

Blackpool Town Deal Board Meeting No. 22

Friday, 8 September 2023

Bickerstaffe Square & Microsoft Teams*

Blackpool Town Deal Board

Peter Cole (Chair)	(PS)	Chartered Surveyor
Alun Francis	(AF)	Blackpool and The Fylde College
Dick Cartmell	(DC)	Together in Lancashire
Graham Cowley*	(GC)	Business in the Community
John Sullivan	(JS)	The Big Picture
Mark McGhee*	(MM)	Blackpool Football Club
Mark Robinson	(MR)	Ellandi
Neil Jack	(NJ)	Blackpool Council
Richard Fee*	(RF)	Nikal
Steve Williams	(SW)	Force Technology
Tracy Hopkins*	(TH)	Blackpool Fylde and Wyre VCFS

In Attendance

Blackpool Council: Kevin Sturley* (KS), Liam Waterhouse (LW), Mark Gillingham (MG), Michael Hodgson (MH), Nick Gerrard (NG), Rob Stocks (RS) (Communications Manager to Paul Maynard).

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Introduction</p> <p>a) Meeting commenced with an introduction and welcome from the new Town Deal Board Chair, Peter Cole.</p> <p>b) Board members introduced themselves and welcomed new Board member Alun Francis, the newly appointed Principal of Blackpool & The Fylde College.</p> <p>c) Robin Stocks, Communications Manager for the Blackpool North Constituency team attended in place of Paul Maynard.</p> <p>d) Apologies received from the following: Alan Cavill, Blackpool Council. Jane Cole, Blackpool Transport. Debbie Francis, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. Helen Warren, Department for Work and Pensions. Kate Shane, Merlin Entertainments.</p>	

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<p>Paul Maynard, MP for Blackpool North. Scott Benton, MP for Blackpool South. Steve Fogg, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust David Gaffney, Arts Council Tina Redford, Leftcoast.</p>	
<p>2. Declaration of Interests</p> <p>a) The Chair asked members of the Board for any new interests other than those previously recorded. The following additional declaration of interests were made:</p> <p>Alun Francis (Blackpool & The Fylde College): Multiversity. Tracy Hopkins (Blackpool Fylde and Wyre VCFS): SPF Community Navigators. Graham Cowley (Business in the Community): SPF Development & Collaboration Support Services to Business.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of Meeting 21, 9th June 2023 and Matters Arising</p> <p>a) The Board approved the minutes of meeting 21, 24 February 2023.</p> <p>Matters Arising: Revoe Community Sports Village</p> <p>b) It was confirmed that community use of the pitches and in particular disabled access to them is a priority for Blackpool Football Club. The grant agreement is currently being finalised, with Community access the priority throughout. In response to this update it was questioned if sports other than football would be included in the development of the sports pitches including those for disabled people. Mark McGhee confirmed that that there is scope for community pitches to be used for other sports for which due consideration would be given as the proposals are brought forward.</p>	
<p>4. Town Deal Programme Update</p> <p>Overall Programme Progress:</p> <p>a) NG updated the Board on the overall Town Deal progress to date. Current delivery, spend and risks for the Town Deal programme are RAG rated as a Four/Amber and whilst there are significant risks, this is not considered to be unusual for such a major-scale regeneration programme at this stage.</p>	

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<p>a) Town Deal Investment Panel (TDIP) points raised With reference to the discussions that had taken place at the recent TDIP, NG explained that although forecasted spend for the overall Town Deal programme has been revised for this financial year, spend is still behind this forecast, which had led to the following key points being raised by the TDIP Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the programme still be delivered? Will Town Deal money be lost if forecasted spend profiles are not met? Blackpool’s reputation with DLUHC, which is a result of Blackpool’s ambition and the credible scale of the projects being delivered, and the actual physical progress of regeneration that can be seen in Blackpool. Blackpool’s £3M contribution to HMCTS new courts facility, which was forecasted to be spent this financial year but has been held back until HMCTS confirm their commitment to vacating their premises by no later than March 2025 to enable the demolition to take place within Town Deal timescales.. <p>b) NG explained the importance of Blackpool’s excellent reputation and relationship with DLUHC, which needs to remain strong; there is no concern about losing any resource from DHLUC at this stage and all schemes, though there are many challenges, remain on course for delivery, but whilst good progress is being made there is no room for complacency in terms of delivery.</p> <p>c) The Board also noted the new flexibilities introduced by DHLUC because of the number of Town Deal, Shared Prosperity Fund and Future High Streets Fund projects, many of which have been impacted by the recent rises in inflation and interest rates. This enables local determination of variation to outputs and scheme expenditure by up to 30%. Whilst this welcome flexibility was not currently proposed to be utilised it would be kept under review as the Programme progressed.</p> <p>d) Project Updates NG provided a brief summary of progress to date as follows:</p> <p>Multiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Behind on 2023-2024 spend. ○ Noted good progress in dialogue and negotiations with virtually all properties. ○ Next stage is to make a formal CPO. 	

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<p>The Edge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project is behind on spend. ○ Revised tenders received and currently being evaluated. <p>Enterprise Zone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final tender contracts expected to be agreed by late autumn with work commencing in the New Year. <p>Illuminations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Going well. No concerns and considered a major contribution to all year round tourism. ○ ‘Switch on’ event commenced 08/09/2023 <p>Revoe Community Sports Village:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Blackpool FC commitment to project confirmed ○ Phase One: Proceeding soon. ○ Phase Two: Over half of the required properties acquired. ○ It was noted that the project is behind on spend and Phase 2 will happen later than conceived. <p>The Platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continues to be a good news story. ○ Continues to deliver well and better than predicted in positive outcomes. <p>Blackpool Central Courts relocation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NG noted the update regarding Blackpool’s £3M contribution to HMCTS new court facility. ○ Whilst not a Town Deal project per se, Blackpool Central MSCP car park progressing well and will be completed by the end of 2023 to release land for the development. <p>e) The Board noted the report and that inflation will remain a concern for project delivery going forward.</p>	
<p>5. Town Deal Investment Panel Minutes (16 August 2023)</p> <p>a) Chair of the Town Deal Investment Panel, Steve Williams, gave a brief overview of the points raised (listed below) and the discussions that had taken place at the TDIP, noting Peter Cole’s attendance so that he could</p>	

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<p>observe the Panel and their processes of questioning and scrutinising of the information provided by the PMO team.</p> <p>In respect of the question of deploying interest gained from unspent Town Deal monies held in Blackpool's account back into the projects, the Council's Section 151 Officer confirmed that the Council's contributions to the projects and covering increases in costs on some schemes far surpassed any interest gained.</p> <p>The TDIP's debate on the realism of catching up on spend by April 2024 and the reassurance they had received from the PMO that any unspent money will not be lost.</p> <p>Project delays and reassurance that project pace will pick up this year. It was noted that some projects are now gaining significant momentum.</p> <p>An improved focus on project managers' completing claim forms in the required time. The PMO team provided the Town Deal Investment Panel a detailed insight into the claims process.</p> <p>The overall impact of inflation rates. It was noted to closely monitor how inflation impacted The Edge tenders.</p> <p>The request for completion dates against project milestones to be included in the PMO's reporting in future (e.g. with a Gant chart).</p> <p>f) The Chair commented that the TDIP are doing a good job in terms of challenging the information provided by the PMO with the PMO being receptive to their contributions, and he assured the Board that the TDIP are fulfilling their role on behalf of the Board.</p> <p>g) The Chair informed the Board that there had been a discussion at the TDIP meeting regarding resource issues within the Growth and Prosperity team but this had not impacted on overall delivery of the projects.</p> <p>h) The Board noted the report.</p>	
<p>6. Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)</p> <p>a) Blackpool's use of the TDIP for managing the Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling-up Fund has been recognised by DLUHC and is considered an innovative move on Blackpool's part.</p> <p>b) It was noted that we are already well into the second year of a 3 year programme and that Blackpool needs to be ready for when the</p>	

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<p>successor to Shared Prosperity Fund is announced as it will need to commence delivery in April 2025 although this will be dependent on what happens at a government level.</p> <p>Blackpool SPF Update:</p> <p>c) In a bid to meet SPF spend requirements the Community Navigators project will commence earlier than originally proposed and will be delivered jointly by Blackpool Citizens Advice Bureau and the Blackpool & Fylde Volunteer Centre following a rigorous tender exercise</p> <p>d) Whilst there has been some good progress made on SPF project spend, achieving the full spend this financial year will be challenging. Blackpool is looking at contingencies to bring forward SPF schemes that were due to start later to prevent potentially losing SPF funds and to meet with central government’s requirement or all local authorities to have spent their allocations by the end of this financial year. These contingencies include bringing programme activity forward to increase spend profile (People and Skills projects).</p> <p>e) The Board noted the report.</p>	
<p>7. Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and Capital Regeneration Project</p> <p>Levelling Up Fund Project: Multiversity¹</p> <p>a) Whilst the design team has been appointed and work is progressing discussions have taken place between Blackpool Council and Blackpool & The Fylde College regarding their proposed £16 million contribution to the project and how the potential impact of VAT can be mitigated. An application has been submitted to HMRC requesting VAT to which a response is awaited. In the meantime plans are being made to mitigate the impact in the event that VAT is chargeable and discussions have taken place with DHLUC regarding the perversity of grant funds being potentially diminished to pay back to HMRC.</p> <p>a) AF explained that VAT would not be applicable to the College’s contribution if the Multiversity was only offering education to students aged between sixteen and eighteen. However, as the college facilitates</p>	

¹ £65M project comprising of £9 million Town Deal Fund, £40 million Levelling-Up Fund and £16 million contribution from Blackpool & The Fylde College.

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<p>adult learners who pay for their education via student loans and bursaries etc. this means VAT is applicable.</p> <p>Capital Regeneration Grant Project: Transformation of the Former Abingdon Street Post Office into an Indigo Boutique Hotel</p> <p>b) NG explained that as welcome as the grant award is the delays in receiving approval had resulted in further challenges to the delivery of the scheme which were being intensively addressed with the owners of the building and Ashall's. It was noted that the £8M Capital Regeneration Grant remains the same regardless in increases in building materials and inflation.</p> <p>c) It was confirmed that the intention is still for Ashall's to deliver the same project and the Council is now in the process of finalising a deal to acquire the building and discussions are taking place with Ashall's as to how best to deliver the project in partnership.</p>	
<p>8. UK and Blackpool Town Centres Review</p> <p>a) Mark Robinson provided an overview of the relationship between Blackpool Council and Ellandi as they are responsible for managing the Houndshill Shopping Centre and other council owned town centre retail assets, before giving an overview of some of the challenges being faced by town centres nationally and in Blackpool in particular. The following points from the presentation were noted:</p> <p>Blackpool is ranked seventh out of 725 retail destinations in the North West.</p> <p>The addition of Frasers, along with wider developments in the town centre, should assist in closing the gap with Preston and in confirming Houndshill as the best in-town shopping centre in the North West</p> <p>Since the lifting of lockdown restrictions internet shopping has decreased and continues to do so.</p> <p>Footfall at Houndshill has remained broadly similar to 2022 but reported turnover has increased significantly.</p> <p>Houndshill is being used as a "destination shopping centre" and most people in the catchment shop locally.</p> <p>Blackpool Town Centre vacancies are not considered to be out of control and are similar to other locations.</p> <p>There are two areas of challenge that require focus:</p>	

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attracting the “upper aspirational brands” into the town centre. ○ Enticing people from “further afield catchment areas” to visit Blackpool town centre. <p>b) MR summarised the relationship between Blackpool Council and Ellandi so far and noted Ellandi’s achievement of securing Frasers as a Houndshill tenant, which has helped to secure new tenants in the centre and is hoped will have a similar impact for Blackpool as that of the opening of Frasers in Wolverhampton which resulted in an increase in town centre footfall.</p> <p>c) The biggest strategic risk is in regards to creating a vibrant town centre and the steps that will need to be taken to make this happen. Other town centres are being looked at for inspiration/ ideas that can be brought to Blackpool. For example, “Window Shops” to reduce vacancies and increase local entrepreneurship, whereby empty shops are fitted out (white-boxing) and a “Dragons Den” type of competition is held and creating a vibrant art scene and areas/ units for artists similar to New Brighton’s Victoria Street, which has been transformed and turned on its head.</p> <p>d) Following MR’s presentation the Chair commented that there were some really powerful ideas presented to the Board, all of whom are advocates for Blackpool and understand the importance of making sure a commercial approach is applied across the town centre.</p> <p>e) In response to this, MR made the Board aware that “at a consumer level, shoppers in Blackpool were not aware of Frasers coming” to the Houndshill and that consumer focused marketing is required to take Blackpool to its next level.</p> <p>f) Alun Francis commented on the huge potential for Blackpool & Fylde College to help create a culture of enterprise and a “reason for people to remain in Blackpool” once they had completed their studies, given the opportunities that the Multiversity and town centre regeneration would be able to offer.</p> <p>g) NJ and NG welcomed the ideas presented and agreed to consider them further through the Houndshill Board and as part of the Town Centre Action Plan as appropriate.</p>	<p>Nick Gerrard</p>

Notes and Actions	By Whom
<p>9. Blackpool's £2 billion plus Growth and Prosperity Programme</p> <p>a) The Board received a short promotional video under the Blackpool Makes it Work banner that demonstrates the scale of work completed so far and how much more there is to do, and the excellent example Blackpool is showing when it comes to delivering regeneration.</p> <p>b) Following the presentation Board members commented that the video's prime audience is investors and funders and asked for "fly-through" version of to be created for residents whereby monetary figures/ values are replaced by the number of jobs created/ will create as a result of all the regeneration works.</p>	<p>Nick Gerrard</p>
<p>10. Any Other Business</p> <p>a) The Board noted the proposals for a community engagement event taking place at Houndshell in December, which will be overseen by the Council's Infusion team. A request was made as to whether it was possible to explore options for engagement work to be carried out in areas that are further away from the town centre as some people were not aware of how Blackpool's regeneration spend affects them.</p>	<p>Rob Latham</p>
<p>11. Next Meeting</p> <p>Friday, 17 November, 1:00pm to 3:00pm, Bickerstaffe Square.</p>	