

Blackpool Council



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**MINUTES OF BLACKPOOL, FYLDE AND WYRE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD MEETING -  
THURSDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2023**

EPB members present:

Councillors:

Councillor Karen Buckley, Leader, Fylde Council

Councillor Michael Vincent, Leader, Wyre Council by Teams

Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Levelling Up: Place, Blackpool Council

Chief Executives:

Neil Jack, Chief Executive, Blackpool Council

Allan Oldfield, Chief Blackpool, Fylde Council

Co-opted Private Sector Representative:

Martin Long, Blackpool Council area 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

Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director of Communities

Charlie Richards, Head of Regeneration Projects, Fylde Council

No members of the public or press attending the meeting.

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## **1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

In the absence of the Chair and with the Vice-Chair joining the meeting virtually. The Board considered the appointment of a Chair for the meeting.

### **Resolved:**

That Councillor Mark Smith be appointed Chair of the Blackpool Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board for the meeting.

## **2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed Board members to the meeting.

The Board noted apologies from Councillor Lynn Williams of Blackpool Council and noted that Councillor Williams had been replaced for this meeting by Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Levelling Up: Place.

The Board also noted apologies from Rebecca Huddleston, Chief Executive, Wyre Council.

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

## **4 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

### **Resolved:**

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting while agenda items 7 and 8 are considered, on the grounds 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

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the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

### **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on 28 September 2023.

#### **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **6 SILICON SANDS (ETHICALLY POWERED DATA TECH DEMONSTRATOR)**

The Board received a presentation on Silicon Sands from Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones; Scott Butterfield, Strategy Policy and Research Manager and Dr Andy Pickard, Net Zero Innovation Manager, Blackpool Council.

The presentation built on previous presentations given to the Board regarding the ambition for greater provision of data centres within the Silicon Sands part of the Enterprise Zone. Mr Green explained the key ambition of Silicon Sands continued to be create new green jobs and boost the local economy. Growing sectors such as advanced manufacturing, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, eSports and telehealth needed access to high performance, low latency data centres. Dr Pickard reminded members of Blackpool Council's Net Zero Pledge and the challenges caused by the growth of data centre requirements within the climate emergency- it remained almost certain that by 2030, data centres would use 4% of global electricity consumption and become the largest single emitter of greenhouse gases. Dr Pickard reminded members of the Board that as outlined at previous meetings that energy reuse in data centres is currently very rare in the UK but much more common in Europe and now required by new EU regulations. This meant that Liquid immersion cooling, coupled with renewable energy and reuse of the waste heat could position the Fylde Coast as a leader in ethically powered data.

Mr Green explained that the Enterprise Zone had the potential to harness renewable energy, through wind farms, solar farm and battery storage.

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Dr Pickard further outlined that a district heat network also would remove excess heat and repurpose it – reducing emissions and supporting businesses. A trial would shortly start at the Solaris Centre. A further update would be brought to a future meeting.

## **7 LOCAL AUTHORITY ECONOMIC UPDATES**

### Blackpool Council

Mr Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, gave a brief presentation to the Board on the Town Deal programme. Mr Gerrard highlighted the 7 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 by the proposed move of the Blackpool Central Courts to facilitate the Blackpool Central development the Multiversity to enhance skills provision and the Edge business incubator; the Revoe Community Sports Village, Airport Enterprise Zone Infrastructure, and the Illuminations Rejuvenation to help extend the Tourism season,. Mr Gerrard gave a range of examples including The Platform for employment support to young people which had recently helped its 1,000<sup>th</sup> person and the Illuminations development which provided a new image to a classic attraction.

### 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 event spaces at Clifton Drive to concentrate events on a sustainable and accessible site with early contractor discussion having already taken place, improvements and rationalisation of space at Pleasure Island and progress on delivering improvements to Kirkham Town Centre were also highlighted.

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### Wyre Council

Ms Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director of Communities, Wyre Council, updated the Board on issues within Wyre Borough. Ms Hesketh highlighted the recent visit of civil servants from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and that Fleetwood would be considered to deal with underspends. The recent success of the Wyre Business awards was also noted.

### **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 had been undertaken and would be presented for consideration by Blackpool Council's Executive on 11 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 pitches had completed their second season of use.

Industrial enquiries had reduced in the light of recent economic turbulence but were 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.

The Eastern Gateway highway and plot development project had secured £7.5m funding from the Blackpool Town Deal allocation of £40m, as a contribution to an initial £18m project, additional works particularly around service diversions and new connections plus a 26% in material costs has seen the overall project price increase. The Town Deal project covers the remodelling of Common Edge Road between School Road and Division Lane incorporating traffic signalled junctions, and 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 off Amy Johnson Way to the eastern side of the airport to support development of new aircraft hangars.

## **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 had been granted planning consent from Wyre Council in June 2023 for a social housing development to be undertaken by Places for People and work on up to 130 units will commence in the near future following discharge of planning conditions, this scheme crucially provides for the construction of the next section of the northern access road. A further site, also in the ownership of BXB, is the subject of an ongoing planning application for a small retail development and petrol filling station, together with a small residential element.
- 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

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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 had 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.

### **Chairman**

(The meeting ended at 3.55pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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