

PLACE PORTFOLIOS

The 'Place' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Lynn Williams - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism, Arts 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

Blackpool honours Her Majesty with Platinum Jubilee celebrations

Blackpool marked the start of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in our inimitable way, with a spectacular seafront display of trams, lights, lasers and fireworks. After staging one of the largest heritage tram parades in living memory, the resort joined thousands of locations and landmarks across the UK in taking part in the Jubilee Beacon Lighting ceremony. Following a reading of the Royal Proclamation and a bugler fanfare, the heart on the centre of The Blackpool Tower revealed a countdown to the firing of red, white and blue laser beams from three separate locations: the top of The Blackpool Tower, Pleasure Beach and the Blackpool and Fylde College campus. I'm sure we all feel that we did the Queen proud and would all again send our very best wishes to her in reaching this unprecedented milestone for a reigning UK and Commonwealth monarch.

Levelling Up Fund Round 2 application

As highlighted in the Executive decision [EX19/2022 Levelling Up Fund](#) agreed at its meeting on 25 April 2022, the Council is required to submit bids into the cross-departmental Levelling Up

Fund via an online portal by 6 July 2022. An enhanced transport-specific bid based on the original Levelling Up Fund Round 1 Town Centre Access Scheme (TCAS) will be submitted. There will also be two further separate bids, one to support the Multiversity scheme to deliver a carbon-neutral facility for the College and the other with regards to regenerating the former Post Office on Abingdon Street into a private sector-led boutique hotel scheme.

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and Multiply – a work in progress

As highlighted in the Council Executive meeting on 16 May 2022, an investment plan for Shared Prosperity Fund must be submitted by 1 August 2022. An initial exercise to pull together potential projects has identified schemes well in excess of the funding available, with the schemes now being prioritised by members of the Town Deal Investment Panel working with Council officers.

A separate Investment Plan for the Multiply programme, which is designed to raise numeracy skills and which will be funded by money earmarked by the government for the SPF, will need to be submitted by 30 June 2022.

LGA funding awarded for solar study

The Council has been successful in applying for £25k of Local Government Association funding from the Housing Advisers Programme. The money will be used to assess the potential power which could be generated by using roofspace on Blackpool Coastal Housing and My Blackpool Home properties. Key to the work is looking at business and delivery models which would ensure the financial benefits of solar power can be shared with tenants. Initial work is underway to assess the potential of the properties, with the study due to complete in the Autumn.

Corporate Issues

Geoff Reeves

Our colleague Geoff Reeves who retired only last year died suddenly in Victoria Hospital in March of this year. Geoff was well known to hundreds of businesses in Blackpool having successfully led the Council's Get Started Business Start Up service and before that working with the Prince's Trust on business support. He was passing on his wealth of business experience to people in his home town after serving as General Manager of Coca Cola in the UK and running his own start up business. Geoff grew up on Grange Park Estate and was passionate about his home town. Anybody who met him would describe him as always happy

and cheery despite his own health struggles in later years and his positivity was infectious. Many businesses in town owe their success to Geoff and he will be sadly missed by them and all of his colleagues here at the Council. Our thoughts, of course, remain with Geoff's family and friends who have lost a truly remarkable human being.

The End of an Era - Will Britain, Head of Highways and Traffic Management, retires

I am sad to report to you all the retirement of one of our most well-known figures of staff on 31 May after 43 years of service. Will Britain started working for Blackpool Council's Highways and Traffic Management Division back in 1979, working his way through roles which gave him a wealth of experience, expertise and knowledge in highway services. In 2015 he was appointed as Head of Highways and Traffic Management, where he developed and led the service to be an exemplar of national good practice promoted by the Department for Transport. In particular he formed the Local Council's Road Innovation Group (LCRIG), which shares good practice and procurement in all Highway matters and has become the largest group in the sector with more than ninety local authority members, hosting annually the country's largest highways conference – a fitting legacy of his leadership and collaborative skills. His passion, enthusiasm and commitment is legendary in the sector and he has had a whole host of projects recognised nationally, including Project 30 and Project Amber. Recently awarded a lifetime achievement award at the National Highways Conference by the Department for Transport, Will has truly been an inspiration in the highways sector and a great leader, champion and ambassador. I am sure we would all like to send him our best wishes for his very well-earned retirement.

Another step forward for Blackpool Central

Delivery of the Blackpool Central scheme has now commenced on site with the construction of the new multi-storey car park, as part of the 'Enabling Phase'. This is yet another major milestone and step forward in the delivery of the project by the developers, Nikal Ltd. The work on the car park began at the end of March 2022 and should complete in August 2023, with the Council taking a long leasehold interest in the occupation and management of the car park once it is completed. Once complete, it will free up the remaining surface carpark land in preparation for the delivery of the main leisure attractions (Phase 1). This will be followed by the remodelling and refurbishment of the King Edward buildings along Central Drive (Phase 2).

The Council has agreed new short-term lease arrangements with occupants of Bonny Street Market and the King Edward Public House, allowing them to continue to trade until the end of November when they will vacate the site in preparation for redevelopment. The compulsory purchase order, which was submitted by the Council in July 2021 and would see the acquisition of the outstanding third party interests, is currently awaiting determination by the Planning

Inspectorate. Discussions continue to take place with central government departments with respect to the relocation for the courts, which would facilitate the delivery of Phase 3 of the Developers proposals.

Houndshill extension proceeding to plan

The Steel frameworks adjacent to the existing car park elevation and further groundworks were completed week commencing 30 May 2022. Scaffolding to the West Elevation is now in place and demolition to external walls has commenced to make the connection with the existing centre. The cinema operator is finalising discussions with a world leading cinema technology supplier and discussions are currently ongoing with a potential new department store retailer to replace the former Debenhams department store.

Rejuvenated Abingdon Street Market draws closer

The first phase of the works to transform Abingdon Street Market is expected to complete later this year, ready for fit out by a new market operator. The appointment of the operator will be crucial in realising our vision for the future market and food hall offer, with Council officers engaged in discussions over this currently. Details of the provider will be announced in due course.

Town Deal Scheme Progress Update

Progress on the seven Town Deals schemes are as follows:

1. **Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone** - Wildes Consultant Engineers have been appointed to lead on design feasibility through to detailed design and the compilation of the specification and tender documents. Area F (junction at Division Lane) is at the detailed design stage and Areas A (Amy Johnson Way/Airport east link) C (Amy Johnson Way realignment) D (New link road – Amy Johnson Way to Common Edge) and E (Common Edge corridor/School Road junction) are all currently at the outline stage. A desktop ground investigation scope has been prepared and a ground investigation scoping report has been published. The sports pavilion car park is 60% complete which, when complete, will release 194 additional parking spaces for the Common Edge site. The project has completed the purchase of a key property within the project site and planning permission for its demolition can now be sought. However, inflation is now a major concern as construction related prices have increased by up to 25%. The project delivery team has commenced discussions on how to mitigate/address the inflationary issue.

2. **The Youth Hub ('The Platform')** – The formal launch of The Platform at the Youth Hub took place on 17 March 2022. 148 of the 300 target beneficiaries have engaged with 'The Platform', with 22 of the 75 target beneficiaries having moved into education or training as a result of the support given, whilst a further 18 beneficiaries have moved into employment as a result of the support given.
3. **Revoe Community Sports Village** – After saving £200,000 on the contract following a two-round tender process, work has been undertaken to remove spoil from the surrounding site, with our attention now turning to the land preparation tender process. A draft funding agreement has been prepared between the Council and Blackpool Football Club, whilst the scope of works is currently under review.
4. **The Edge** – Planning approval has been received and progress with surveys, demolition works and branding are on track, with start on site expected in late August / early September 2022. Work is progressing to agree the final scope of works and pricing with the appointed main contractor, Eric Wright Group. The expected completion of tender is maximum price and therefore formal Council funding agreement and contract for works is expected to be in place by end of July 2022. The forecast cost currently exceeds the budget but this will be addressed through the agreement of the Agreed Maximum Price. Funding is also being sought for measures to address the energy efficiency of the building and therefore the overall carbon footprint.
5. **The Illuminations** – Designs for the 2022 Illuminations have been finalised, which includes the new proposed illuminations feature, 'Odyssey'. Currently, two large 3D beach ball features and tower projection improvements have been delivered and the rebuild of the Venus Reborn tableau to include three large LED screens completed. The cliffs tableaux and road sections have been upgraded with internal LED lighting, with feeder pillars installed around the town. The next step is to undertake improvements to Talbot Square and the Talbot Road network.
6. **Multiversity** - The memorandum of understanding between Blackpool and the Fylde College and the Council has now been signed. The current designs for the Multiversity are to be amended as part of the process of securing the funding to deliver the Multiversity including a Levelling Up Fund bid submission by July 2022. Business Properties in the targeted area for land acquisition have received letters and negotiations to acquire have commenced.

- 7. Blackpool Central Courts Relocation** – A demolition strategy report has been commissioned and received from Hermolle Associates. A geotechnical survey has been undertaken to support the structural report, with boreholes and ground investigation works being undertaken on site. Her Majesty’s Court and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) are assessing the proposed relocation site, Devonshire Road. An analysis of the costs has been undertaken by the Council's internal Chartered Quantity Surveyors to inform the proposed budget position and anticipated project costs. No definitive decision from HM Treasury has yet been provided to HMCTS on funding the new courts buildings.

Staff Sustainability Alliance – greening our work

I am pleased to report that the latest development on our path to net zero is the formation of a new group by and for staff who want to play a more active part in making the Council more sustainable. The Climate Assembly made it clear that people wanted to see the Council “getting its own house in order” so we would be seen as a credible local leader on the decarbonisation agenda. The group will be led by the Green and Blue Infrastructure Manager and has already started work on a host of projects from litter picking and improving recycling in our offices through to sharing information on Electric Vehicles.

Commonwealth Baton Relay

Blackpool has been selected as one of the places to host The Queen’s Baton Relay ahead of this year’s Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. The relay began with a five-day tour of London during the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and then resumed an international journey taking in the Falkland Islands, Channel Islands, the Isle Of Man and the UK home nations. On Saturday 16 July 2022, the relay will arrive in Blackpool for a special event where the baton will be paraded on the Comedy Carpet and in The Blackpool Tower. The relay will then move on to other parts of England before finishing its journey in Birmingham for the Games Opening Ceremony on 28 July 2022.

Let’s go on with the Show...town

The Showtown museum project is now well into its final phase, with Conlon Construction anticipating completion of the building works by the autumn. Meanwhile, our exhibition contractors are busy developing the main exhibition displays based around our six themes: the seaside, magic, circus, the Illuminations, dance and shows and will be able to start their own work on site over the summer. For those of you who cannot wait, our learning and engagement team have set up an activity hub on Victoria Street with lots of fun activities to whet the appetite over the summer.

Transforming Services

A fourth night of Fireworks

A fourth fireworks event has been added to Blackpool's autumn events programme as part of a new sponsorship deal with Coral Island. The seafront family entertainment centre will put its name to the three World Fireworks Championship Blackpool events that were announced earlier this year and also to a new UK showcase display in October half-term. Three countries will participate over alternate Saturdays on 17 September, 1 October and 15 October, with the showcase event taking place on Friday 28 October 2022.

Playground Investments

Over the next few months we will see the start of considerable investment within seven of our playgrounds which include Stanley Park, Bispham Cliff Tops, Gynn Gardens and more. The playground improvements include the renewal of existing equipment, new equipment and new layouts.

Ranger Service

The Rangers are continuing to educate children in outdoor learning with investment from ward councillors to improve Revoe Gardens, purchase equipment and fund further sessions. The Rangers are also organising regular events which included a Jubilee event for children living in the 7 priority wards as identified in the funding specification to attend, which included learning activities, refreshments, cook and eat sessions and funded lunches.

Working with Partners

Destination Marketing

Blackpool has launched its biggest ever marketing campaign "Only in Blackpool", which has been spearheaded by a new "spokesbird" Nigel C Gull. The £1.3 million partnership between Merlin Entertainments, Blackpool Council, Blackpool Tourism Business Improvement District and other partners features the specially-created seagull puppet, voiced by actor and comedian Johnny Vegas. The campaign seeks to showcase our resort's wide range of attractions and reaffirm its position as the UK's capital of fun and ultimate destination for families.

Stanley Park Skate Park

A new £220,000 skate park facility in Stanley Park was opened on 17 May 2022. The Skate Park was developed in collaboration with the local community through the development of the Stanley Park Skate Park Group. The group raised the required funds from Sport England, Suez Communities Trust and Blackpool Council through developer commuted sums contributions. The street style skate park was designed and built by a world renowned specialist from Latvia and includes ramps, steps and rails.

Tree Planting

The Parks Development Team has been making good progress in all areas to enhance our parks and green spaces. We are planning numerous tree planting projects which will be implemented within the planting season. This includes restoring tree avenues and vistas within our parks, community tree planting projects which are being led by the Rangers and by our Parks Volunteer Coordinator, whilst also working with external partners and Enveco to enable successful tree planting bids.