

## PLACE PORTFOLIOS

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The 'Place' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Lynn Williams - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism, Arts and Culture
- Councillor Ivan Taylor – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Performance (Housing)
- Councillor Neal Brookes - Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Public Safety, Highways and Transport
- Councillor Jane Hugo - Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment
- Councillor Mark Smith - Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation

The full details of the portfolio areas can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Your-councillors/Executive-members.aspx>

## Strategic Issues

### Town Deal Scheme progress update

Progress on the seven Town Deal schemes, several of which are supported by Council funding, are as follows:

#### 1. **Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Infrastructure (£7.5m Town Deal)**

The scheme will create and refurbish highways to open up 10.5 hectares of development sites that will attract jobs and investment within the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone. Site investigations are underway and designs are progressing, with a delay in delivery due to awaiting provision of technical information and costs estimates from United Utilities and Electricity North West and some queries from Sport England, The Health and Safety Executive and Lancashire County Council Highways. The first phase of works, remodelling the Division Lane Junctions, will commence in October and last 6 weeks. As the Common Edge site remains Greenbelt until completion of the ongoing examination in public process for part 2 of the Local Plan, any decision of the Planning Committee will be subject to final confirmation by the Secretary of State. It is anticipated that the consents will be in place for the planned start of the main highway construction works in February 2023, with completion scheduled for the end of the calendar year.

**2. The Youth Hub ('The Platform') (£0.5m Town Deal)**

The scheme provides a physical space where advice and guidance will be available to up to 400 young people aged 16-24 in the town, with the anticipated outcome that they will progress into rewarding and fulfilling opportunities in education, training or directly into work. So far 318 young people have benefited from the Hub, with 75 gaining paid employment and 69 going into training or education. Those who are at risk of disengaging with the service are given additional support, including looking at other support options, and have the option to re-engage at any time.

**3. Revoe Community Sports Village (£6.5m Town Deal)**

The project will aid the regeneration of the area, creating jobs and encouraging over 1,700 people to engage in health and well-being activities through the creation of a new community sports centre and facilities. Spoil has been cleared from the site, with planning applications for the work now being prepared for submission in the next few months.

**4. The Edge (£4.5m Town Deal)**

The scheme will redevelop/refurbish the historic Stanley Buildings within the town centre, creating 1,200m<sup>2</sup> of modern office space for start-up and growing businesses to locate and /or access business advice. Planning consent has now been achieved, a branding exercise is underway and construction costs are being reviewed to achieve value for money.

**5. The Illuminations (£4.5m Town Deal)**

With £8.75m of Council funding together with the Town Deal funds, the scheme will upgrade the Illuminations to attract 1,750,000 additional visitors (by 2026) by improving the associated infrastructure and developing new features using novel and environmentally friendly lighting. The creation of new centrepiece attractions will create four permanent full time equivalent (FTE) jobs and support five artists to develop new skills. Several purchases including a box van, two cherry pickers, a lorry mounted crane, a tele handler, a custom robotic arm and computer equipment are now being finalised and new feature designs will see 'Odyssey', the first Town Deal funded attraction, completed in time for the current Illuminations season and will see future manufacturing of the other new features brought forward. The team has also taken a battery-operated zero emissions truck on trial, which is proving to be a success.

**6. Multiversity land acquisition (£9m Town Deal)**

As part of the Multiversity project (see details of the associated Levelling Up Fund bid in the Corporate portfolio report), the Town Deal is funding land acquisition to enable the relocation of Blackpool and the Fylde College's Park Road campus to Blackpool's town centre. Negotiations with property owners are now underway, with a further report related to the compulsory acquisition of the site to be considered in due course if necessary, depending on progress with negotiations.

## 7. **Blackpool Central Courts Relocation (£6.95m Town Deal)**

Relocation of the county and magistrates court will allow the demolition, clearing and remediation of the current courts building and plot to further open up 'Blackpool Central', the £300m leisure development, which will create a year-round, world-class visitor attraction.

Discussions are continuing with Government regarding funding for the construction of the new courts on the site purchased at Devonshire Road, for which a planning application will be submitted when funding is secured. Construction of the car park as part of the scheme continues to make progress.

## **Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone update**

Good progress continues to be made on the Enterprise Zone development. The construction work for the new Common Edge Sports pavilion and car park will complete in late September but planning conditions require the completion of the Division Lane junction before this can be brought into use, which is anticipated from January 2023. The planning consent for the building also prevented any work commencing on the junction until the building itself was complete. The interim period will be utilised for staff training and commissioning works.

The pavilion includes changing rooms, an activity space and a take-away café facility to complement the newly-relocated grass pitches. The new facilities are very much welcomed by the local football clubs and leagues who have visited the site whilst under construction to see for themselves the new facilities on offer. The tender for the construction of a new 3G floodlit sports pitch and a new grass Rugby League rugby pitch has been awarded to Carrick Sports, with work planned to commence in mid-September and is scheduled for completion late March 2023.

Initial design proposals and high level feasibility studies are underway with Enterprise Zone consultant engineers WSP and Enterprise Zone architects and planners Cassidy and Ashton, working alongside the airport's operational management team, to develop proposals for new aircraft hangars on the eastern and western flanks of the airport. These will enable the Council to support the relocation of airport operations in line with approved master plan and add additional hangar capacity to help attract new business.

Despite the present economic uncertainty there remains a reasonable level of interest in investment in new property at the Enterprise Zone, with advanced discussions underway with a number of data centre operators wishing to benefit from the transatlantic cable.

Studies are also underway into supporting infrastructure that will both enable development of ethically powered data facilities and assist the progression to achieve net zero by 2030, including for a large solar farm within the airport boundary, a battery storage facility and a connection to new off shore wind farms. Engineers WSP are also conducting a detailed study into the existing and required future power requirements of Enterprise Zone phase 2, as the

necessary primary electricity sub-station may now have a delivery time lag from order to commissioning of up to four years.

### **Abingdon Street Market rejuvenation**

The refurbishment of Abingdon Street Market is progressing and in September the contractor will hand over the market ready to commence the fit out. The new glazing for the Edward Street elevation will arrive soon and this will bring forward the most striking physical change on Cedar Square. Terms are also close to being finalised with the potential operators of the Market.

### **Coastal Protection Scheme**

Following the delivery of the outline business case in line with the Blackpool Coastal Strategy, Blackpool has been allocated £61m for the coastal protection schemes between Little Bispham and Bispham and Gynn Square to Cocker Square.

The Environment Agency (EA) has developed a collaborative delivery framework, which has been through a rigorous procurement process in the selection of suitable designers and contractors for coastal protection schemes. We will be using the framework, working collaboratively with the EA and DEFRA's commercial team to deliver the project, strengthening the contract through previous learning.

### **Blackpool Beach Nourishment Works**

The outline business case for the proposed beach nourishment works between North and Central piers commenced earlier this year. The Council has commissioned Jacobs from the Environment Agency's framework to assist in the preparation. The outline business case will complete by the end of 2022 and it is anticipated that it will be submitted to the Environment Agency's large project review board in early January.

## **Corporate Issues**

### **Council "Highly Commended" for our response to the Climate Emergency**

I am very pleased to report that the Council won a prestigious Local Government Chronicle (LGC) "Highly Commended" award at their 2022 ceremony in the category of "Climate Response", marking us out as one of the top three Councils in the country. The judges noted that they were impressed at the range of measures and initiatives which had been put in place, and felt there were many strong examples of the Council demonstrating leadership on the agenda. They liked that the measures taken were clearly tailored to address local circumstances and cited the Eco Coaching project led by Groundwork on Grange Park as a great example of how we can also tackle the cost of living crisis in a "green" way.

I was particularly proud of their comment that our team “truly seemed to be responding to the climate change emergency like it is an emergency, and acting with urgency”. We are all aware that there are other places in the country which need to do much more than us to reduce their impact on the environment and over the next 12 months we will be demonstrating that if we can take the climate crisis seriously, others with greater resources at their disposal certainly can too. We already have 45 staff and councillors trained as part of efforts to make the Council “carbon literate”, with more to follow.

### **“Council of the Year” from the Northern Housing Awards**

It seems that every one of my reports brings news of another award for our work on housing, and this one is no different! Blackpool added to its success at the Inside Housing Awards in November 2021 by coming away with three awards from the Northern Housing Awards in May. The Council once again picked up “Council of the Year” and our ALMO Blackpool Coastal Housing also collected two awards for “Best Approach to Diversity and Inclusion” and “Best Approach to Employee Wellbeing”. Our congratulations go to all involved.

### **Grange Park work progresses**

The contractors have now started work on phase 2, as work continues to progress well on phase 1 of the site. This £20 million project will provide 131 new homes for affordable rent, comprised of 2 to 6 bed houses, bungalows and new sheltered housing. With the support of the European Social Fund and council investment, these new homes will have a number of energy saving measures and technologies, including 30 air source heat pumps and good levels of insulation. Once complete they will act as a demonstrator for how we can reduce the large proportion of our emissions which come from housing in Blackpool. Hopefully by then the government will make some coherent proposals to fund insulation to reduce energy use and bills, so we can bring the benefits to more and more people at a time when they need it most.

### **Troutbeck - completed**

I am very pleased to report that the final units have now been completed on this scheme, totalling 75 new affordable homes, a number of which have been customised to meet the needs of disabled families. Replacing ageing and unwanted housing stock is essential if we are to deliver communities which provide a settled place for families to flourish and create a desirable place to live.

### **Leading the way on Supported Housing**

Blackpool Council is one of four Councils to be awarded a first share of the Governments £20m funding for the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP). At a visit to Blackpool in June this year, Housing Minister Eddie Hughes announced that this funding would allow Blackpool “to build on their successful pilot schemes”, and stated that “this work is already

benefitting local communities by tackling poor practice and improving conditions for vulnerable tenants”.

The SHIP will enable Blackpool Council to continue the work of the pilot to work with providers to drive up standards, tackle poor quality accommodation and support and ensure providers are clear on the needs of the town to ensure we have the right accommodation, for the right people, in the right place. To do this we will offer support but also challenge the market to make sure that the supported housing schemes in Blackpool deliver great outcomes.

### **Rollout of trauma first aid kits**

In conjunction with Blackpool Community Safety Partnership, we are currently rolling out 45 publicly accessible trauma first aid kits into key locations, forming part of measures that are being considered and taken in relation to our Protect and Prepare Duty. These would be available for use in the event of serious injuries that requires appropriate lifesaving first aid with vital and available equipment in publicly accessible locations.

The equipment is designed so that a member of the public is able to use it, but will potentially allow access to staff from Blackpool Teaching Hospitals to support the rollout of equipment with a training offer for those organisations who host or are located near to the equipment.

## **Transforming Services**

### **Stanley Park – a National Treasure**

Stanley Park has been named “England Park of the Year” for the third time and as a result awarded 'National Treasure' status. This amazing accolade is thanks to the partnership work between the Council’s Park Development Service, Friends of Stanley Park and ENVECO NW Environmental Services who have all worked tirelessly to bring engaging events, activities and high quality green spaces to local residents.

I would also like to congratulate the Friends of Stanley Park on receiving the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service which is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK, almost an equivalent of an “MBE” for community groups, and reflects their tireless work in helping to keep Stanley Park’s place amongst the very best parks in the UK.

## **Working with Partners**

### **Bee Hives installed in Revoe Community Garden**

The Park Development Service's Park Ranger Team has been working with the HeadStart team and the local community to install two new bee hives and replace an existing one. The three hives will house around 140,000 honey bees at Revoe Park, one for everyone living in Blackpool!

The project has been led by the Park Rangers, who understand the importance and benefits of bees. The hives will contribute both environmentally and be used as an education tool during Forest School and wider Park Rangers activities. Bees are responsible for pollinating around 80 percent of flowering plants, making them an essential part of any healthy ecosystem and supporting the growing of vegetables, fruits and crops.