

CABINET MEMBER FOR LEVELLING UP: PLACE - COUNCILLOR MARK SMITH

Portfolio areas of responsibility:

- Economic development based regeneration including growth and prosperity
- Enterprise Zones
- Town Deal, Levelling Up and Community Renewal Funding
- Asset management/ Council owned properties
- Strategic housing
- Strategic transport management
- Building Services
- Business Improvement District (BID)

Introduction

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

Theme 1: Regeneration projects delivering town centre jobs before March 2025

As we approach a new financial year, I am very pleased that many projects that have been years in the making will begin to add to the mix of facilities in our ever improving town. The first project coming to fruition should be the Showtown Museum, which will open in March. Our story as Britain's best-known seaside resort can finally be celebrated in a fitting manner, with the creation of 40 jobs allowing local people to showcase everything which makes Blackpool special.

April and May will see the arrival of the new iMax and 9-screen cinema, along with the Backlot Diner, which will greatly add to our early evening economy and further enhance the town. These businesses will also create over 40 new jobs and enhance the Coronation Street streetscape.

2024 will also see the opening of the 144-room Holiday Inn hotel and Marco's (Pierre White) New York Italian restaurant. The arrival of this global hotel chain and celebrity chef restaurant is a huge milestone in our regeneration programme and will bring almost 100 new jobs to the town. Taken together, these three projects will create around 180 new jobs in just a 3 month period.

With speedy progress already being made, as seen by the steel structure and façade already coming together, the new Civil Service Hub will be completed later in the financial year, with 3,000 office workers previously based on the outskirts of the town moving into a quality energy efficient building in the town centre and providing a significant boost to the economy.

Theme 2: Growth and Prosperity 2023 achievements and projects underway

Blackpool Council's Growth and Prosperity team was established in 2017 to lead, develop and implement an ambitious £2 billion regeneration programme to create jobs and increase opportunities for local people by attracting public and private sector investment. In addition to making great progress on the projects listed above, 2023 has been a landmark year. Our initial plans are now coming to fruition to great acclaim, with the benefits of our work being realised and Blackpool establishing itself as a serious economic hotspot.

Projects which completed or progressed in 2023 include:

- **Abingdon Street Market** - May saw the highly anticipated launch of what is now a very popular food and beverage element of the market after acquisition and refurbishment. The full opening of the retail element, providing a space for independent businesses in a key location, followed in November 2023.
- **Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone** - The Enterprise Zone continues to drive business and economic growth, recently attracting the 2,500th new job since being granted Enterprise Zone status in 2016, with this growth showing no signs of slowing down. Other significant developments included securing electricity for 10.5 hectares of land on the zone, new plans being unveiled for a number of hangars and a new road at Blackpool Airport and the completion of a brand new 3G artificial turf pitch. Additional Council funding for the next major phase of the Enterprise Zone Delivery was also confirmed.
- **Common Edge Sports Village** - A new £6 million sports village in Blackpool, the Common Edge Sports Village has been developed as phase one of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone and improving the community sports facilities allows 10.5 hectares of land to be unlocked for commercial development. The sports village includes 14 new grass football pitches, a full sized 3G football pitch, sports pavilion with changing rooms and community space, plus a grass rugby pitch and training area.
- **New Frasers Blackpool** - The new store opened its doors to the public in Houndshell Shopping Centre this November. This partnership with the Council brings together a range of exciting brands including Frasers, Flannels, Sports Direct, Game and Evans Cycles all in one place and will help increase footfall into the town centre.

- **Attracting and Managing External Funding** – Levelling Up Fund and Capital Regeneration Funding of £63 million were confirmed this year to support the Multiversity (January), former Post Office (March) and Town Centre Access Schemes (November). We also secured money for the A586 via the Safer Roads Fund and saw the approval of a £237,000 High Street Accelerator pilot in November, with ability to submit an additional £500,000 town centre “greening” bid in early 2024. Elsewhere, the Shared Prosperity Fund money allocated to Blackpool by the UK government saw the approval of 13 projects, amounting to £4.9 million of activity to support Blackpool community and business sectors.
- **Attendance at key events** such as the UK’s Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum 2023, where the Council exhibited its activities and potential to developers and contractors for the second year in a row. The team also sponsored events and were reported in major regional business publications e.g. Invest North West guide with continued progress with Blackpool Makes it Work marketing campaign.

Further projects planned for 2024 include:

- **Multiversity** – £9 million of Town Deal funding is being used to acquire properties which supplements the award of £40 million from the Levelling Up Fund to develop a new Multiversity campus bringing up to 3,000 more students and staff to the area. The project progressed in 2023 via this funding and the submission of an outline planning application.
- **Delivering the Town Deal programme** - All 7 Town Deal schemes will progress substantially, including the Stanley Buildings redevelopment into units for businesses commencing in February 2024, whilst The Platform employment support project (see cabinet member for Young People and Aspiration report) will complete as a Town Deal Project March 2024 and continue as a Shared Prosperity Funded scheme from April.
- **Enterprise Zone Access Road** – work to connect Common Edge Road to Amy Johnson Way through the unlocked land will commence soon, creating access to development plots which will become available for growing or relocating businesses. The commercial units will help the Enterprise Zone to achieve its targets of creating 5,000 new, quality jobs for local people and spark £300 million of private sector investment in the town.
- **Extension to Blackpool tramway** - which will connect the Talbot Gateway and train station directly with Blackpool Promenade, alongside an underpass which will allow pedestrians to access the Holiday Inn and tramway directly from the station.
- **Devolution Deal** – subject to the Devolution Deal being formally approved, Blackpool is highly likely to secure £6 million Devolution funding for the Technology Demonstrator project to be based at the Enterprise Zone.
- **Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)** – All 13 SPF projects will continue delivery producing key outputs and outcomes. This includes the two new business academies (Blackpool Growth

and Low Carbon), which will provide tailored advice to new and growing businesses and help to lower carbon emissions and energy costs. They will provide advice and mentoring to improve their workforce, scale their operations and drive innovation. External funding will also drive the implementation of the implementation of the **Town Centre Action Plan** and **High Street Accelerator pilot**.

- **Hotel Indigo** – The scheme to convert the former Post Office into a boutique hotel will progress, with acquisition of the existing building and redevelopment of the site.
- **Town Centre Access Scheme (TCAS)** – full scheme designs and delivery will commence further to approval in November 23.
- Continued work on finalising **multi-million pound disposals**.
- **Monitoring and Assurance** – Due to the substantial regeneration funding involved, the management, monitoring and assurance of the delivery of externally-funded schemes will continue to ensure we meet funders’ requirements. The ongoing administration of key representative groups such as the Town Deal Board will continue.

Selective Licensing

At the Council meeting on 29th November we had a public speaker who spoke about the proposed new Selective Licensing Scheme. In my reply in my role as the relevant Cabinet Member, I made reference to a property which he had referred to in his speech on Hornby Road as being up for auction. In my reply I commented that this property was shown on the auction website as being sold. I have since found out that although the website did state it was sold, this information was incorrect and the property had not been sold. I wanted to clarify this point as part of my report today.

With regard to the Selective Licensing Scheme the consultation closed on 7th January and the responses are currently being reviewed and analysed.

General questions / comments

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