

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

New Conference and Exhibition Centre: Open for Business

This fabulous addition to the town's business tourism offer has welcomed its first meetings following its hand over to the Council and in turn to Blackpool Entertainment Company Ltd (the Winter Gardens). We are very much looking forward to attracting further major conferences to the town including the Conservative Party's Spring Forum.

Levelling Up

The UK Levelling Up Fund is a capital scheme which will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. This includes a range of high value local investment priorities, including transport schemes, urban regeneration projects and cultural assets.

Our bid, which covered three projects seeking a total of £20 million, was unsuccessful and there has been little feedback to date as to why. Blackpool is still eligible for two further bids and potentially a third transport-related bid, but until the Government publishes its proposed

Levelling Up White Paper and the guidance and timescales for Round 2 bidding, there is significant uncertainty with the process. Nevertheless, our officers have commenced early discussions on potential projects for submission in the next bidding round in order to be as prepared as possible. We have also committed to running a comprehensive consultation exercise with local residents and businesses in South Shore to understand what the priorities and challenges are for the area, despite not receiving government support. The Council will therefore have to put a full action plan in place to support the development of the community and environment of the area.

Climate Action Partnership underway

I am pleased to report to Members that Blackpool's first Climate Action Partnership meeting took place in January. The meeting included representatives from across the public, private and voluntary sectors learning of the plans put in place by the Council and Blackpool Teaching Hospitals, whilst a presentation from ATOS explored the attitudes of businesses in the town towards carbon neutral targets. Breakout sessions identified areas of common interest and joint work, which will all feed into our Climate Emergency Action Plan as it evolves.

Corporate Issues

Suspected Avian Influenza Outbreak at Stanley Park Lake

I am sad to report the death of over 20 wild birds so far, following the suspected outbreak in early December 2021. Although only one bird has been tested and confirmed as having the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza (AI), as the testing of sick or dead wild birds does not routinely take place, the other deaths meet the criteria for assuming the cause was Avian Influenza.

The Council has implemented a multiagency response, putting a biosecurity cordon in place around Stanley Park Lake to prevent visitors to the park walking in a potentially infected area. The cordon also included signage explaining to visitors its purpose and instructing not to breach it, supported by social media communications warning people not to touch birds or breach the cordon. Communications have also covered the need for anyone keeping birds to follow the Animal and Plant Health Agency advice, with a web page seeking the voluntary registration of flocks to receive further information in future. UKHSA has acknowledged that this is a sensible and proactive approach. The cordon will remain until a suitable length of time has passed following further deaths.

Showtown Museum Project on Target for Completion

The basebuild contractor, Conlons, have completed works including the interior walls and the acoustic lining of the museum, and are moving on to the installation of ducting and pipework for the mechanical and electrical first fix. Work has also started with the four main exhibition contractors, which includes the physical exhibition fit-out, the audio-visuals and the manual interactives – all the fun things which will make Showtown a roaring success!

A museum is nothing without an audience, and the team are making sure that public engagement continues throughout the build. This includes co-production activities working with community groups to create content that form part of the exhibition, truly making it a museum created with and by Blackpool people.

Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone: Delivering the Masterplan

The revised delivery plan and annual progress report on the Enterprise Zone will be presented to the Council's Executive in February 2022, reflecting updated modelling of the forecast retained business rates income, as a result of changed layouts and delayed delivery dates for built development.

Conlon's Construction commenced work on construction of the new changing pavilion site for the sports pitches in late September, part funded by a £250,000 grant from the Football Foundation, with completion expected by June 2022. Following the completion of the new sports pitches, a phased release of existing pitches will permit highway preparation works to progress. The existing Jepson Way changing facilities will continue in use for the interim period. Meanwhile, detailed design work is progressing for the design and construction tendering of the associated 3G pitch and rugby pitches, with a contract scheduled to be let in February/March to enable operation from Autumn 2022.

Construction of the remodelled junction at Division Lane West will commence in spring 2022 with the intention that this is completed prior to the main holiday season commencing in June. Further design work has continued for both the Eastern Gateway Access and the Common Edge Road junction upgrade, with further site investigations commissioned following the appointment of Wilde Consulting.

An application to the Blackpool Towns Fund for £7.5m toward the costs of an overall £18m project to provide new highways and enabling utility infrastructure and drainage has been approved by the Town Deal Board and the Council's Executive and also formally signed off by

DLUHC in December. This project will incorporate the remodelling of Common Edge Road between School Road and Division Lane incorporating traffic signalled junctions, the construction of the Eastern Gateway access road to link Amy Johnson Way and Common Edge opening a further 10.5ha land for commercial development. The project will also enable two new access points to be constructed from Amy Johnson Way to the Eastern side of the Airport to support development of new aircraft hangars.

Growing and Greening the Enterprise Zone

Practical completion of the Multiply development took place in August with contractors Eric Wright Construction continuing work on the internal fit out which is progressing well and on target to complete in January 2022, allowing the building to be fully operational by March. Meanwhile, the Aquacomms base station facility is operational, and three wayleaves for telecommunication companies agreed. There are presently seven enquiries for data centres that have been generated as a result of the EZ's enhanced connectivity, reflecting a surge in interest from this sector driven by our team.

Linking into our climate emergency ambitions, the intention is to promote Blackpool Enterprise Zone as the leader in "greening the data sector". This will be reflected in our marketing material and we are assessing the feasibility of a direct power connection from Walney Island wind farm to the Enterprise Zone, complementing the proposals for onsite solar power generation at the airport.

Overall demand for commercial property is far greater than the present availability of stock or development plots. Growth in the number of businesses is reflected in an increase of business rates relief applications, which expire on 31 March 2022. Sadly a national campaign looking to extend the benefits of the Enterprise Zone looks to have been unsuccessful, although lobbying continues. Several existing Enterprise Zone occupiers are also looking to move to larger units as they continue to grow. These enquiries will be confirmed and delivery accelerated as the detailed designs for the highways are completed. The owners of Squires Gate Industrial Estate continue subdividing and letting units to meet demand, with the team engaging the owners around opportunities for new development on limited areas of the site.

Since its Enterprise Zone designation in 2016, Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone has attracted circa £50m pounds of private sector investment, generating c.350,000 sq ft (32,516 sq m) of new commercial development, supporting over 130 new businesses to the site and 1,950 new jobs to date against a 25 year target of 5,000. Great progress for Blackpool.

Blackpool Airport: Exciting Developments Ahead

The Council has been successful in an application for consultancy and business advice to help with the redevelopment of the airport with the Airport Development Advisory Fund. This will help with commercial marketing activity to help secure new business, assess and identify viable routes, potential operators and partner airfields. The Council also sought advice on the potential suitability of new technology to support air traffic control, an airspace modernisation strategy, alternative power generation and electric aircraft operations, all of which are helping to inform the business plan and identify ways to improve the airport's sustainability from both a commercial and environmental perspective.

In March the airport announced the intention to take the operational Civil Aviation Authority licences back into its own name to help ensure the airport's long term future. Blackpool Airport Operations Ltd (BAOL) having direct control means that the airport can maximise opportunities for growth, with a greater level of control and flexibility to take investment decisions, and to be more efficient and cost effective.

Discussions have continued to base a new CPL training facility at the airport initially looking at cohort of 20 pilots per annum and potentially rising to 100. Similarly discussions are ongoing for provision of specialist helicopter pilot and engineering training facilities, with the airport looking to capitalise on opportunities to become a major centre for aviation industry training. Key to progressing development and securing additional business rests with the relocation of the existing control tower and provision of new and replacement hangar accommodation and apron predominantly within the Fylde Greenbelt.

Improving sea defences across the Fylde Coast

The Outline Business Cases for the Little Bispham to Bispham and Gynn Square to Cocker Square Coast Protection Schemes are nearing completion, ready for submission to the Environment Agency's Large Project Review Board by the end of January 2022. These schemes are crucial to prepare for the impact of climate change, which will bring further adverse weather conditions and higher sea levels. Two stakeholder meetings have been held to engage and inform all those involved with the projects, with future stakeholder meetings to come following the outcome of the Large Project review Board's appraisal and approval of proposed options.

The Council has also been successful in its application for £342,000 funding to prepare a study leading to the submission of an outline business case for Beach Nourishment Works, which

would provide additional natural protection for the shore. The Environment Agency has already allocated £12m for this proposed scheme.

Further down the coast in Fylde borough, Blackpool Council has been allocated £1 million by the Environment Agency to continue to improve the sand dune habitat from Starr Hill Sand Dunes to Lytham Green, providing a natural means of coast protection for 493 residential properties and 8 businesses.

Blackpool's successful bid for future funding from 2022 – 2027 means that work will continue following on the past nine successful years to improve the standard of protection. Delivered in partnership with Fylde Borough Council and the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, the works include fencing off vulnerable areas, thatching the dunes to help them grow using donated recycled Christmas trees, transplanting of Marram and Lyme grass, the removal of invasive non-native species, and the provision of pedestrian access routes aligned away from the prevailing wind direction. The funding will also help to continue community and volunteer engagement, and implement the recommendations of the Geomorphological Study undertaken in 2016.

Bathing water quality

Blackpool Council consistently complied with its duty to erect signage at its four bathing water sites to inform bathers during the 2021 bathing season. Blackpool still faces challenges due to sources of pollution but continues to work in partnership to better understand how the challenges can be mitigated collectively. The results for 2021 are as follows:

Blackpool South – Good

Blackpool Central - Good

Blackpool North – Sufficient (the Environment Agency has categorised this as a priority water so work can continue to establish the source of pollution in more detail.)

Bispham – Excellent

The council has applied to Keep Britain Tidy for Seaside Awards for all four bathing water sites.

Working with Partners

Blackpool Central: Another Major Milestone Reached

Following various planning approvals, the Council and developers of Blackpool Central (Nikal Ltd) have completed on the conditional terms of the Land Sale Agreement on 22 December

2021. This major milestone marks the start of not just the construction of the new 1300 space multi-storey carpark, but ultimately the delivery of one of the most exciting new leisure developments in Europe.

Work on the site will start in early February, with completion of the car park scheduled for summer 2023. Central Car Park will remain available for parking, but normal access from Seaside Way will be disrupted from early March this year, as the contractors take control of the site. We are working on appropriate traffic management measures to mitigate the impact of this, to include appropriate signage to alternative networks routes across the town.

During the delivery of the construction of the multi storey car park, the developers will be working hard to prepare for the detailed planning submission for the rest of the scheme. The Council have made the application to Government office for the Compulsory Purchase Order of all other remaining interests on the site, and we will be continuing to press forward with this over the coming months. In the meantime we are continuing to negotiate with the third party interests in effort to reach mutually agreeable terms where possible.

Talbot Gateway Phase 2: Hotel and Infrastructure

Robertson Construction Group Ltd continue to progress well on the construction works for the Hotel, Underpass and Temporary Car Park. The installation of the light-weight frame for the upper floors is almost complete, and work has started on the construction of the new underpass between the train station and the new tram terminus under High Street. Following the completion of the frame work will start on the facades and the internal fit-out works. The current hope is to test trams on the new track in February 2022.

Public Consultation on Stanley Park Golf Course Proposals

HIP/UKAP have undertaken 3 well attended public consultation sessions, seeking feedback to inform the final design. We expect a planning application to follow in 2022.

Preparing for the New Abingdon Street Market

Whilst Parkinsons continue to strip out the existing building, the Council is in discussions with a number of parties regarding the future operation of the market. This has resulted in some interesting proposals, which we are reviewing for the quality of the offer and the ability to attract more different types of customer.

Transforming Services

Supported Housing Review Pilot Concludes

The local area pilot has now concluded, with the Tourism Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee approving the report. The Committee recommended that the council endorses the Supported Housing Standards for Adults and separate Youth Standards and Charter, and that we continue to lobby the Government on regulation or legislation so we can enforce our approach to supported housing as set out in the agreed standards.

The pilot team is currently working to finalise the quality standards and the Council's market position statement, which will be published on the Council's website shortly. We will also be making a submission to a government's Select Committee enquiry alongside the other 5 pilot areas and the Local Government Association.

UK Housing Awards – Council of the Year!

I am very proud to tell you that that in November 2021 Blackpool Council was successful in winning the coveted "Council of the Year" award at the Inside Housing, UK Housing Awards.

The submission focused on our work together with our Housing Companies to keep building, intervening and keep people safe. Praising our "meaningful impact", the judges were impressed by investment to increase the quality of local housing and also noted that "The outcomes achieved during the pandemic, for example the number of families helped out of a homelessness emergency, through 'Everyone In', as well as interventions in the private rented sector to increase access to affordable tenancies, were impressive." Congratulations to all concerned!

New Housing Developments

Far from resting on our laurels, we continue to seek opportunities to develop quality new affordable housing for local people. Work at Troutbeck and Grange Park continues to progress well, despite challenges related to the pandemic and supply of materials. Site preparation and stopping up is well underway for Phase 1 at Grange Park, and so far 36 of the total 75 new homes at Troutbeck have been handed over for letting.

Homelessness: Current Position and Funding

There is significant continued pressure on our homelessness service, due to a combination of the continuing pandemic, the cold weather, and the impact of the ending of the eviction ban. Numbers in temporary accommodation are relatively stable at around 90 households, with a

flow of people moving into more permanent settings sadly balanced by high demand. Little additional funding will be available to tackle this in 2022/2023, with the annual Homelessness Prevention grant for 2022/2023 confirmed at the same level as 2021/2020 (£577k), although an additional £21k is available via New Burdens funding due to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and £90k is available for the “Protect and Vaccinate” scheme.

Project Amber: Reducing Potholes and Emissions

To date over 350 roads have received maintenance under Project Amber, with the innovative approach and materials being used delivering a carbon reduction of 90 tonnes from one contractor alone. Further projects scheduled during the year include Waterloo Road, Ashburton and Sherbourne, parts of Anchorsholme, Rosedale Avenue and Leopold Grove. Waterloo Road centre is scheduled to start in late February with works to be completed before Easter, whilst Red Bank Road which will be a “net zero carbon” scheme, will start on site in summer 2022.

Promising start for our Climate Emergency Action Plan

The Council has placed in the top 25% of Local Authorities in the UK for the quality of our approach to tackling the Climate Emergency. Detailed analysis by the not-for-profit campaigning group Declare A Climate Emergency UK considered how well our plan was integrated into other policies, the ambition of the actions and the strength of our commitment to tackling the problem, amongst other factors. We scored 61% - the highest in Lancashire - and were placed equal 6th amongst the most deprived authorities in the country. In particular, our approach to Community Engagement scored highly, with a score of 9 out of 9 demonstrating our commitment to putting our communities at the heart of addressing one of the most important issues of our time. I can also report that the September cut-off date for evidence means that we would now score even higher and we have firm plans in place to improve our scores in other categories.