

## DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE – COUNCILLOR IVAN TAYLOR

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Portfolio areas of responsibility:

- Relationships with all the Council wholly owned companies and the shareholder lead Cabinet Member
- Relationships with partner organisations:
  - Blackpool Tower complex and associated buildings (Merlin)
  - Hounds Hill Shopping Centre
- Corporate strategy development and research
- Governance
- Contracts, policy and purchasing

### Introduction

The cabinet member will present the report to Council and report on any key issues.

### Theme 1 – Blackpool Tower Investment

Since acquisition by Blackpool Council in 2010, the steel structure of Blackpool Tower has benefitted from an ongoing renewal programme, which has addressed a considerable number of requirements including partial lift pit and lift shaft steel replacement, installation of new access ladders and platforms, the replacement of a range of individual steel members and connection details, and repainting.

Whilst the Tower is in good condition overall it is necessary to protect this iconic asset for the town and indeed the country from deterioration. This is inevitable due to the age of the structure and historically some maintenance shortfall under previous private ownership, in addition to the geographical location of the Tower and the associated exposure to adverse weather conditions that the Irish Sea can bring.

Blackpool Council has appointed specialist structural engineers, Ove Arup Limited, to advise on the renewal works needed to the Tower steel structure, in order to maintain and preserve it for the future. The advice provided is based on the completion of physical structural surveys of the steel structure, which are currently undertaken twice each year. The surveys are further complemented by desk-top structural analysis and calculations. This sets out the requirements for steel renewal and replacement and repainting needed to maintain and to continue to preserve the integrity of the Tower structure.

The works currently identified are likely to require a programme duration of between at least five to seven years and will cost over £10m. A significant part of this work will include repainting the Tower. Modern paint systems and materials mean that the expected lifespan of the paint system will now exceed 20 years which will reduce the need for a “Forth Bridge” approach to repainting the structure. The phasing of the works is designed to minimise the operational and visual impact of necessary temporary access structures such as scaffold and encapsulation materials, whilst maximising efficiency of the works and minimising cost. Scheduling of the works is a continual planning and programming process.

The works currently identified as required include:

- Removal of the existing stair structure and making good
- Further steel, concrete and paint renewal works to the lift shafts and lift pit
- Replacement where necessary of steel elements
- Repainting of the structure in accordance with the specification requirements
- Removal of redundant items such as secondary steel and other miscellaneous items
- Replacement of ladder platforms and landings and the associated support steelwork
- Repair and renewal of concrete structural elements

Blackpool Council has appointed a locally-based main Contractor to complete previously instructed steel renewal works. Should the proposals put forward in this report be approved, further instructions will be issued to the existing main Contractor to complete the required steel works. Options for undertaking the painting of the structure currently remain under consideration.

It is anticipated that the authority sought from the Executive will allow completion of the currently identified works required to the Blackpool Tower structure, in addition to finalising the associated funding package.

## **Theme 2 – Houndshill Update**

The Houndshill Centre has seen a number of new tenants over recent months with new stores from Skechers, Muffin Break, Bob and Berts and of course the fit out for the Fraser’s, Flannels, Sports Direct, Game and Evans Cycles with an opening in the next few months. Work is progressing on other new brands and tenants, with more opening due in the coming 12 months.

The shopping centre has continued to grow its performance post COVID and is one of the strongest shopping centres in the UK compared to other towns of a similar size.

The Phase 2 Houndshill extension has now completed the base-build and the Cinema fit out will commence shortly to create The Backlot Cinema and Diner. This multiscreen cinema with one of the largest IMax screens in the country will open in the Spring and alongside it the operators will deliver an exciting new diner on the ground floor to complement the Cinema offer.

This exciting development continues the strategy of making the town centre a diverse and interesting offer for shoppers and leisure seekers alike increasing footfall and viability of the retail offer. This, coupled with the significant increase in the offer elsewhere in the town centre including Abingdon St Market, improved conferencing facilities and an increase of almost 3,000 office workers in the Civil Service Hub and over 3,000 students will deliver a sustainable and thriving domestic hub for the town and the surrounding area. A place of aspiration, inspiration and imagination

### **General questions / comments**

Councillors will have the opportunity to raise questions / comments on any matter in the Cabinet Member's portfolio.