

CABINET MEMBER FOR LEVELLING UP: PLACE - COUNCILLOR MARK SMITH

Portfolio areas of responsibility:

- Economic development based regeneration including growth and prosperity
- Enterprise Zones
- Town Deal, Levelling Up and Community Renewal Funding
- Asset management/ Council owned properties
- Strategic housing
- Strategic transport management
- Building Services
- Business Improvement District (BID)

Introduction

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

Theme 1 - Talbot Gateway Phase 2 - Hotel and Tram

Robertson Construction is looking to complete work on the Holiday Inn hotel in January 2024. When the work is complete RBH Management will prepare the hotel for opening by Easter 2024, alongside the temporary car park and new underpass. Recruitment to the management team has commenced, with the plan that further staff recruitment will begin early in the New Year.

The tramway extension is now complete. The area has now been handed back to the hotel contractor to complete the external works to building, after which the overhead cables will be installed. Blackpool Transport is conducting staff training and intends to start operation of the additional tram service shortly after the hotel is opened.

Theme 2 - High Street Accelerator funding bid

In September 2023, the Council was one of only ten places receiving an invitation to host the government's new High Street Accelerator Pilot Programme. This aims to encourage local stakeholders to work in partnership to support the long-term revival and regeneration of declining High Streets through accelerating development.

The programme provides seed funding of £237,000 until March 2025 to support activity that will make the identified area cleaner, safer or more appealing. The overall objective is that addressing these issues will lead to increased private investment in the area. The programme also opens up access to a share of £5 million “Green Spaces Funding” to improve greening in the chosen area agreed by the partnership.

If successful, Blackpool Council would oversee the initial stages of the programme. The future management will then be driven by a public-private sector partnership covering the identified area and chaired by a representative of the private sector. The detailed arrangements will be reviewed if and when the council’s proposed High Streets are confirmed as a pilot.

Confirmation of interest was required by 26 September 2023 and a formal short bid was submitted by 16 October 2023, highlighting the Abingdon Street and Queen Street area as the proposed target focus that met the government’s specific criteria. A government decision on the approval of the chosen High Streets is expected in November 2023.

Theme 3 - Abingdon Street Market Opening - Phase 2 Update

The Council purchased Abingdon Street Market in October 2020 after securing £3.63 million from the Getting Building Fund, appointing local company Little Blackpool Leisure to operate the market. Since re-opening the food court in May 2023, the feedback has been very positive and has already helped new footfall into the town centre. Earlier this month Little Blackpool Leisure opened the retail section with 14 vibrant retail stalls offering a range of products and services, including fresh produce. This is a very exciting prospect for Blackpool enabling new start-ups to have a platform for growth and for more established businesses to secure a footing in the heart of Blackpool town centre.

Theme 4 - Blackpool Central Update

Construction of the new multi-storey car park is due for completion early next year. The developer is due to hand the car park over to the Council in December 2023 following which the Council, as the long term operator, needs to undertake a package of fit out works prior to the car park coming into use in early 2024.

Proposals for the relocation of Blackpool Courts from existing facilities on Chapel Street to Devonshire Road site are being managed by His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunal Services. A planning application for the new development was received during October and subject to a positive decision this could see development activity on the site take place sometime during May/June next year, for a completion of the facilities in late 2025.

General questions / comments

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