

PLACE PORTFOLIOS

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

Public support for our Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

I am pleased to report that we will be bringing our first Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy before Executive for approval later this month. A public consultation on the priorities before Christmas showed clear support for the plan amongst those responding, which also re-affirms our commitment to promoting walking, cycling and public transport as our primary transport objective. We will ensure that chargepoints are available across the town, with measures to ensure that sufficient chargers are available for motorists with physical disabilities, are reliable and easy to use and that chargepoints for use by those without home charging facilities are as affordable as possible. The chargers we have installed in our car parks are well used and are increasingly important as a way of supporting the visitor economy but we must also ensure those who do not have driveways can choose to switch to Electric Vehicles when they are ready to do so.

The strategy is the first in Lancashire and aims to help future proof the town by forecasting anticipated chargepoint needs over the next five years, with over 200 additional publicly available chargers to be delivered by 2027 via a mix of council delivery and work in partnership with private providers. Having a strategy is an important pre-requisite for the Council if it is to access funding from the £400m Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding due to launch later this year and we have engaged with the free support on offer from the Energy Savings Trust to ensure that the plan is appropriate for our needs.

Corporate Issues

New homes progressing well on Grange Park

Excellent progress continues to be made on the new Council homes at Grange Park. The new homes will be finished in phases, with the first occupations expected in May on the Phase 1 site (Dinmore Avenue) and in the autumn on the Phase 2 site (Chepstow Road).

Shared commitment to make progress at Foxhall Village

The Council remains fully and actively engaged with Great Places Housing Association and Homes England with a shared commitment to complete the new homes at Foxhall Village. We aim to bring a recommendation to Executive ahead of the pre-election period, with a hope to restarting on site in spring this year.

Yet another award for our housing!

I seem to be able to tell Council about another housing award every time we have a meeting, and this time is no exception! Troutbeck was recently awarded a 'highly commended' award by the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists for Excellence in Architectural Technology.

The judges commented that it is "...an exemplary and well-considered use of materials addressing sustainability and performance... An inclusive, functional and adaptable design with strong technical detailing, consideration to context and striking aesthetic. There is strong evidence in relation to the technical design and detailing associated with buildability and assembly. A great example of Architectural Technology in residential design." Well done to all involved.

Transforming Services

Nearly ¾ million pounds to save people money and help the planet

As part of our commitment to the Climate Emergency declared unanimously at full Council in 2019, we have earmarked at least £745k of government funding in our Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan to reduce emissions and help build resilience to extreme weather events. Whilst all Shared Prosperity Fund projects will consider how they can make a positive environmental impact, two buildings will benefit directly from low carbon heating and energy generation technology, supporting our challenging goal of making the Council a net zero carbon organisation by 2030.

The majority of the funding will deliver projects of direct benefit to residents. We will develop a town-wide project based on the highly successful "eco-coaches" scheme at Grange Park, to provide support for residents to get through the cost of living crisis in a sustainable way, helping to lower domestic energy bills through practical guidance and energy efficiency

measures which save carbon emissions. To kick-start this process at a time when it is most needed, an additional £42,000 of funding from the Council's internal Climate Action Fund has been used to establish a town-wide post in collaboration with Groundwork operating as part of their "Green Doctor" service. Groundwork will also provide Council staff with training so we can support hundreds of vulnerable residents who use the Libraries at Home service in a similar way.

The eco-coaches will be based at an "eco-hub", which will bring together various services including staff from Cosy Homes in Lancashire to help residents access funding available for larger-scale domestic efficiency improvements, as well as acting as a demonstrator for low carbon technologies such as Air Source Heat Pumps. The site will also support delivery of the third project, a community flood risk reduction scheme, which will contribute to building resilience to extreme rain events by providing rainwater storage in key places in the town, as well as helping residents to understand the risks and ways in which they can contribute further.

Working with Partners

Heritage Action Zone Conference

On Thursday 8 December, Historic England held a one-day conference at the Winter Gardens for all the Heritage Action Zone Officers nationally. The focus of the conference was specifically on Public Engagement and Blackpool as the host was the focus of the day with an overview by Carl Carrington of the wider scheme and its objectives. This was followed by a presentation from Catherine Mugonyi of Aunty Social about the new Creative Hub at 28 Topping Street funded by the Heritage Action Zone and the opportunities for reconnecting local communities to the high street through creative activity that this Council initiative will offer.

The rest of the day focused on other schemes with strong community engagement across the UK, finishing with a tour of the Blackpool projects introduced by Neil Jack and a workshop on engagement tools for the historic built environment.

The choice of Blackpool as the venue reflects both the success of the scheme and the strong relationship between Historic England and the Council, a relationship that has yielded circa £2.1m of funding over the last five years. We will be one of the first schemes to complete in March 2023, as we were able to continue works over lockdown relatively uninterrupted.

Parks and Green Open Spaces service

The Parks and Green Open Spaces Service has successfully collaborated with Tree for Cities and secured tree planting funds via the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and the Queen's Green Canopy Fund to plant a diverse range of trees over the next two planting seasons. The funding will benefit Revoe park, Claremont, Crossland Road Park, Highfield Park and Bridge Farm open space. Further funding has been secured through the Levelling Up fund, which will see £85K

invested in Fisher's Field to have a new play area, community space and garden with a new tree line and hedgerow surrounding the football pitches.

Further collaborative work has seen Parks and Green Open Spaces successfully involved with the woodland accelerator fund and includes multiple local authorities, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and third sector organisations developing plans to increase tree planting across Lancashire.

The Ranger Service has seen a further increase in volunteer numbers, forest/beach school attendees and is currently planting over 2,300 trees with children from nine participating schools in Blackpool.

Further improvements include several play area updates, improving existing facilities and plans to improve ecological and natural sites which includes Lawson's Field and Marton Mere working with Natural England and local volunteer groups.