

Report to:	LEVELLING UP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration
Date of Meeting:	21 June 2023

BLACKPOOL TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an overview of progress on various projects being undertaken to secure the regeneration of Blackpool Town Centre following the last update in September 2022.

2.0 Recommendation:

2.1 To accept the report and note the progress being made and the content with regard to the work of the scrutiny committee in the future.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation:

3.1 To ensure constructive and robust scrutiny of the strategic approach to regenerating Blackpool Town Centre following a request by the Committee.

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 priorities are:

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

6.0 Background information

6.1 In the period since the previous Town Centre Update, significant progress has been made on the delivery of a number of projects, with further approvals having been received for the

funding of a number of additional projects, and progress being made on the implementation of the Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan.

6.2 Ongoing Projects Update

- 6.2.1 Talbot Gateway Phases 2 and 3 – Work on the Holiday Inn is in its final stages with a view to opening in early 2024 together with the completion of the tram extension. Construction of the Civil Service Hub is progressing very well and is due for completion in 2025. Work also continues to explore options around further office developments and increasing parking provision in the Talbot Gateway area
- 6.2.2 Blackpool Central and Courts Relocation – Construction of the multi-storey car park continues at pace and is due for completion later this year. HMCTS received confirmation of £40m in funding to support their relocation from the Blackpool Central site to the former Devonshire Road Hospital site, and draft plans have been subject to pre-application advice and a consultation exercise is to be held by HMCTS (or appointed agents) in June.
- 6.2.3 Showtown – Internal fit out of the building is underway, with development of audio-visual installations also in progress prior to opening next year. A new Chief Executive has been appointed, and is due to start in September.
- 6.2.4 Houndshell Phase 2 – Construction of the shell and core of the extension is nearing completion, and is due for hand over to the Imax cinema and Wilko in the next few weeks with a view to opening this autumn.
- 6.2.5 Abingdon Street Market – The phase one food hall of Abingdon Street Market opened to the public on 27 May, and has been very successful and enthusiastically received since opening. Work to finalise the entrance from St John’s Square is ongoing. Whilst there is a 12 month window for the opening of Phase 2 comprising the retail units, the operators are hoping to be in a position to open them later this year.
- 6.2.6 The Edge (Stanley Buildings) – Following projected costs for the initially designed building coming in well over budget, revisions have been made to the plans and the total project cost has been significantly reduced whilst maintaining the core outputs. A revised planning application has now been submitted for design alterations following the value engineering exercise. The procurement process for the works package is due to begin in June.

6.3 Projects Receiving Funding Approval

- 6.3.1 Multiversity : Levelling Up Fund: – The Council was successful in its bid to the Levelling Up Fund for £40m towards the Multiversity project. This is in addition to £9m already obtained as part of the Town Deal funding package. Subsequent to this approval, Hawkins Brown and CBRE have been appointed as the consultancy team for the building design continuation, and acquisition of a planning consultant is being finalised. As part of the programme tied to Town

Deal, acquisition of property in the area within which the Multiversity will be situated continues via negotiation with property owners. Negotiations are also being finalised with Blackpool and The Fylde College regarding the funding of the balance of £16m of this £65m project.

6.3.2 *Hotel Indigo – Former Post Office –Capital Regeneration Project* : Following news that the Hotel Indigo project had been unsuccessful through the Levelling Up Fund’s second round announcement, as a result of each local authority having been limited to one successful project during Government’s assessment process, the Council received surprising news in the March Budget Statement that Former Post Office had subsequently been included on a list of ‘Capital Regeneration Projects’, and was to able to receive the full £8m funding allocation asked for within the Levelling Up Fund bid in relation to the originally outlined project. As such, work has resumed on aiming to bring this project forward to implementation with Ashall Developments in what are challenging market conditions.

6.3.3 *Shared Prosperity Fund: Town Centre Interventions* – Having received confirmation of the approval of Blackpool’s Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan in December 2022, 13 projects were subsequently initiated, with the largest of those projects being the Town Centre Interventions project. This is a £1.5m project, split across capital and revenue, which looks to address four areas outlined within the refreshed Town Centre Action Plan presented to a recent Scrutiny Committee in the last cycle:

- 1A - Streetscape: Furniture and planting; Promenade gateways
- 1B - Environment: Biophilia/planting
- 1C - Illuminate: Lighting enhancements
- 2C - Signage and Wayfinding: Visual appearance; Key entry and decision points; Pedestrian traffic flow

c.£250,000 from this project has supported the completion of the Abingdon Street Market refurbishment, and planning is underway to allocate the remaining spend across the town centre through the Town Centre Action Group (see below).

6.4 **Town Centre Action Group**

6.4.1 Following the completion and approval of Blackpool’s renewed Town Centre Strategy and outline Action Plan in May 2022, work commenced on establishing a detailed Town Centre Action Plan in Summer 2022, which followed the priorities outlined by CBRE in the development of the Town Centre Strategy. This involved extensive engagement with Council officers, Blackpool BID officers, and representatives from private sector and other organisations who are key stakeholders across the town centre, particularly those holding responsibilities for the management or improvement of key facilities or public spaces.

Following this engagement process, a 117 action Town Centre Action Plan, split across seven priority areas, was completed and approved by the Council’s Executive in February 2023 and presented to the former Tourism and Economy Scrutiny Committee. This Action Plan is

designed to operate on a 5 year rolling basis, with an annual update being carried out. The Action Plan will also form the basis for any investments in the town centre from the Shared Prosperity Fund's Town Centre Interventions Project.

With the Action Plan being as extensive as it is, the establishment of a Town Centre Action Group has been established to act as a body overseeing the delivery of the Action Plan, as well as outlining priorities within the Action Plan that would benefit from investment from the Shared Prosperity Fund project.

The Town Centre Action core Group comprises:

- Growing Places
- Blackpool BID Town Centre Management Group
- Built Heritage
- Ellandi
- Growth and Prosperity
- Highways

In addition, other Council teams that hold lead roles in relation to the Town Centre Action Plan will be invited to join the group, or any 'task and finish' sub-groups, when specific areas of focus are identified

Membership of any 'task and finish' sub-group will draw from appropriate Council officers, BID officers and business and third-sector community members with experience or expertise in the specific area or space being focused upon

6.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1
- Appendix 7(a) Town Centre Action Plan

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 Each of the developments referred to have significant financial implications for which individual business cases are prepared and factored into the Council's budget. This includes securing significant levels of private sector investment and grant funding.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 Most of the developments and projects referred to either do or will include individual legal agreements to protect the Council's investment and to secure the planned outcomes.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Each of the developments and projects, including those included in Levelling Up Fund bids, has a business case which includes a review of risks or has undertaken a separate risk assessment.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 The implementation of the Council's £2bn+ Growth and Prosperity Programme is designed to create extensive opportunities for employment and economic benefit to Blackpool residents and businesses.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 Whilst sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations are not a key focus of the majority of the outlined projects, each project has its own business case that will look to address sustainability and the environment where appropriate. In the case of the Shared Prosperity Fund application, three of the outlined projects that were put forward in the Investment Plan had a specific focus on sustainability, climate change and the environment.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Both formal and informal consultation has been and will continue to be a key part of the implementation of such an extensive programme of improvement. Engagement has also been undertaken around the Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund bids. In addition the Town Centre Action Group includes parties external to the Council (in particular the Town Centre BID) and will involve other Town Centre partners through the establishment of sub groups.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None