

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE – COUNCILLOR IVAN TAYLOR

Portfolio areas of responsibility:

- Relationships with all the Council wholly owned companies and the shareholder lead Cabinet Member
- Relationships with partner organisations:
 - Blackpool Tower complex and associated buildings (Merlin)
 - Hounds Hill Shopping Centre
- Corporate strategy development and research
- Governance
- Contracts, policy and purchasing

Introduction

The cabinet member will present the report to Council and report on any key issues.

Theme 1 - Houndshill Development Update

Following the purchase of the Houndshill Shopping Centre in 2019, the Council purchased land to build an extension in 2021 and this has now been developed in to the “Backlot Diner” to compliment the cinema. Backlot took possession of these in October and are working toward a spring 2024 opening. The cinema multiplex will house multiple screens, including one of the largest IMAX screens in the country.

Theme 2 - Waste and Environmental Services

Blackpool Waste Services (aka ENVECO) is the Council’s wholly-owned waste and environmental services company, formed in 2019 to deliver much valued kerbside refuse and recycling collections. In September 2021 it took on responsibility for Street Cleansing, the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC), StreetScene Services and associated frontline services that help to maintain clean streets in Blackpool.

This integration of staff and physical resources has led to new ways of agile, co-ordinated working, delivering improved environmental outcomes for local residents, businesses and visitors to Blackpool. By improving co-ordination of the services it delivers, ENVECO has achieved a visible improvement in cleanliness across the town, particularly in the treatment of weeds, and has improved access to recycling collections and facilities.

Further significant developments include the design and implementation of a 'Cleansing Inspection Management System' to make sure all streets in the town are manually inspected and graded according to cleanliness every month. The data gathered is used to plan future works and the resources needed to continually improve the standard achieved. Elsewhere, by putting additional resources into the Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team, ENVECO has realised a step change for both residents and members in the delivery of integrated environmental services. Improved co-ordination with the BID team has also led to an improvement in the appearance of the town centre.

Building on these achievements, the Company is now considering how to adapt to major changes in government policy on waste and recycling. Following a number of delays, the UK Government is bringing forward environmental policies designed to reduce waste and carbon emissions, including the Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Bill. Over the coming years, these will include changes such as:

- Separate weekly food waste collections;
- Introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme;
- Packaging Reforms, including extended producer responsibility; and
- Simpler Recycling.

The provision of a separate weekly collection of organic food waste from every household in the UK by the end of 2025 will increase the cost burden on local authorities. The process will require the procurement of specialist vehicles and it is anticipated will need more frontline staff. The Government has suggested that this important and positive measure would be funded, but has yet to clarify how the funding would be allocated. The Council hopes that sufficient New Burdens Funding is provided to avoid putting pressure on budgets elsewhere.

Another new initiative that the team is working to prepare for is the Deposit Return Scheme. This scheme, due to be implemented nationally by the end of 2025, is designed to encourage people to return their plastic and metal drinks containers by providing a small financial incentive. The implementation of this scheme could reduce the amount of material collected from households, leading to ENVECO needing to consider the number and type of vehicles needed, the routes of collection rounds and the method of collection among other factors, including a potential reduction in income from the recyclate collected.

We are also seeing the introduction of the Extended Producer Responsibility places responsibility on manufacturers to pay for the disposal of their packaging and end-of-life products and therefore encourages them to find ways of reducing the amount of material used and making it more recyclable. In this way, it addresses one of the main concerns voiced by some climate advocates that the responsibility for reducing, re-using and recycling should not sit mostly with consumers. Based on the 'polluter pays' principal, it will be accompanied by an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) which will allow for some flexibility as manufacturers make changes to their processes. Ultimately the aim here is that packaging waste reduces, which will again impact on the configuration of collection services locally.

“Simpler Recycling” relates to identifying a set group of materials that can be recycled across the country, no matter where you live in the UK. It aims to increase participation in recycling by considering which materials can be disposed of in the same bin, with an aim to minimise the number of bins households need but ensuring that recyclate is in the best condition possible, such as allowing disposal of dry material in the same bin.

Taken together, the current changing landscape is one which will prompt significant positive change and potential but which includes uncertainty and serious risks in terms of funding, procurement and operations. To address this, the Council and ENVECO have recently established two key project delivery groups which will also consider further issues related to climate change and the future sustainability of the Company and its operational infrastructure.

General questions / comments

Councillors will have the opportunity to raise questions / comments on any matter in the Cabinet Member’s portfolio.