

# Blackpool Council

23 June 2020

To: Councillors Burdess, Mrs Callow JP, Galley, Hugo, Mitchell, Mrs Scott, Stansfield and Walsh

The above members are requested to attend the:

Special meeting of the:

## **SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD**

Wednesday, 1 July 2020 at 6.00 pm  
via Zoom meeting

### **A G E N D A**

#### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to declare any interests in the items under consideration and in doing so state:

(1) the type of interest concerned either a

- (a) personal interest
- (b) prejudicial interest
- (c) disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI)

and

(2) the nature of the interest concerned

If any member requires advice on declarations of interests, they are advised to contact the Head of Democratic Governance in advance of the meeting.

#### **2 CHILDREN'S SERVICES** (Pages 1 - 10)

To provide an overview of the Children's Services response to Covid-19.

#### **3 TOURISM RECOVERY PLANNING** (Pages 11 - 24)

To gain an insight into how Blackpool Council is developing a tourism recovery plan for

the resort in the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown. The report is intended to illustrate the steps that the Council is taking to facilitate this recovery process together with key partners in the visitor economy.

**4 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020**

(Pages 25 - 36)

To allow Members to consider the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/2020, celebrating achievement and identifying improvement to be made.

**Other information:**

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager, Tel: 01253 477213, e-mail [sharon.davis@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.davis@blackpool.gov.uk)

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<b>Report to:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	1 July 2020

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESPONSE TO COVID-19

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an overview of the Children's Services response to Covid-19.

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To review and challenge the Children's Services response to Covid-19.

### 3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure robust scrutiny of the response.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? No

### 4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

### 5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

### 6.0 Background information

6.1 When it became evident that the country was likely to move to similar levels of social restriction as those already in place in other parts of Europe, planning began for continuing to deliver children's social care services in Blackpool. Detailed planning began in the week beginning 9 March 2020 and a revised model of service delivery was launched from 23 March 2020.

6.2 To provide both some degree of resilience to the service in its discharge of its core

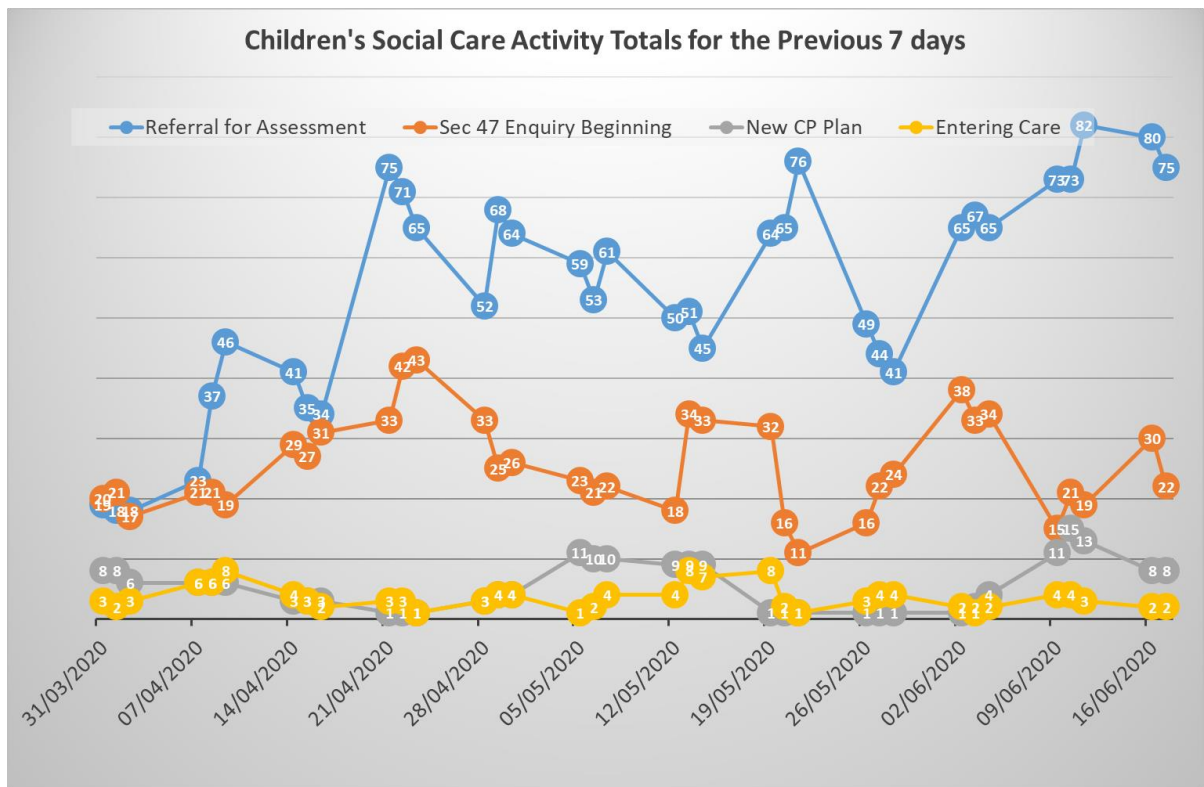
safeguarding functions, while also respecting the social distancing approach, Children's Social Care, Early Help and the Youth Justice Service were split into two separate business units: Team A and Team B, each with their own group of team managers, service managers and Heads of Service (workers remained with their normal team managers). The teams each had between 150 and 170 workers (80 to 90 social workers) and in any one week, one of the teams was office based, while the other worked from home, alternating weekly.

- 6.3 Within each of these units, social workers were divided between those focused on incoming work and those focused on ongoing work. Early Help services were divided equally between Teams A and B and played a vital role in supporting families experiencing difficulties especially around food poverty, through the Corona Kindness hubs.
- 6.4 The team A and team B structure went live on 23 March 2020, the day of the announcement of lockdown.
- 6.5 To focus ongoing activity, Team Managers were asked to evaluate all the open children, young people and families in their teams and to identify those of most concern, which required the greatest level of oversight (REDS), and other cases where oversight clearly needed to be maintained (AMBERs).
- 6.6 Since the beginning of the new structure, daily activity has been monitored across the service, the capacity of the service and the key core social work posts within it; and the number of children and families self-isolating. Senior managers have also been provided with a twice-weekly updated list of all children open to the service, when they were last seen, the manager's rating of concern; whether the child/family is self-isolating; whether children in care are living with carers in groups identified as particularly vulnerable to the virus; and when the children's circumstances were last risk assessed.
- 6.7 Beginning from 9 April 2020, the approach in the light of the then current national restrictions and social distancing arrangements was refined. There was a move to having a greater focus on the children about whom was the greatest concerns – only these children were to be in receipt of face to face visits by social workers. Other children open to the service were to be 'virtually' visited, using technology with which the family is familiar; or be kept in phone contact with, where virtual visits are not possible. All workers have been based at home since 9 April 2020, with the exception of a reduced skeleton duty staff at the front door and in the MASH. Thankfully, we have seen very low rates of sickness from COVID amongst our staff, in common with the rest of the council.
- 6.8 Planning is ongoing for a return to some office-based work from late June/early July, with the service again divided in two and teams likely to be predominantly office-

based for one week and then working from home the next. The service is continuing to strive to balance the needs of the service, particularly around direct work with children and families, with the risk of infection/transmission, both within the local community and within our own workforce.

**Demand and Activity During COVID**

- 6.9 As can be seen from the chart below, incoming demand for Children’s Social Care intervention was initially very low. The service therefore proactively sought to publicise that Children’s Social Care was open for business through the council’s Facebook page, Twitter feed, in addition to local radio and newspaper.
  
- 6.10 Subsequently, there has been a return to demand close to pre-COVID levels and then rising further still, reflecting rising levels of need amongst families, tiredness with restriction; and the return of agencies to something closer to their normal service delivery. Through COVID the number of contacts being received from the community has been particularly pleasing, alerting the service to families in difficulty, which have been higher than under normal circumstances.



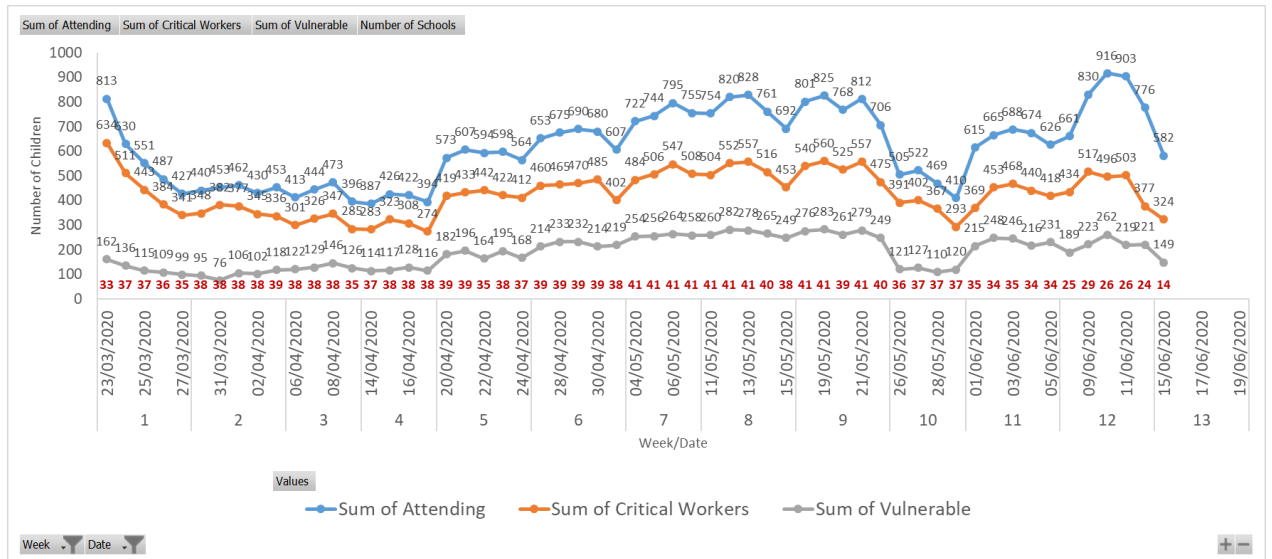
- 6.11 In the chart above, one can also see a pattern of presenting demand being influenced by Bank Holidays and uncertainty about government restrictions on movement (there has been an unfortunate conjunction during COVID).

- 6.12 In terms of the reasons for demand for social care assessment/intervention, there is limited evidence available at the moment, but of those becoming subject to a child protection plan, there has been a growth in those becoming subject for reasons of neglect, rather than Emotional Abuse (DA). Nearly 40% of those becoming subject to a plan had previously been subject to a plan, probably reflecting families already struggling, struggling more in lockdown.
- 6.13 Looking at the children and families newly opening to children's social care, the pattern remains similar to previously – it's mostly (two thirds) caused by abuse and neglect, but there has been a growth in family dysfunction and inter-generational conflict during lockdown – often between male carers/fathers and sons.
- 6.14 The area of greatest concern through the COVID period has been mental health and well-being. In particular, there have been increasing numbers of care leavers struggling with their mental health through the period of lockdown. There have been incidences of attempted suicide, self-harm and harm to others. Support for this group in the community to prevent escalation is one of the services' key priorities (and for the wider partnership as well). As a recent Violence Reduction Network report makes clear, this is part of a wider picture where Blackpool is facing high levels of presenting demand for mental health services – around double the presenting issues in other similar sized areas, such as Preston, Lancaster or Blackburn with Darwen.

#### **Vulnerable Children and School**

- 6.15 Local schools have been contacting all vulnerable children – at least weekly; and one of our special schools is scoping out non-school-based support for children and families through the summer.
- 6.16 Overall, the strength of Government messaging about the need for families to stay at home has made it very difficult to persuade families with children open to children's social care, or other children deemed to be vulnerable, to agree to their children attending school. Attendance rates in Blackpool schools are nationally average for vulnerable children, It may be the case that wider opening of schools to children will help, but the vast majority of vulnerable children are not attending school, both locally and nationally.
- 6.17 Having noted the above, attendance at schools by vulnerable pupils has risen through the COVID period, see the chart below, which contains daily attendance (*please note that figures rise in retrospect, as some schools report on a weekly basis, so last week's figures will be accurate, while this weeks will not*). The proportion of vulnerable children attending school in Blackpool is in line with the national average (14%).
- 6.18 One can also see from the chart below the steady growth in the total number of children attending school, as attendance has been opened up to specific year groups.

6.19 Recent communication with the Department for Education (DfE) and the Office of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) confirms that Blackpool’s schools are further along with increasing the number of children attending, than other areas.



6.20 Finally, the service has also overseen the ordering and, finally, the distribution of laptops and routers to vulnerable children across the borough – up to 900 children will receive this help.

**What has been the impact of Covid-19 on improvement progress and which areas of service have been impacted the most?**

6.21 Through the COVID period, the service has remained relatively confident about the ability to discharge vital safeguarding functions. Ongoing face to face contact has continued with those children and young people about whom there is the most concern, including children open to children’s social care, but also care leavers and young people open to the Youth Justice Service. Food parcels have also been provided to the most vulnerable families throughout the COVID lockdown period.

6.22 In spite of this, the service remains chronically aware that children and families are more vulnerable and less visible than they should be. One can contact families, or episodically visit those felt to be most at risk, but it is no substitute to the innate protections of ‘normal’ life and multiple professionals and other adults having daily contact with and sight of children outside of the family home. Knowing this fact places a heavy mental and emotional burden on those who work with children and young people.

6.23 Given national guidance on social distancing, purposeful direct work with children and families was not possible for a considerable period of time (and remains difficult still)

and there is also the worry about the possible escalation of concerns in families, with the prolonged nature of the current measures, particularly with regard to domestic violence, which is already a significant driver for work locally. One can see signs of this in the rising number of referrals as the country moves towards two and the three months of lockdown. Government guidance has also posed considerable issues for contact with children in care with their birth parents. Throughout COVID virtual family time has been supported, but not always at the frequency of pre-COVID times. Some direct face to face family time will be reintroduced for parents with the youngest babies in care from next week.

- 6.24 Court hearings have become virtual; and there has been a slowing in court proceedings, as those proceedings are largely dependent on assessment work with adults and children, which is difficult or impossible to complete satisfactorily without face to face contact with the individual children or adults concerned. In addition, the judiciary also decided that contested hearings, i.e. those where parents/carers are not in agreement with the local authority's care plan for their children, would not be heard virtually, but only in person. The plan for court proceedings for the foreseeable future is for hybrid hearings; using both virtual and in person attendance at court, depending on the circumstances of the individual case. Overall, this has led to a slowing in court proceedings and we have been delayed in bringing children on care orders before the court for discharge – which was a key ongoing project designed to significantly lower the current numbers of children in local authority care.
- 6.25 The Getting to Good (Improvement) Board has met three times virtually during COVID; and the work of the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership has also continued at both a county-wide and local level. The degree of managerial grip within Children's Services in both continuing to deliver services and also continuing on the improvement journey has been positively noted by both the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted colleagues; and positively compared with other areas in the region and nationally. Through this period, Blackpool has continued to lead on the launch of the new county-wide threshold document for children's services and this will be launched across the local partnership shortly.
- 6.26 The council's care planning and permanence planning panels resumed, after a short break at the start of COVID; and continue weekly, virtually. Recruitment has also moved successfully on-line. Training of council workers has largely moved to being delivered online using Microsoft Teams and this has been successful, delivering virtual training on Blackpool Families Rock, neglect, workshops on undertaking virtual home visits, in addition to virtual weekly support sessions to social workers in their first year of practice. It would be fair to note, however, that some of our less experienced staff have still struggled with the move to working at home and their continued absence from the wider support network of the office.
- 6.27 Similarly, following a period when we focused child protection reviews and reviews



for children in our care on those children with whom there is the greatest concern, virtual reviews have now recommenced for all those in the council's care or subject to a child protection plan. This has left a legacy of out of time reviews that the service is currently working through. Overall, the involvement of key safeguarding partners, such as the Police, schools and health and third sector colleagues during COVID in child protection work has been good.

- 6.28 In spite of unprecedentedly difficult circumstances, the service has continued to visit the families that there is most concerned about – in the first two weeks of June 760 children and young people have been seen. There has been telephone contact with 500 more. The service has also sought to continue and develop direct work remotely and has also developed and deployed a virtual support platform for teenagers during COVID. Virtual support has been particularly successful with teenagers who have, in some cases, engaged better using technology than face to face, which is learning that can be taken forward in the future.
- 6.29 For example, activity packs have been distributed and virtual workspaces set up to continue work with some of the most vulnerable young people working with our Child Exploitation Partnership service and this has been warmly welcomed by young people:
- A 14 year old female: “I like the sessions on the phone. I like talking. I like doing the work book.
  - A 14 year old female: “It’s been good, I am going to make it (the posted activity) really colourful and good in my own time”
  - A 17 year old female told her keyworker that she “really liked” doing the art project set and supported by AWAKEN worker via safe distance meetings in the community and telephone calls. The young person’s keyworker commented that they had put lots of effort into the project, despite experiencing turbulent times. The process of doing the work in her own time with support - sending the photographs of the completed work, then receiving feedback from the worker – made them feel “very proud”.
- 6.30 In summary, the service and the workforce have responded well during a difficult time and vulnerable children in Blackpool have been as safe as they could be in the circumstances. The service has continued on its improvement journey, although a large part of business has had to be conducted virtually. The shock to national systems caused by COVID has led to some slow-down in some areas, most notably court work, but conversely, COVID has also provided an opportunity to demonstrate strong leadership in the delivery of Children’s Services – and this has been recognised externally..
- 6.31 The area where progress has been most impeded is in the direct work with families

and the development of the new relationship-based model of practice, which would really benefit from more face to face contact. Of course, this has to be balanced with the risks to our own workers and children and families from more contact.

- 6.32 Finally, there will be definite legacy issues arising from the COVID period, with harm and unmet need that was not apparent during lockdown becoming clearer afterwards. It is difficult to estimate the scope of this likely demand for service, not least because Blackpool has continued to receive a relatively high level of contact from local agencies and the community, but it is certain to exist and we need to be prepared for that through the autumn and winter of 2020.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

## **7.0 List of Appendices:**

- 7.1 None.

## **8.0 Legal considerations:**

- 8.1 Central government has not authorised any deviation from local authority statutory responsibilities to children with unmet need or safeguarding risks, although there has been some acknowledgement of the greater difficulty of discharging those responsibilities during COVID.

## **9.0 Human resources considerations:**

- 9.1 Provision of Children's Services during the COVID period is a delicate balancing act between the need of families and children for support and protection and the need to ensure that our own workers are as safe as possible. We have successfully protected our staff to date and have had a very low level of COVID sickness throughout the past 3 months. Transition to the new model of service delivery will have to be sensitively and sensibly managed.

## **10.0 Equalities considerations:**

- 10.1 None, although it is likely that through the COVID period, especially lockdown, individual groups with protected characteristics, particularly those living in households where domestic abuse is a feature, will be and have been at greater risk.

## **11.0 Financial considerations:**

- 11.1 Finance colleagues estimate that the COVID period has increased cost pressures by between 11 and 20%, in relation to residential placements and foster placements provided by independent fostering agencies.

**12.0 Risk management considerations:**

12.1 See section 9.1 above.

**13.0 Ethical considerations:**

13.1 Children and families with whom Children's Services work will typically be amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. Lesser levels of support for those children and families inevitably has ramifications for increasing the level of vulnerability and disadvantage that they face.

**14.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:**

14.1 Throughout all the COVID period, Children's Services has had ongoing discussion with colleagues in Finance, Human Resources and Health & Safety within the council, in addition to regular weekly meetings with key partner agencies (Police, Health, Schools and other third sector partners).

**15.0 Background papers:**

15.1 None.

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<b>Report to:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communication
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	1 July 2020

## TOURISM RECOVERY PLAN

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To gain an insight into how Blackpool Council is developing a tourism recovery plan for the resort in the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown. The report is intended to illustrate the steps that the Council is taking to facilitate this recovery process together with key partners in the visitor economy.

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To note the content of the report and challenge planning progress.

### 3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure the recovery plan is robustly challenged.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

### 4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None

### 5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool.

### 6.0 Background information

6.1 On March 23, 2020, the Government declared that the country had moved into a lockdown phase as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.1.1 This resulted in the immediate closure of the vast majority of Blackpool's tourism and hospitality industry (although a small number of hotels were allowed to continue to trade to accommodate key workers). The timing of the lockdown could not have come at a more critical time for businesses dependent on tourism as it came just before the start of the tourism season at Easter.

6.1.2 The report is intended to demonstrate the steps that the Council is taking to facilitate recovery as the Government starts to ease restrictions.

## 6.2 **Key dates**

6.2.2 Blackpool's tourism industry went into lockdown from March 23 as part of the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is widely anticipated that Government will start to ease restrictions on the tourism and hospitality industry from July 4, although at the point of writing this report that date had yet to be confirmed.

6.2.3 Forward guidance on how the tourism and hospitality industry can start to re-open, including a possible reduction in the 2m social distancing rule was expected to be announced at a Government briefing on Tuesday 23 June. If there is a reduction in social distancing guidance from 2m to 1m that will have undoubtedly have a significant positive impact on the viability of many tourism businesses who are faced with operating at a significantly reduced level of capacity and income with a 2m rule in place.

6.2.4 For a number of businesses operating in the tourism sector, the amount of notice they are given for reopening is key, as it will take some of them several days (if not weeks) to bring furloughed staff back into the business and prepare for opening under what will be very different and challenging operating conditions.

6.2.5 This has been demonstrated by the announcement on zoos which gave them less than a week's notice that they could reopen from 15 June. In Blackpool's case, the zoo will not reopen until 29 June 2020 to ensure all preparation work and retraining of staff is completed.

6.2.6 The Council has been working closely with its own key attractions for several weeks now and most are assuming that 4 July 2020 is the key date. Holiday accommodation, pubs and restaurants are also working towards that date. Given the current continuing social distancing measures, there is no guidance as to when theatres and venues will be allowed to open although it is hoped that this will be clarified in the 23 June 2020 briefing.

## 6.3 **Preparing for recovery**

### **Industry Standard**

- 6.3.1 VisitEngland is continuing to work on a new industry standard for tourism and hospitality businesses that can be rolled out ahead of 4 July 2020. Again, at the point of writing this report, it was due to be launched in the week coming 22 June 2020.
- 6.3.2 The standard will take the form of a voluntary registration and assessment process that will enable businesses to acquire a nationally recognisable accreditation mark and give a credible form of assurance to build customer confidence that the industry is taking all necessary steps to ensure public safety.
- 6.3.3 The working title for the accreditation scheme is *'We're Good To Go'*. VisitEngland has stated that the online registration will be free for businesses including hotels, Bed and Breakfasts, attractions, venues, restaurants and pubs and that a helpline manned by up to 40 advisors will be put in place to help businesses to get through the accreditation process.
- 6.3.4 From a Blackpool perspective, the Council is planning to align itself to this national industry standard firstly, because it will be recognisable across most of the sector and, secondly, because the domestic staycation campaign that VisitEngland is looking to roll out during the summer is likely to be linked directly to the *'We're Good To Go'* messaging.

#### 6.4 **Resort Infrastructure**

##### 6.4.1 Beach Patrol

Our Beach Patrol service operates year-round, albeit with reduced numbers of staff outside of the normal bathing season. Given the increasing numbers of people already starting to use the beaches and Promenade areas, coupled with further easing of restrictions and the onset of warmer weather, seasonal staff are being recruited to ensure we have a fit-for-purpose service in place for the summer season. In addition to their normal duties, Beach Patrol are using their mobile loudspeaker system to remind people of social distancing advice and the need to dispose of litter in a responsible way.

##### 6.4.2 Signage

Extensive signage has been installed across the resort to reinforce the safe distancing messages. There are three variations – one aimed at beach users, one at visitors to our parks and the other a more generic one be installed at arrival points, car parks and at locations around the town centre. A fourth variation has been developed with the Town Centre BID to coincide with the easing of restrictions on non-essential retail from 15 June 2020.

#### 6.4.3 Litter

The initial easing of lockdown restrictions created significant issues with litter being dumped on the promenade and beaches, even though bins were not full. In response to this, a new anti-littering campaign, “*Don’t Be A Scruff, Bin Your Stuff*”, has been launched with posters installed along the length of the promenade, supported by PR activity and a social media campaign.

#### 6.4.4 Tourist Information

The Council’s own facilities management service is working to prepare the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) to re-open to the public from early July with necessary social distancing and staff/customer protective screens in place. This opening date is subject to satisfactory risk assessments being undertaken.

It is anticipated that over the coming months, the TIC will be used less as a ticket agency and more as a focal point of information on what facilities are open. It will also be used to reinforce safe distancing and hygiene advice. We are planning to sell a range of I Heart BPL face masks.

#### 6.4.5 Public Toilets

A number of public toilets were reopened by Danfo in mid-May 2020 because of the increasing numbers of people visiting the resort. The opening of the new block at Flagstaff Gardens (opposite South Pier) has been delayed because the contractors were taken off site at the point of lockdown. Work resumed at the start of June with a view to getting these facilities open before by the first week of July 2020.

#### 6.4.6 Car Parking

Although most of the Council’s car parks remained operational during the lockdown, there was no enforcement in place which meant any users were able to park for free. From the start of June, the civil enforcement officers returned to their duties and have been carrying out a softly-softly approach to ticketing on car parks with a view to returning to a normal service from 1 July 2020.

At the end of May, the new PayByPhone parking app was launched that allows customers to pay for their parking without queuing, handling cash or touching payment machines. It also enables users to top up their parking session from a remote location. The initial take-up has been extremely encouraging. Extensive signage has been installed around the car parks and along the Promenade to encourage people to download the app.



#### 6.4.7 Inbound Rail Services

Blackpool-bound services have been heavily disrupted during the lockdown period with rail operators encouraging essential travel only. The main regional operator, Northern Rail, has confirmed that there will be an uplift in Blackpool-bound services (including the restoration of the Manchester Airport to Blackpool service) from 6 July 2020. They are also reviewing their messaging as to when they can start to promote leisure travel as opposed to essential travel only. The introduction of the new daily London services by the operator, Grand Central, has been delayed until 2021.

#### 6.4.8 Coach Travel

The lockdown has already had a serious impact on the coach industry with a number of operators going into administration during the pandemic and the risk of more to follow.

Those that have gone into administration, including Shearings, Wallace Arnold and National Holidays, brought an estimated 200,000 people into Blackpool each year, many of them staying visitors.

There are a number of large hotels in Blackpool that are heavily dependent on coach trade/group travel, particularly for the shoulder and off-season months. Key attractions and venues are also dependent on coach parties to bring in day trippers, and coach trips contribute a significant volume of visitors during Illuminations season. The key issue facing coach operators is social distancing regulations which, at two metres, mean that operators will only be able to accommodate 14 passengers on a standard coach, against a current break-even capacity of 31.

A review of Blackpool's overall dependence on coach travel in the accommodation sector and the likely scale of the economic impact on the wider visitor economy is underway.

The Council is working with coach industry representative groups to determine how it can support what remains of the coach industry and find ways of retaining those visitors who rely on this form of domestic package holiday.

The Council is also working with our own transport company, BTS, to explore what support and interventions can be made at local level, including organised tours during the Illuminations.

### 6.5 **Blackpool Tourism Product**

- 6.5.1 Since the early stages of the lockdown, the Council has been working closely with key venues and attractions through a Tourism Recovery Group. The key aim of this group

has been to prepare the resort for reopening when conditions allow. They have each produced their own robust recovery plans of which officers have had sight (an example is shown below under the Pleasure Beach heading).

- 6.5.2 The easing of restrictions across the wider economy is moving at a rapid pace and the only forward guidance issued to date is that tourism and hospitality businesses will be able to reopen on or around 4 July 2020, subject to them being able to meet key criteria.
- 6.5.3 Most of these criteria will be around social distancing and hygiene measures which, depending on whether there is a 2m or 1m rule in place, will have an impact on capacity and the actual visitor experience. Blackpool's various attractions are adopting similar measures including managed queuing areas, PPE for staff, enhanced cleaning regimes and a much-reduced capacity in the opening weeks.
- 6.5.4 If the tourism industry is allowed to start to reopen from 4 July 2020, there is confidence that there will be a good mix of attractions to offer to visitors. The details below were correct at the timing of compiling this report and are subject to changes depending on Government and Public Health guidance.

## 6.6 **Attractions**

### 6.6.1 Blackpool Zoo

Scheduled reopening: Monday 29 June with previews over the previous weekend. Zoos were the first ticketed attractions to be given the go-ahead to reopen. Some of the European attractions operated by the zoo's parent company have already started to open so there is a good understanding of what needs to be done to open safely.

When the attraction is reopened to visitors it will be a slimmed-down visitor experience with a capacity of 1,000 visitors, most indoor attractions closed and no "added value" animal displays where crowds might gather. Capacity will be gradually increased to up to 2,500 as the summer progresses and the Zoo is considering whether to introduce morning and afternoon sessions at some point in order to expand capacity.

### 6.6.2 Pleasure Beach

Scheduled reopening: 4 July 2020.

The park will be taking online bookings only and is planning safe distancing measures, regular cleaning of rides and temperature checking of staff. A key issue for Pleasure Beach will be capacity and also ensuring a positive customer experience. In the early stages, it is envisaged the park will be running at somewhere between 30 and 50% of

its normal capacity at the point of reopening. A comprehensive guide to how the park intends to reopen safely can be found here:

<https://covid.blackpoolpleasurebeach.com/>

#### 6.6.3 Merlin Attractions

Tower Top, Sea Life and Madame Tussauds: Scheduled reopening: 4 July 2020.

Other Merlin attractions including the Tower Ballroom and Dungeon are provisionally scheduled to reopen in July and August respectively. At this time, there is no confirmed date for the reopening of the Tower Circus.

The three attractions scheduled to open on 4 July will operate with online bookings with allocation of 15-minute time slots for entry, cashless payment, one-way access through the attractions, protective screens at reception points and provision of PPE for staff and protective screens at tills.

#### 6.6.4 Sandcastle Waterpark

Scheduled reopening: 16 July 2020 (provisional).

The Sandcastle team has produced a comprehensive reopening plan focusing on the measures that will need to be undertaken to ensure safe distancing. This includes remodelling of changing rooms, closure of some facilities and different ways of operating some of the indoor slides. Indoor waterparks clearly operate in a different way to “dry” attractions and there is little evidence to date as to how pools, spas and leisure centres can operate and with what restrictions in place.

#### 6.6.5 Coral Island

It is anticipated that there will be a gradual reopening with the adult gaming area and takeaway food restaurant reopening in June, followed by the main arcade and other concessions and attractions in early July.

#### 6.6.6 Piers

Scheduled reopening: 4 July 2020.

#### 6.6.7 Tramway

Scheduled reopening: July (date to be confirmed).

## 6.7 **Theatres/Venues**

### 6.7.1 Winter Gardens

Scheduled reopening: To be confirmed.

The issue facing theatres and cinemas is less clear in terms of how they will be able to operate with social distancing in place and the inevitable knock-on financial impact with reduced audience numbers. The management team are continuing to deal with, conferences shows and events on an individual basis to determine whether they can go ahead in some form or be moved to another date.

### 6.7.2 Viva Blackpool

Scheduled re-opening: 4 July 2020 with reduced capacity and limited programme of entertainment.

### 6.7.3 Grand Theatre

Scheduled reopening: 5 September 2020.

The theatre has suspended all of its summer programme and moved its four-week run of Dirty Dancing from August this year to August 2021. The theatre is hoping to resume operations in some form from September, though that will clearly be governed by guidance on how theatres are allowed to operate. There is the added complication that some of the shows programmed in the months ahead for UK theatres might not happen because a number of touring productions have disbanded during the lockdown.

## 6.8 **Retail**

Non-essential shops and stores were given the go-ahead to re-open from 15 June 2020 if they could demonstrate that they had adopted COVID-19 Secure guidance. The Houndshell Shopping Centre and car park reopened on that date with most national chains opening either on the day or over the following few days.

## 6.9 **Hotel Accommodation**

A number of hotels have stated their intention to re-open as soon as restrictions are eased. It is anticipated that the larger hotels (particularly those operated by national groups) will be at an advanced state of readiness.

Consumer confidence research suggests that self-catering accommodation is likely to be most in demand when the lockdown eases along with large hotels that can convert

function areas into additional public eating areas.

The industry standard being developed by VisitEngland is key in terms of supporting the wider accommodation sector to open and provide reassurance to guests.

These are provisional opening dates for some of our larger hotels (though note that the dates could be subject to change). Most are expected to open with much reduced capacity though, again, that could change depending on any amendments to social distancing guidance:

The Boulevard, The Big Blue and The Imperial: 4 July 2020.

The Royal Ruskin: 6 July 2020.

The Elgin and The Sheraton: Scheduled reopening, 13 July 2020.

Choice Hotels (Cliffs, Claremont and Viking): July 2020 (date to be confirmed)

Hampton By Hilton: Has remained open throughout lockdown for construction and key workers.

#### 6.10 **Self-Catering**

The self-catering sector including caravan parks, campsites and holiday villages would appear to be well placed to attract staying visitors in the early stages of lockdown restrictions being eased.

##### Haven/Marton Mere

Provisional reopening date: 6 July 2020.

Will be marketed as “Haven Hideaway” breaks with a slimmed-down offer that will allow visitors to stay in self-catering units with takeaway food service, but with no immediate access to pools, entertainment venues or on-site pubs/restaurants. Likely to operate at around 25% of normal capacity in early stages.

##### Ribby Hall Village

Provisional reopening date: 6 July 2020.

Will be marketed as “Ribby Retreat” packages with self-catering accommodation, takeaway good options but limited or no immediate access to pools and leisure facilities.

#### 6.11 **Next Generation Hotels**

##### Premier Inn, North Pier

September opening postponed. Now due to open on December 4, 2020

##### Sands Venue Resort Hotel

Due to open July 2021

## 6.12 **Illuminations**

The annual Illuminations display provides a great opportunity to market the resort over the final third of the year. The fact that the Illuminations can be experienced as a drive-through attraction without any social distancing issues gives it an added appeal. The installation of the display is on schedule for the 4 September 2020 switch-on. In order to help businesses recoup some of the losses they have suffered during lockdown, we have announced an extension of the Illuminations season by two months, ending on Sunday 3 January, 2021.

Some of the attractions (including Pleasure Beach) have indicated that they will open weekends only into the winter months to provide additional reasons to visit the resort during this extended Illuminations season.

## 6.13 **Events**

The town's major events programme has already been seriously impacted with Pride, Armed Forces Week and Air Show weekend all cancelled. Other events including Ride The Lights, World Fireworks and Slimefest are all under review.

Given the difficulty of implementing social distancing at large-scale gatherings, most of these events are at risk and the Council will be looking to make further announcements of cancellations or postponements in the weeks ahead.

A virtual version of the Switch-On celebration is to be staged in association with MTV to ensure that we can generate national PR for the Illuminations. This will take the form of an hour-long streamed show, freely accessible to all on the evening of Friday 4 September 2020.

The Council is also working on a Lightpool Festival for October half-term, though that is likely to be in a reduced format because of the withdrawal of Arts Council funding and the difficulties of staging events such as the Illuminated Tram Parade with social distancing measures in place.

The Government is being lobbied to declare an additional bank holiday in October to compensate for the loss of Easter and the two May Bank holidays and officers will continue to monitor whether that creates any opportunity for one-off events.

## 6.14 **Marketing Campaigns**

As more of the restrictions are eased, communications are moving away from the DoNotVisitBlackpool messaging that was adopted at the point of lockdown. Since the start of June, this has evolved into VisitBlackpool Safely, reflecting the fact that large numbers of visitors were heading to the coast.

As moves are made towards a reopening of the tourism economy at the start of July, initial focus will be on messaging that provides reassurance that Blackpool is a safe place to visit.

Under normal circumstances, the annual destination marketing campaign would be currently being rolled out with TV advertising across Scotland and the north of England. That campaign, which is co-funded by key partners, has been suspended and will be re-worked for the 2021 season.

In its place, three distinct pieces of marketing activity will be launched over the remainder of 2020:

### **1. Know Before You Go**

This first phase is focused on building trust with visitors and managing their expectations when they come here. Weekly tracker research is being used to provide insights into the sort of attractions that consumers will feel most confident about visiting in the first weeks of the post-lockdown period and what they will be looking for in terms of health and safety measures that are in place.

The campaign will be website-based with social media and PR support and will provide visitors with a wealth of information before they come to Blackpool.

This will include details of how the attractions are operating to deliver a COVID-19 secure environment, what facilities there are in resort, up-to-date public health guidance and full details of all of businesses that are participating in the VisitEngland industry standard scheme.

### **2. We're Good To Go**

This second phase is about building demand as public confidence starts to return and taking on a much more proactive stance to inviting and welcoming visitors back to Blackpool.

VisitEngland will be launching a relatively high-profile domestic staycation campaign using the 'We're Good To Go' branding in July 2020 and it is the Council's intention to align with that, but giving it a more bespoke feel by incorporating some very specific Blackpool messaging across our own channels.

There will be extensive use of social media to promote messages and close ties with national media and TV will be used to generate significant amounts of PR on what Blackpool is doing to kick-start its tourism industry.

### **3. Bring On The Light**

As stated earlier, the Illuminations season offers an outstanding opportunity to both extend the tourism season to the end of the year and promote a visitor experience that will not be materially affected by post-lockdown restrictions.

The Council is working on a celebratory theme called “Bring On The Light” which will play to the perception that the country is finally emerging from a period of darkness. The promotion of the 2020 Illuminations will commence during the summer and will include extensive social media activity, PR and some advertising on Nickelodeon TV channels.

The display will also be heavily promoted during the virtual Switch-On streamed event which will go out across the VisitBlackpool and MTV social media channels.

### **4. Planning for 2021**

The annual destination marketing campaign, which is delivered in association with key partners including Merlin, Pleasure Beach, Blackpool Transport, Winter Gardens and Sandcastle Waterpark, usually commences at Easter and runs through to the end of August.

For 2021, it is intended to produce a brand new campaign that will be launched at the end of this year to ensure that the town is in a strong position to capture people’s attention when they are actively starting to think again about holiday plans. The Council is already working with an agency with national and international experience on the creative concept for the TV advertisement element of this campaign and will look to complete that piece of work in the autumn.

#### **6.15 Monitoring**

As stated earlier, through VisitEngland weekly tracker research is being used to gain insights into the public appetite to undertake day trips, overnight short breaks and extended holidays in the UK once lockdown restrictions are lifted for the tourism industry.

The research, which started on 1 June 2020 and will continue until the end of the summer holidays, has a particular focus on barriers and concerns around travel and how these evolve over time. It addresses the likelihood of UK residents to travel; when and where they plan to go; specific trip details such as accommodation and the sort of reassurances they are seeking from the sector.

The first phases of research are already throwing up some interesting pointers in terms of perceptions on car usage versus public transport; indoor versus outdoor



attractions; and the point in the future when people perceive that things will return to “normal”. It is based on surveys of 1,500 people and given the immediacy of the survey results, it will prove enormously useful in terms of being able to manage and evolve messaging over the months ahead.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

**7.0 List of Appendices:**

7.1 None.

**8.0 Legal considerations:**

8.1 None

**9.0 Human resources considerations:**

9.1 None

**10.0 Equalities considerations:**

10.1 None

**11.0 Financial considerations:**

11.1 None

**12.0 Risk management considerations:**

12.1 Blackpool’s tourism industry is valued at more than £1.5bn per year, supporting an estimated 25,000 jobs. A full recovery is key to the town’s future economic prosperity.

**13.0 Ethical considerations:**

13.1 None

**14.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:**

14.1 None

**15.0 Background papers:**

15.1 None

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<b>Report to:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	1 July 2020

## SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To allow Members to consider the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/2020, celebrating achievement and identifying improvement to be made.

### 2.0 Recommendation:

2.1 To review and approve the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/2020 and forward to Full Council for consideration.

### 3.0 Reasons for recommendation:

3.1 It is best practice to have an annual report for scrutiny and it will form the second report back to Council required by the Scrutiny Lead Member.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None

### 4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priorities are:

- The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool
- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

### 5.0 Background information

5.1 The production of a Scrutiny Annual Report each year is considered best practice. The report reflects on the work carried out during the year and what lessons can be learned for improvement to continue to drive scrutiny forward at the authority.

- 5.2 The Municipal Year of 2019/2020 was very positive for Scrutiny at the authority with more work carried out than in recent years including scrutiny reviews, policy development, special committee meetings and informal meetings to build relationships between Executive Members and Scrutiny Members.
- 5.3 Due to the ongoing pandemic, in March 2020 it was considered that all scrutiny work should be put on hold in order to reduce the burden on services in crisis mode and also determine how scrutiny meetings could be carried out during the pandemic whilst meeting Government requirements.
- 5.4 Things have slowly been returning to normal with informal meetings held virtually between scrutiny chairs and vice chairs, directors, Executive Members and key partners such as the CCG. The work of scrutiny was temporarily consolidated into two meetings of the Scrutiny Leadership Board, this meeting and another scheduled for 22 July with five key topics in total to be reported on.
- 5.5 Workplanning sessions have been established for the three Scrutiny Committees and it is expected that the schedule of meetings for the Committees will return to normal from September 2020. Following that consideration will need to be given to re-scoping and restarting Scrutiny Reviews and rescheduling (if appropriate) work put on hold due to the crisis.

6.0 **List of Appendices**  
Appendix 4(a): Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/2020

7.0 **Legal considerations**

None.

8.0 **Human Resources considerations**

None.

9.0 **Equalities considerations**

None.

10.0 **Financial considerations**

None.

11.0 **Risk management considerations**

None.

12.0 **Ethical considerations**

None.

13.0 **Internal/External Consultation undertaken**

None.

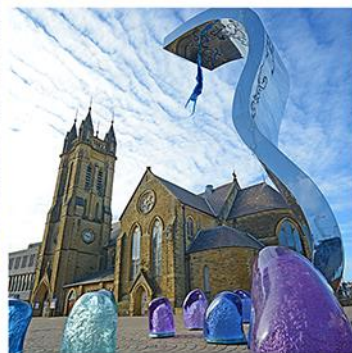
14.0 **Background papers**

None.

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# Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/2020

Blackpool Council



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## Introduction

There has never been a more exciting or busier time for Scrutiny at Blackpool than the last Municipal Year, with more policy development input and ongoing scrutiny reviews than ever. Each of the Committees has been working towards achieving outcomes, considering how impact can be determined and championing improvement. The achievements of Scrutiny Members in 2019/2020 are set out in this report.

**The impact of Covid-19 was keenly felt on scrutiny work in March 2020 and all ongoing work was temporarily suspended in light of the necessary restrictions put in place.**

## Scrutiny Leadership Board

The Scrutiny Leadership Board was established at Annual Council in 2019 with Councillor Mrs Maxine Callow appointed to the new position of Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board. The aim of the Board and the position being to lead the scrutiny function and drive forward the improvements identified.

The impact of the Scrutiny Leadership Board can already be seen with improvement made to the relationship between the Executive and Scrutiny Members. This has culminated in the revision of the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol which sets out the expectations for all Members involved in Scrutiny and on the Executive.

The Leadership Board has also proved key in co-ordinating the work of the three scrutiny committees. Due to the cross-cutting nature of many of the issues considered by scrutiny, the Board has ensured that duplication of work is prevented and that the Chairs and Vice Chairs of each committee work together to achieve outcomes.

### Key pieces of work

- The **Channel Shift** Scrutiny Review was established in November 2019 and is ongoing. A thorough approach is being taken with a focus on increasing resilience and targeting social isolation. The scope will be reviewed in light of Covid-19.
- As a result of scrutiny input into the **Green and Blue Infrastructure** Strategy development, the

way in which the Parks Team was organised was completely changed. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy was reviewed 12 months after its implementation by the Scrutiny Leadership Board and will continue to be looked at on a regular basis. The Leadership Board felt that the Strategy did not sufficiently reference blue infrastructure and has requested that further work be undertaken in developing the 'blue' aspect. It was also suggested that additional work was required to engage with businesses.

### FOCUS POINT: SCRUTINY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The Board met with Council Officers to discuss how different methods could be used to promote scrutiny to the wider public and improve engagement in scrutiny activity. Work is ongoing to determine how best to use social media to both gather intel for consideration by Members and also promote the work of scrutiny to the wider public.

### Informal Scrutiny Leadership Board

Whilst also meeting formally, the Scrutiny Leadership Board also meets informally on a regular basis to gather information from Executive Members and Senior Officers and work on building relationships. The informal meetings also give the Chairs and Vice Chairs a positive opportunity to discuss the work of their committees and reflect on where improvements can be made.

**Overall, the work of the Scrutiny Leadership Board both formally and informally has been essential in driving forward the improvements made to Scrutiny at Blackpool in 2019/2020.**

### Future Focus:

An evaluation of the Budget Scrutiny process with the aim of making improvements for 2020/2021 will be undertaken. Members of the Budget Scrutiny Panel have been asked to complete a questionnaire to identify what went well and where improvements could be made. Executive Member and Director input will also be sought to assist in ensuring Budget Scrutiny is as effective as possible and adds the most value in the future.

### Future Policy Development work identified:

- Tree Strategy

## Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee

The Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee has been setting the standard for Scrutiny at Blackpool in 2019/2020. The engagement with external organisations including the Fylde Coast Clinical Commissioning Groups, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust has significantly improved which has resulted in improved reporting from the organisations and involvement in scrutiny reviews. NHS Service redesigns are also being communicated to Members more efficiently for input.

The Committee has also been focussed on improving engagement with community and third sector groups and has facilitated a high level of involvement from a variety of groups when carrying out its work on mental health services.

### FOCUS POINT: MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

BBC North West Tonight attended the Committee in 2019 to film the special meeting held to review mental health service provision in Blackpool resulting in a two day report on the news programme. The local press has also keenly reported the work of the Committee in relation to both mental health services and many other items.

The Committee has been focussed on holding NHS leaders and commissioners to account on the provision of mental health services. Significant impact has been made as a result of the Committee's work on engagement of the main providers with wider partners and the gaps in service provision have been widely acknowledged resulting in the introduction of a new crisis café amongst other services.

### Key pieces of work

- The Healthy Weight Scrutiny Panel carried out an 'in a day' review of Healthy Weight and the ongoing work to ensure both children and adults engaged in healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. The review agreed ten recommendations, which were agreed by the Executive including writing to schools to ensure they understood the importance of meeting the school food standards and that the Council consider the feasibility of providing free gym access to 11-18 year olds. The Committee will be monitoring the

implementation of these recommendations and will measure the impact in due course.

- The Committee has been very active in carrying out workshops with NHS organisations on service redesign. Meetings have been held to consider **Head, Neck and Vascular Services, Stroke Improvement and Renal Dialysis Services.**
- Key issues considered by the Committee include Smoking Cessation, Fulfilling Lives, the CQC inspection of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Fylde Coast Clinical Commissioning Group Performance.

### Measuring the impact

In November 2018, the Committee carried out a scrutiny review on Whole Systems Transfers of Care, the recommendations of which were approved by the Executive in early 2019. Throughout 2019/2020 the Committee has been holding to account responsible officers for ensuring the recommendations have been implemented.

To take this one step further, a piece of work was commissioned from the Corporate Delivery Unit to measure the impact of the recommendations of that review. The review was delayed by Covid-19 and will be completed as soon as possible in 2020/2021.

### Joint Integrated Care System Health Scrutiny Committee

Blackpool Council, in collaboration with Lancashire County Council, Cumbria County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council has established a joint scrutiny committee to review issues relating to the South Cumbria and Lancashire Integrated Care System. The Committee is yet to meet but it will focus on issues affecting the whole system collectively.

### Policy Development input:

During 2019/2020 the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee has considered and contributed to:

- Drug Strategy
- Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy

**Future work identified includes reviews on Supported Housing and Drug Related Deaths as well as a look at infant mortality in Blackpool and maternity services. Workplanning for the year will be carried out in July 2020 and will be reviewed in light**

## Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

The focus of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee has been very much on Children's Social Care Improvement due to the outcome of the Ofsted inspection. However, there have been challenges in ensuring the right topics in this area are presented to the Committee for review.

This significant and complex area has generated much involvement from Committee Members but despite this only one review has been undertaken outside of the Committee setting. It has been important for Members to gather a deeper understanding and thorough overview of this complicated topic. Training has therefore been provided for Members on a variety of services which fall within the remit of the Committee to improve knowledge levels, namely:

- **Education Landscape of Blackpool**
- **Children's Services Departmental Briefing**
- **Financial Scrutiny**

Training was also scheduled on **Children's Scrutiny** which was postponed due to Covid-19.

### Key pieces of work

- A working group made up of Members of the Committee undertook an in-depth review of **Inclusion in Education** which considered the issues faced by parents of children requiring an in-year school place, schools' admissions procedures that aim to ensure pupils are offered a suitable place in a timely manner and the associated impact on the number of children being placed within the Pupil Referral Unit. The working group is in the process of agreeing its final recommendations and will submit its report to the Executive as soon as possible.

### Connecting with our young people

The Committee recognises the importance of incorporating the voice of our children and is excited to be holding a special meeting with young people as the focus. The meeting was originally scheduled to be held in May 2020, but was delayed due to Covid-19. It will be rescheduled as soon as possible and will provide the opportunity for Members to hear about the fantastic ventures going on across the town, directly from those impacted the most and gather the views of children and young people of the services provided by the Council.

### Working with our partners

The Committee identified the important impact of the Council's partners on children and young people within Blackpool and as such has maintained a focus on monitoring the new Pan-Lancashire safeguarding partnership arrangements implemented in September 2019. Members have worked closely with the Independent Scrutineer to receive an overview of the arrangements as they have developed and have determined to continue this critical-watch role over the coming year.

Holding key partners to account will be a priority for the Committee going forward, as Members recognise that the changes required to ensure continued improvement for our children and young people require a committed and coordinated approach from the Council and its partner agencies.

#### FOCUS POINT: BUDGET MONITORING

A new and significant function of the Committee over 2019/2020 has been the introduction of financial management monitoring of the services that fall under the remit of the Committee, including holding relevant budget holders to account. With the major budget implications associated with the improvement journey of Children's Social Care, Members have been developing their ability to scrutinise financial data and question Officers and Executive Members on their budgetary decisions and future financial planning. The Committee is keen to develop its role in scrutiny of the budget even further and is considering ways in which this can be done.

### Co-Opted Members

The Committee was delighted to welcome two new co-opted members this year:

- Ms Helen Sage joined the Committee as diocesan co-opted member and brought a wealth of experience from her employment as Advisor to High Schools and Academies within the Blackburn Diocese.
- Dr Elaine Allen joined the Committee as Roman Catholic co-opted member and has provided a thorough understanding of the issues faced by young people in Blackpool through her position as Headteacher of St John Vianney Catholic Primary School.

# Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee

The Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee has had a busy year focusing on a range of issues.

In addition to receiving Annual Reports on subjects such as Flood Risk Management, Leisure Services, Car Parking and Tourism Performance, a number of in-depth review panels have been held, allowing the Committee to scrutinise Council Plans and contribute to the development of policy and strategies. Monitoring of the projects such as Town Centre Regeneration and the implementation of the Single-Use Plastics Policy has also continued.

## FOCUS POINT: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SCRUTINY REVIEW

This year the Committee agreed to undertake a **Housing and Homelessness Scrutiny Review** to consider the impact of the implementation of the Council Housing Strategy and Homelessness Reduction Strategy.

The review panel met a number of times in 2019/2020 and heard evidence from Officers in the housing and benefits teams, Blackpool Housing Company Ltd, Fulfilling Lives and the Salvation Army. The panel also heard from an individual with lived experience of being homeless in Blackpool.

Issues discussed have included the work of the Council's housing team, the impact of public protection enforcement, Blackpool's private housing market, the impact of universal credit and non-Council services provided to support the homeless.

The review was put on hold in March 2020 due to Covid-19 and will be completed as soon as possible in 2020/2021. The scope of the review will need to be revisited following the pandemic.

### Key pieces of work

- On 18 September 2019 the Committee held a review panel meeting to consider the draft **Libraries Ambition Plan 2019-2024**.

The Committee met with officers and discussed the Plan and the Council's vision for its libraries. The meeting highlighted the value

of libraries to Blackpool and how they can be used to promote learning and support health and wellbeing in the town.

- The **Community Safety Plan 2019-2022** was considered by the Committee at a Review Panel meeting held on 11 September 2019.

The Panel met with members of the Community Safety Partnership, including; Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, the National Probation Service and Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group. The Panel endorsed the Plan and agreed the need to undertake ongoing monitoring of the performance of the Plan against its priorities.

- The Committee identified the environment as a subject for scrutiny as part of its 2019-2020 work programming. As part of this it began work to monitor the implementation of the **Councils' declaration of a Climate Emergency**.

An overview of actions undertaken by the Council since the declaration was made in June 2019 was provided to the 5 February 2020 meeting of the Committee. The Climate Emergency Action Plan which outlines all the actions identified that the Council will be undertaking in response to the declaration and progress against them will be considered by the Committee in the new Municipal Year.

### Future Focus:

The Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee will hold an annual workplanning workshop in July 2020 to identify key issues with officers and Executive Members for future scrutiny. The Committee has identified the **Illuminations** in particular as an area of work for 2020/2021 and will continue to prioritise scrutiny of climate change action and tourism performance as well as carrying out its statutory duties in the review of the Community Safety Partnership. Topics may need to be reviewed in response to the pandemic.

### Future policy development work identified:

- Clean Air Strategy
- Lancashire Waste Strategy



## Cross Committee Working

The three scrutiny committees have been carrying out more joined up working than ever. This is in part thanks to the role of the Scrutiny Leadership Board in bringing the Chairs and Vice Chairs together in a co-ordinating role and in part due to the nature of the issues being considered and that they arguably fall within the remit of more than one of the committees. Key pieces of work that have been carried out jointly:

### Supported Housing

The topic of **Supported Housing** was identified as a significant issue in Blackpool by the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee and as such a review was scheduled to be carried out in conjunction with the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee. The meeting was due to be held in April 2020 but has been delayed due to Covid-19.

### Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Scrutiny of **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services** was identified as a key priority for the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee and a workshop on the redesign of services was held in conjunction with the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed that the proposals set out by the redesign were positive and to review the changes and outcomes made by the redesign approximately 18 months following the meeting, when proposals had been implemented.

### Active Lives Strategy

The Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee set up a joint meeting with the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee to feed into the development of the **Active Lives Strategy**. The meeting was facilitated by the Council's consultants on the strategy, Knight, Kavanagh and Page. Issues discussed included encouraging the take up of sports, engaging young people, making better use of the Council's leisure resources and working with partners to encourage healthier lifestyles.

A draft of the strategy will also be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

### Community Engagement Strategy

Members from across the three Scrutiny Committees were appointed to input into the **Community Engagement Strategy**. A focus was placed on ensuring departments were complying with the policy and

responding to members of the public and managing expectations as appropriate.

## The challenge ahead

Significant improvements to Scrutiny have been made over the past 18 months. A new structure has been implemented and relationships between the Executive and Scrutiny Members have been improved, however, there is still improvement to be made. The pandemic has had a massive impact on the work of the Council and scrutiny needs to determine its role in the ongoing response.

Scrutiny at Blackpool needs to develop an improved programme for budget and financial scrutiny throughout the year and determine both the individual Committees' roles and the Scrutiny Leadership Board's role in that process. Further work is also required on improving public engagement and the use of social media to encourage that engagement. Both of these issues have been identified by the Scrutiny Leadership Board for development and work has already commenced.

There is also a challenge ahead in driving forward the work of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee to ensure that it is supporting and challenging Children's Services to make improvement. The Committee's true role in this process has not yet been defined in Blackpool.

**In 2020/2021 there will be a drive to demonstrate the impact of scrutiny at Blackpool through review of previous recommendations and working towards identifying the impact of those recommendations on service provision. This is not something that has been demonstrated before due to the difficulties in finding meaningful evidence that can be attributed to scrutiny recommendations. We will still be striving to achieve this.**

Further training for Members has also been identified as a priority. A refresher will be held on the key roles and abilities of a scrutiny member, it is hoped that a peer to peer training course can be held on how to be an effective scrutineer and once the scrutiny review impact work has been concluded a training session will be held to identify learning from that review. Ongoing training for Members is vital to ensure they are supported and encouraged to provide both essential challenge to decision makers and can make a positive contribution to developing policy and scrutiny review work.

## Header 3

### Document Control

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