

PLACE PORTFOLIOS

The 'Place' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Lynn Williams - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture
- Councillor Ivan Taylor – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Performance (Housing)
- Councillor Neal Brookes - Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Public Safety, Highways and Transport
- Councillor Jane Hugo - Cabinet Member for Climate Change
- 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

Our path to net zero

As we look forward to COP26 in Glasgow and hope for international agreement to accelerate action to tackle climate change, we are taking our own steps towards slashing carbon emissions in Blackpool. We have now thoroughly considered and accepted the vast majority of recommendations made by our Climate Assembly, incorporating their views into our first Climate Emergency Action Plan. This is now out for public consultation, with a final version very likely to be brought before Council at our next meeting. The plan will be considered at the first formal meeting of our Climate Action Partnership next month, bringing together key organisations to reflect on their contributions. Recognising the scale of the challenge ahead, we have invested in additional staffing resources as we work to help everyone play their part in tackling this increasingly urgent issue.

New developments at Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone

The Enterprise Zone continues to be a hive of activity, with multiple projects coming to fruition. Construction work will start on the new £3m Sports Changing facilities at Common Edge in late September. This follows hot on the heels of the high quality playing pitches welcoming their first grass roots football league fixtures in the middle of the month.

Multiply Components Ltd have started the fit-out of their new 40,000 sq ft facility on Amy Johnson Way, which they anticipate will take around three months, which they are hoping to open in February 2022.

Meanwhile, the live connection to Aqua Comms' high speed, high capacity international subsea fibre optic cable network, The North Atlantic Loop, is attracting national carriers, telecommunications and digital technology sectors. This has prompted multiple enquiries from businesses interested in locating data handling and management facilities on the Enterprise Zone, including one which has established a local office.

We continue to see evidence of demand for premises at the Enterprise Zone, and a strong pipeline of enquiries for premises. 15 new businesses have moved into the zone in the last quarter, which now supports 1883 jobs.

In addition, we are also actively pursuing other measures so that growth continues. We have now submitted the business case for Town Deal funding toward the cost of new and upgraded highways to serve the Enterprise Zone. The next step is to make the outline planning application for the development of the new roads, commercial and residential floor space on the site of the old Common Edge playing fields.

Blackpool Airport: continuing to provide vital services

In contrast to some of the region's larger airports, Blackpool Airport has remained fully operational throughout the pandemic, ensuring that vital service connections to the gas rigs in the Irish Sea have been maintained, thanks to the hard work and dedication of the whole airport team. This has allowed the airport to bounce back quickly as the aviation sector gradually recovers from the most severe difficulties it has faced in decades. With 5,000 total aircraft movements in both July and August, the airport exceeded pre-Covid 19 levels of use, making it the seventh busiest in the UK in July, including Blackpool favourites the Red Arrows display team and two Spitfire aircraft.

This activity masks reduced revenues throughout the pandemic. The airport did not meet Government qualification criteria for financial support, and with fixed costs remaining unchanged, this will significantly increase operating costs and restrict the ability to invest in infrastructure upgrades. However, work has been completed on a £150,000 repair and refurbishment of the 1940s control tower. This essential project will extend the life of the facility by four years, pending option studies to evaluate the options for long-term replacement.

Good progress has been maintained in the transfer of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) operating licenses to the airport company and this remains on track to take place at the end of October. A recruitment process has commenced to identify a managing director, in the expectation of filling the post in early 2022.

Corporate Issues

New quality, affordable homes and carbon savings at Grange Park

Blackpool Council is proud to continue to be a housing stock holding authority. Furthermore, we are now building quality, affordable Council homes again in significant numbers. Planning permission has now been granted for a new development of 131 new homes for affordable rent, comprising of 2 to 6 bed houses, bungalows and new sheltered housing. With the support of the European Social Fund, alongside £22m of council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) investment, these new homes will have a

number or energy saving measures and technologies, with 30 benefitting from carbon-saving ground source heat pumps as part of a wider package of measures to cut emissions across the estate. Work will start on this exciting development in the autumn.

Redevelopment of new homes at Troutbeck

Despite supply chain issues caused by Covid and Brexit, 18 new Council homes have so far been completed and handed over to Blackpool Coastal Housing for letting, and the first residents have moved into their new home. Once complete, the redevelopment scheme will provide a total of 75 new homes, a mix of one bed flats, two and three bed family homes and two bed accessible houses.

Regaining Control of the Foxhall Village Site

The Foxhall Village scheme has so far delivered 202 new homes across two phases, of which 79 are Great Places affordable units for rent, a further 27 are Heylo shared ownership and 86 are private market sales. The original plans included the provision of 410 new homes, but work stopped when the Developer Partner (Marcus Worthington/ Hollinwood Homes) went into Administration in October 2019. Whilst the Council stepped in to secure the site in the interest of public safety, no works could progress whilst in administration.

The Council has concluded a very protracted legal process and has finally accepted the surrender of the house builder's leases on the site. This means that the Council has now reclaimed formal ownership and control of the site. Whilst many challenges remain, the Council has already signed an exclusivity agreement with Great Places to work towards providing more affordable homes on the remainder of the site, alongside the provision of community sports facilities adjacent to the Football Club.

Blackpool Housing Company and Lumen: transforming housing in Inner Blackpool

Alongside the provision of greater number of Council homes, the Council is determined to continue to intervene to create better homes in the centre of Blackpool. Despite the impact of the pandemic, Blackpool Housing Company has added a further 59 homes to its stock in 2020/21, with the figure now standing at 504 quality, affordable homes in total. The company established its own Registered Provider, Lumen Housing, to diversify into the social housing sector. The regulator approved Lumen for operation in October 2020, since when it has developed 16 of these units, with plans to add a further 66 over three years.

Blackpool Local Plan: A blueprint for the town

The Council has now submitted the Local Plan Part 2 – Publication Version to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for Examination, along with representations made by the public and stakeholders during the consultation.

The Examination is likely to take place early December 2021, and will be led by an independent Planning Inspector. The Inspector may choose to undertake further consultation to aid their deliberations. Following the Examination, they will issue a report setting out their conclusions and including any modifications that are required to make the plan sound. The Planning team will then make the required amendments, and present the plan to Full Council for adoption, potentially around early summer 2022.

In addition, work started this summer on the 5-yearly review of the Local Plan Part 1 – Core Strategy. Covering the whole of the Borough, the Core Strategy sets out where new development such as housing, employment, retail and leisure should be located to meet Blackpool’s future needs up until 2027; identifies those areas which will be regenerated, protected or enhanced; and sets out development principles, such as design guidelines and affordable housing. The review process must conclude whether or not we need to update the policies in the Local Plan, and the extent and scope of the update. We then need to publish reasons for the decision we have made.

Issues under consideration include Blackpool’s development needs, cross-boundary working with neighbouring authorities, the need to respond to the Climate Emergency, other corporate priorities, and the effectiveness of the current policies in terms of Development Management and viability. We will know the scope of the update by next summer, and will publish a timetable setting out the work to be undertaken.

Draft Greening Blackpool Supplementary Planning Document Consultation

Green infrastructure has a vital role to play in Blackpool’s future development. It is widely acknowledged as playing a role in promoting economic growth and investment, health and wellbeing as well as increasing biodiversity and helping to mitigate against the effects of climate change.

The Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy Policy CS6 seeks to protect, enhance, create and connect green infrastructure and requires all new development to incorporate new or enhance existing green infrastructure. Where on-site provision is not possible, the policy ensures we can seek financial contributions to make appropriate provision for open space and green infrastructure.

This document seeks to amplify the requirements of Policy CS6 and includes for the provision of planting trees on-site and off-site, on-site and off-site public open space requirements in new housing development, biodiversity net gains, reducing surface water runoff and other green infrastructure and landscaping requirements.

The consultation closes on Monday 4 October 2021, with any amendments being included in the report to Executive for approval.

The fun starts for Showtown!

Following the signature of a lease with the building owner Coolsilk, work has started on site to create Blackpool’s Showtown museum of fun and entertainment. Based within the Sands Hotel Building on the Promenade, the work will take 72 weeks, and includes the base build by local construction company Conlons, the fit out of the exhibits, and a series of associated smaller contracts. The work will conclude in time for the grand opening on 1 April 2023.

Houndshill Shopping Centre extension gets underway

We are now underway with work on the extension to the Houndshill Shopping Centre, with Tower Street Car Park now closed and demolition works underway by Grahams contractors. Accommodating a new IMAX ready cinema, new Wilko retail store and two restaurants, the £20m scheme is part-funded by a grant of £5m that the Council has won from Getting Building Fund with the balance being funded

using Council borrowing powers. To enable the works, one lane on Coronation Street will be closed and a three-way signal in place until December 2022, which will cause some delays to traffic.

An exciting future for Abingdon Street Market

A new market hall and food hall will be delivered via £3.64m of funding that the Council has won from the Getting Building Fund. Parkinsons contractors have started work to remove asbestos and undertake other strip out works at Abingdon Street Market, with businesses being supported to relocate to a temporary location in the former Topshop on Victoria Street and other shops in the town centre.

Blackpool Central start date being planned

The Council's Planning Committee is scheduled to consider a hybrid planning application for the Blackpool Central scheme on 12 October 2021, which could result in works on the multi-storey car park starting in early 2022. This will enable sufficient parking spaces to be provided whilst the rest of the development work takes place, and will include 13 charge points for electric vehicles. The work will take approximately 18 months, during which there will be some disruption to the transport network in and around the site, together with a reduction in parking available on Central Car Park. Diversions will be in place in advance of Chapel Street in order to mitigate possible congestion.

Work is also continuing to enable future phases of the project. The relocation of the courts is crucial to the long-term delivery of the project, and an allocation from the Towns Fund has been made to facilitate this subject to a business case being approved. In parallel, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service are pursuing separate funding for the delivery of new facilities at their planned Devonshire Road site.

In the meantime, the Council has agreed to lease the Devonshire Road site to North West Ambulance Service on a temporary basis whilst they remodel their existing facilities at Waterloo Road. They will construct temporary accommodation on site during the autumn, which they will occupy from early 2022 until spring 2023.

Revoe Southern Quarter: proposals take shape

The Towns Fund is facilitating proposals to kickstart regeneration in Revoe ward, fulfilling some of the aspirations set out in the Revoe Masterplan document created with the community. These will include new community sports pitches, the expansion of Blackpool Football Club's East Stand, the provision of some public space and enhanced pedestrian links. Developed in collaboration with Blackpool Football Club, Blackpool Football Club Community Trust and the Council, and part funded by the private sector, the scheme has potential to encourage further significant private investment.

The changing face of Talbot Gateway

Robertson Construction Group Ltd have started on the construction works for the Hotel, Underpass and Temporary Car Park associated with the new tram terminus next to Blackpool North. The installation of the frame for the upper floors of the hotel started earlier this month, whilst the area required to complete the tramway extension was handed over to the Tram Contractor, Sisk, in April, with completion expected by the end of the year.

Transforming Services

Improving safety: upgrading our CCTV

We are investing £2m in a new CCTV system, and a further £100k into an annual revenue budget for the service. This will enable the switching off of the obsolete analogue system and a move to modern digital equipment. As part of this, the control room will be moved from Central Police Station to the basement of the Municipal Buildings where Public Protection are based, and additional staff will be accredited to monitor the system. We will also be purchasing a mobile unit that will give us greater flexibility in dealing with localised issues across Blackpool, as well as helping in emergencies and with event management.

The set-up of the new system has been a joint effort. The Tourism and Communities Scrutiny has been involved throughout this process via a review, and will continue to have a role in relation to additional cameras and requirements outside of the core system. We have also held discussions and a workshop with external partners including the Counter Terrorism Security Advisor, Police, Ambulance, Fire, Event Management, Emergency Planning, Business Improvement District and Event Management.

The new control room will also act as a much-needed Incident Co-ordination Centre and Event Management Centre when required. The total number of cameras will increase from 92 to 346, all with 360 vision, whilst the quality of the footage captured will be significantly higher, and a direct link to the Police's Digital Evidence Management System will make it more readily accessible. Currently, the system supports 32 loudspeakers used to "Warn and Inform" the public of an emergency or situation, and this will increase to 105.

Supported Housing Review

The Government must legislate to properly regulate supported housing, and we continue to work to influence appropriate policy. As part of this, Blackpool was one of five pilot areas awarded funding to conduct a review of the supported housing market, with an emphasis on assessing demand, quality of support, and value for money. The pilots intend to improve supported housing at a local level, but also create an evidence base for government to inform future policy and regulation.

The first nine months have focused on scrutinising Housing Benefit claims, inspecting accommodation standards, and reviewing support plans and understanding demand to establish a baseline of information. The pilot is now entering the final phase and this evidence base will allow us to make conclusions about the current situation. Service users and people with lived experience, including a team of Young Inspectors, have made a crucial contribution throughout the project.

Project Amber – preserving our roads

The Highways and Traffic team has completed the first phase of their Project Amber initiative along Blackpool's three main north to south routes in time for the Illuminations Switch On event. Work treating and preserving the Promenade, Progress Way and Squires Gate Lane was carried out at night to minimise disruption, with the carriageway being preserved by using an innovative preventative treatment. The works will improve sustainability by extending the life of the classified network, reducing

the need to resurface roads and reactive maintenance. Work on the other two key north to south routes will take place in 2022, to be followed by the Residential Road Network.

Working with Partners

Funding for tackling fuel poverty and reducing energy use

In July 2020, the Chancellor announced a £2billion Green Homes Grant scheme to upgrade homes across England, of which £500million was allocated to Local Authorities through the LAD scheme. The aim is to improve the energy efficiency of homes in low-income households, which would help to reduce fuel poverty, phase out high carbon fossil fuel heating, and delivering progress towards the UK's commitment to net zero by 2050. The council, acting as the Lead Authority for Lancashire and the Cosy Homes In Lancashire initiative, successfully bid for £2million which will improve the energy efficiency of approximately 300 homes including 60 Blackpool Coastal Housing properties, through a combination of insulation, double-glazing and renewable heating measures. The scheme was launched in March 2021 and is expected to complete in October 2021.

The Council has also been awarded £2.7million of funding on behalf of Lancashire authorities from the Warm Homes Fund established by the National Grid with Community Interest Company Affordable Warmth Solutions. The aim of the Fund is to help fuel poor households, who do not use mains gas as their primary heating fuel, to apply for a free gas connection and to have a free gas central heating system installed and as a result reduce fuel bills, improve the thermal comfort of a property and improve health outcomes. To date the fund has helped over 900 households across Lancashire to have gas central heating installed, of which 284 were in Blackpool. A further £3.9million has been allocated to Lancashire which will help a further 1,250 properties.