

## CORPORATE PORTFOLIOS

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The 'Corporate' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Lynn Williams – Leader of the Council
- Councillor Ivan Taylor – Cabinet Member for Projects and Partnerships

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

#### **Brexit EU Withdrawal Agreement – ensuring our supplies**

We have worked hard to make sure that our key suppliers were able to continue to supply in line with our requirements throughout the uncertainty around the establishment of a trade deal between the UK and the European Commission. Food and utility suppliers were a particular priority, as this was where the greatest risk was envisaged, but all confirmed that they would still be able to meet our requirements, albeit they would pass any price increases due to tariffs onto us.

The deal struck between the UK and the EU at Christmas reduced this risk, although the situation continues to be monitored in order to ensure continuity of supplies. The changing market makes it particularly important to benchmark prices regularly, and ensure value for money for the council.

The Cabinet Office has issued a Green paper 'Transforming Public Procurement' for consultation, setting out a range of proposed changes to Procurement Regulations. The aim is to speed up and simplify procurement processes, and to ensure value for money whilst opening up opportunities for small businesses, charities and social enterprises to innovate in public service delivery. The consultation closes in March, and we are carefully reviewing the content to see whether this may deliver one of the "Brexit dividends" we've heard so much about.

### Corporate Issues

#### **The financial impact on the Council of COVID-19**

We have now lived with the operational and consequential financial demands of the Government's lockdown and restriction measures for almost 12 months. We have worked hard to deal with the tragic health and social consequences of the pandemic and the resultant increases in service demand and cost, whilst also experiencing a loss of income for Council

services, private sector providers, wholly-owned companies and our partners. As detailed in my previous reports we continue to use every tool at our disposal to cope with the effects of COVID and this will be the case well into the future.

The full-year forecast position at the end of month 9 of 2020/2021 shows a marked deterioration in the Council's financial standing when compared with the draft unaudited position as at the close of 2019/2020. There has been a slight reduction in the amount working balances are expected to fall by compared to our last report down to £8,461,000. £3,246,000 of this overspend is related to our COVID response, reflecting the current contribution which the taxpayers of Blackpool are being asked to make this financial year to support our community.

This burden would be even higher without contributions expected from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). We anticipate MHCLG will provide £15.884m for the 2020/2021 financial year due to the release of a fourth tranche of support funding, plus compensation being bid for under the Sales, Fees and Charges Scheme of £8.961m, whilst the CCG is now expected to contribute £3.635m to support with Enhanced Hospital Discharges.

In total, £121,402,772 of Central government funding has been made available to the Council, most of which has been in the form of Business Support Grants (£70.008m) and rate reliefs (£28.944m), with other substantial amounts of funding including spend on Infection Prevention and Control (£4.402m).

#### **General Fund Working Balances and Earmarked Revenue Reserves – maintaining a safety net**

As we have noted in previous reports, the Council's Revenue Budget for 2020/2021 set a target level of General Fund working balances of around £6m and despite the extraordinary circumstances, we are very keen that we maintain at least this level. We are now projecting that earmarked revenue reserves will fall from a record high to an estimated £27.182m by the end of the year. This should still be sufficient to underwrite the current year's financial risks, and we have developed a separate financial plan for the Council's wholly-owned companies.

#### **Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2021/2022 announced**

The Council's Provisional Finance Settlement for 2021/2022 was published on 17 December 2020. The specific details and implications of this announcement will be contained within the Council's Revenue Budget 2021/22 report. We are sure members will share our disappointment that the supposed "spending boost" has failed to materialise and we are again living with the uncertainty of short term funding arrangements at the expense of a properly planned approach.

#### **Business Grants – more money for Blackpool firms**

As at 20 January, we have made over £23.8m of payments to Blackpool businesses from the current round of funding, which includes both the latest one-off grants and the monies for the six-week lockdown period up until mid-February. Further payments under the eight schemes now in operation will be made over the coming weeks and from the Blackpool Business

Recovery Fund. The administration of these payments has been a collective effort by several teams within the Resources Directorate and the Business Support Team and our thanks goes to them for all their efforts. We received a further £1.23m discretionary funding in January and the priority will now be to focus on developing criteria for new applications that ensure we assist as many businesses as possible, including those who have not been able to access grant funding to date.

### **Self-Isolation Grants**

We have so far paid out a total of £155,500 in grants to assist those who have lost income whilst needing to self-isolate. The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has recently announced that the Scheme will be extended until the end of March 2021 and are reviewing the eligibility criteria.

### **Council Tax Reduction Hardship Awards**

We have awarded a total of £2.46m to Working Age Council Tax Reduction recipients as part of the Government's Council Tax Hardship Fund response to COVID. In line with the requirements of the grant, awards of up to £150 have been applied to each claimant's Council Tax account. In addition, a further £150,000 has been allocated from the Fund to assist people affected by the pandemic with Council Tax arrears, but not in receipt of Council Tax Reduction.

### **Increased demand on the Customer First and Benefits teams**

Reflecting the extent of the need across the town, our teams are taking more calls and processing more claims than last year. There are an additional 1,560 people claiming Council Tax Reduction compared to the end of March 2020, whilst calls to Customer First were up to 52,634 in the first two quarters of 2020 compared to 2019, an increase of 14.4%, and the number of emails dealt with by the team rose by 39.2%.

### **Working with Partners**

#### **Tackling the Climate Emergency with People Power**

We are proud to say that Blackpool's first ever climate assembly reached a conclusion on 2 February. Our partners FutureGov issued invitations to households selected at random across the town, 40 residents drawn from across the town were selected to be representative of our population in terms of age, sex, ethnicity and other factors. They have heard from experts working in the field and some of our most environmentally-aware local businesses, debating what needs to happen to make Blackpool carbon neutral.

The Climate Emergency declaration made special reference to involving young people. So our fantastic Headstart team worked with FutureGov to design their own Youth Climate Summit process, which led to 17 of them giving their time over two evenings to learn about the issues and share their views. This has led to some particularly important evidence on their opinions and feelings which we know the Assembly has considered carefully.

The final report is due in March. At the same time, we have commissioned the Carbon Trust to undertake some science-based work on what it would take for the Council and the Town to achieve a target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. We will consider the two sets of recommendations together and use them to form a plan to tackle the climate emergency over the next ten years. We already have some exciting plans at an early stage of development which we look forward to sharing in the near future.

This work will undoubtedly show how big the challenge we are facing is and we will have some difficult decisions to make, but if we can build on the energy and spirit shown by the participants, we have every chance of leading the way in tackling climate change.

## Transforming Services

Contracts awarded since the last meeting are as follows:

CONTRACT	PROVIDER (Locations)	TERM (including extensions)	CONTRACT VALUE	NO. OF INITIAL BIDS	NO. OF BIDDERS WITH FY POSTCODE
Hostile Vehicle Mitigation - guidance and advice in respect of strategic and technical installations	MFD International <b>(Hampshire)</b>	1 year <b>(2 years extension)</b>	£200,000	12	1
Highways Small Pavement Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colas <b>(West Sussex)</b></li> <li>• Geobear <b>(St Helens)</b></li> <li>• Henry Williams <b>(Wrexham)</b></li> <li>• Highways Force <b>(Suffolk)</b></li> <li>• JMS Lincoln <b>(Lincoln)</b></li> <li>• JPCS <b>(Cheshire)</b></li> <li>• Miles Macadam <b>(Cheshire)</b></li> </ul>	4 years	£7,000,000	29	1

CONTRACT	PROVIDER (Locations)	TERM (including extensions)	CONTRACT VALUE	NO. OF INITIAL BIDS	NO. OF BIDDERS WITH FY POSTCOD E
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multevo <b>(Darwen,Lancs)</b></li> <li>• Multipave <b>(Leyland)</b></li> <li>• NuPhalt <b>(Livingston)</b></li> <li>• RMS <b>(Cheshire)</b></li> <li>• Velocity <b>(Sunderland)</b></li> </ul>				
Enterprise Zone - Changing Rooms, Car Park Access Road Upgrade and Floodlit 3G Artificial Sports Pitch	Conlon Construction Ltd <b>(Preston)</b>	7 months	£2,500,000	4	0
Citizens Assembly – Deliberative Engagement Process on Climate Emergency	FutureGov <b>(London)</b>	3 months	£54,825	8	0
School based counselling services	Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust <b>(Blackpool)</b>	2 years <b>(2 years extension)</b>	£98,000	Direct award	1
NHS Data Processing	Quality Medical Solutions Ltd <b>(Bournemouth)</b>	1 year <b>(1+1+1 year extension)</b>	£56,244	6	0

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Audit and Overpayments Recovery Service	Meridan Cost Benefit t/a Recovery Audit <b>(St Alban)</b>	2 years <b>(1 + 1 year extension)</b>	Paid on Commission basis only Recovery savings up to £150,000 - 17% paid Recovery savings up to £500,000 – 16% paid	5	0
Tower Ballroom	Hayles & Howe Ltd <b>(Bristol)</b>	4 months	£904,000	3 – <i>(only 1 compliant submission received)</i>	1 – <i>(non-compliant submission)</i>
Pool Chemicals	BOC Ltd <b>(Manchester)</b>	1 year <b>(1 + 1 year extension)</b>	£12,000	1	0
Medical Advisor to Adoption Panel	Little Sprout Medical Ltd <b>(Blackburn)</b>	6 months <b>(3 months + 3 months)</b>	£33,612.80	Direct Award	0