to Topping Street and Queens Street were progressing well. Both schemes have now been completed on time, with really positive feedback from businesses on Topping Street as to the quality of the works.

The £4.5m Project Amber highway investment programme, which is funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) Challenge Fund is at phase two of the tender assessment process. This will see significant investment in our highway infrastructure, with DfT promoting the project as good practice in terms of innovative road treatments and recycling of materials.

Tree Strategy

As part of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, the Parks Development Team has developed a draft Tree Strategy, which relates to the Climate Change agenda and is currently out to consultation with key stakeholders. The draft strategy will be shared with the Scrutiny Committee in early October for feedback prior to the final version being developed.

Working with Partners

Waste Partnership

The Lancashire Waste Partnership, which includes ourselves and Blackburn with Darwen alongside the County Council and other Lancashire District Councils, is currently producing a new Municipal Waste Strategy. The strategy will link to the National Waste Strategy and recent Environment Bill, in particular centering on issues related to standardisation of recyclable materials, plastic packaging industry reforms, deposit return schemes and food waste. It will also incorporate the principles of the Circular Economy, which aims to reduce disposal of items in favour of re-use, but perhaps the main focal point of the local strategy is to develop an alternative to disposing of residual waste in landfill sites.

With this in mind, the development of an Energy from Waste (EfW)/Refuse Derived Fuel solution is emerging as the most likely suitable option. EfW facilities are becoming the preferred option in residual waste treatment both nationally and across Europe. These facilities incinerate residual waste while at the same time producing power to feed into the national grid and produce less harmful emissions compared to landfill. There are already two sites within Lancashire that have been granted planning permission for these types of facilities and the Lancashire Waste Partnership has already undertaken extensive engagement with potential developers.

The latest updated timeline for the first draft of the local strategy is early spring 2021, which will be shared with the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee.