

Blackpool Council



**MINUTES OF BLACKPOOL, FYLDE AND WYRE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD MEETING -
THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2023**

EPB members present:

Councillors:

Councillor Karen Buckley, Leader, Fylde Council

Councillor Michael Vincent, Leader, Wyre Council by Teams

Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader, Blackpool Council

Chief Executives:

Rebecca Huddleston, Chief Executive, Wyre Council

Neil Jack, Chief Executive, Blackpool Council

Co-opted Private Sector Representative:

Neil Farley, Fylde Council area representative

Other councillors present:

None

Others present:

Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Manager, Blackpool Council

Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager, Blackpool Council

Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, Blackpool Council

Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council

Tracy Manning, Deputy Chief Executive, Fylde Council

Charlie Richards, Head of Regeneration Projects, Fylde Council

Steve Smith, Head of Planning and Regeneration, Wyre Council

Paul Evans, Assistant Director, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

No members of the public or press attending the meeting.

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

3 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting whilst the agenda items 8, 9 and 10 are considered, on the ground that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in category 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12(a) of the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Variation Order 2006 and, that in the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2023

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on 29 June 2023.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the last meeting held on 29 June 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 FYLDE COAST GREEN GROWTH

Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy and Climate Lead, Blackpool Council provided an update to the Board under its Green Growth priority. Mr Butterfield reminded members of the projects already identified at the workshop convened on the 28 July 2023- the use of vegetable oil in place of diesel as an interim fuel technology, domestic energy use reduction and support through the Eco-Hub concept, Project roll out to school sites and joint

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development including procurement for solar development.

Councillor Michael Vincent, Wyre Borough Council, highlighted the carbon reduction that would be anticipated by the change to using vegetable oil for the Wyre Council's fleet of vehicles instead of diesel. The significant reduction of up to 30% of energy use for a relatively small up front cost compared with other initiatives.

6 ETHICALLY POWERED DATA CENTRES

Further to the meeting on the 29 June 2023, where the Board had received a presentation on Ethically Powered Data Centre from the Connected Places Catapult.

Mr Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council presented the Board with a progress report. The Board noted the interest from providers in data centres on the Enterprise Zone. Mr Green explained that work was underway to develop a gas powered generator on site to ensure power generation for data centres. There would be further consideration to the development of solar power and battery arrays depending on the success of the trial.

Mr Green highlighted that while data centres were not large employers on their own, often their location meant that heavy users of data for example animation and online gaming, would be encouraged to locate to those areas.

Mr Butterfield explained that the trials that had been proposed at the Solaris Centre and in other locations to reuse heat in domestic properties. If this trial represented a success then the potential opportunity to replicate this in other locations,, and particularly within social housing developments or to assist employment opportunities, was also noted.

7 LOCAL AUTHORITY ECONOMIC UPDATES

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Mr Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, gave a brief presentation to the Board on the Shared Prosperity Fund programme. Mr Gerrard highlighted the 13 capital schemes under the themes of people and skills, and supporting local business community and place. The fund helped a wide range of activity which fed into the Board's priorities notably in town centre regeneration, eco-coaching, employment support, direct business

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support and community capacity building. It was noted that the schemes were delivered by a range of public, private and third sector organisations. Mr Gerrard gave a range of examples including The Platform for employment support to young people and the Edge with its low carbon heating.

Fylde Council

Mr Charlie Richards, Head of Regeneration Projects provided a brief update on the initiatives being undertaken by Fylde Borough Council. Mr Richards reminded members of three key investment themes for the £2.6m of UK Shared Prosperity Funds namely Communities and Place, Local Business, and People and Skills- the balanced approach between short term “quick wins” and longer term solutions. Mr Richards highlighted the development of St Annes Town Centre Masterplan which was out for consultation. Officers were working on a range of bids while ensuring that these were deliverable. The development of event spaces at Clifton Drive to concentrate events on a sustainable and accessible site, improvements and rationalisation of space at Pleasure Island and improvements to Kirkham Town Centre were highlighted.

Wyre Council

Mr Steve Smith, Head of Planning and Regeneration, updated the Board on issues within Wyre Borough. Mr Smith reminded members of the significant funding that had been secured for Fleetwood market to fund a project which combined the reinstatement of historic features with improved energy efficiency and decarbonisation. The approach would be mirrored in the development of a Fleetwood Seafront Masterplan which would combine improvements to the leisure offer, outdoor spaces and changes to operating model for the historic Marine Hall. The consultation of the Cleveleys Transport Study and creation of new modern commercial seafood processing facilities under Project Neptune were also highlighted.

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8 BLACKPOOL AIRPORT ENTERPRISE ZONE: PROGRESS REPORT

Mr Rob Green, Head of Enterprise, Blackpool Council presented the Board with the progress report. A copy of the report had been circulated with the agenda. Mr Green highlighted from the report as follows:

A further review of the Delivery Plan was being undertaken and would be presented for consideration by Blackpool Council's Executive in December 2023. This would allow adjustment to costs and included contingencies following receipt of tenders for the major highway and infrastructure work.

The Common Edge Sports Village had now been completed with the exception of the new floodlit rugby league pitch where the late seeding of grass due to weather had meant that it would be playable from October 2023. The new pavilion had been formally opened on the 30 June 2023 with the facilities having been in use since the completion of the Division Lane Junction in the first week of June 2023. The new grass pitched had completed their second season of use, and again hosted a very successful Blackpool Cup youth tournament over Easter and May bank holiday weekends.

The Aquacomms base station had now become fully operational. There were now nine outline expressions of interest in the development of data centres at the Enterprise Zone in phase two the Knowledge quarter- Silicon Sands- the largest being for a 10MW facility.

Industrial enquiries had reduced in the light of recent economic turbulence but are expected to pick up once stability returns to the markets and once the final design for the Eastern Gateway highway is confirmed allowing proactive marketing campaigns to restart.

Blackpool Airport Operations Limited had agreed a ten year business plan with the shareholder, Blackpool Council, to return the airport to profitable operation, with the emphasis on securing new commercial opportunities. Initial interest had been good and delivery would be dependent upon provision of new enabling infrastructure and commercial hangar accommodation.

9 HILLHOUSE ENTERPRISE ZONE: PROGRESS REPORT

Mr Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, presented the Board with an update on the Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone and its future work and priorities against its role and remit. A copy of the report had been circulated with the agenda.

Mr Green highlighted the following key areas:

- Network Rail had submitted the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to the Department for Transport in February 2023 for the re-opening of the Fleetwood/Poulton-Le-Fylde rail line. This Strategic Outline Business Case indicates that a Tram/Train option is the most impactful in terms of Benefit/Cost analysis. However this would only become a preferred option if the relevant Minister approves the project to progress to the next stage.
- BXB's planning application for residential development of the site originally allocated for development of a large food store and district centre had been refused, with the developer having now submitted a revised application to run in parallel with a pending planning appeal and an ongoing application for commercial development on the adjacent 'Island' site with decisions anticipated in July 2023.
- Majority landowner NPL Estates had acquired the vacant property of the former Vinnolit site in 2022 and having cleared much of the former production facilities have refurbished and actively marketed the remaining buildings, the majority have now been let. The revised Masterplan for Hillhouse would identify the availability of new development plots in this area.
- As outlined at the previous meeting, finalisation of the implementation and delivery plan has been delayed pending the completion of a full masterplan review and a decision by Government on the Rail Reinstatement Project for the Poulton to Fleetwood line, Consultants WSP have been commissioned to undertake a concept design for the Northern access route – incorporating the worst case cost option of a rail overbridge and thereafter to undertake a full refresh of the masterplan, to include recent new developments – the clearance of the former Vinnolit site and emerging opportunities within the energy and sustainable waste management sectors. An update would be brought to a future meeting.

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10 LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP WINDING UP

The Board noted the winding up of the Local Enterprise Partnership from March 2024. It considered that it may be beneficial for the Board to review work on the national cyber force, inward investment and the relevant sector workshops from that date. While accepting the reasoning behind the cessation of the Partnership, the Board considered it would be beneficial to continue the business links which had been a key element of the LEP's work.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 4.35pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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