

**MINUTES OF BLACKPOOL, FYLDE AND WYRE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD MEETING -
WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2020**

EPB members present:

Councillor Karen Buckley, Fylde Borough Council
Councillor David Henderson, Wyre Borough Council
Councillor Mark Smith, Blackpool Council as substitute for Councillor Lynn Williams

Chief Executive Officers:

Neil Jack, Blackpool Council
Allan Oldfield, Fylde Borough Council
Garry Payne, Wyre Borough Council

Co-opted private sector representatives present:

Martin Long (Blackpool), Peter Worthington (Wyre)

Other Attendees:

Nicole Billington, Marketing Officer, Blackpool Council
Tony Doyle, Head of ICT, Blackpool Council for Item 5 only
Paul Evans, Assistant Director, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Mark Evans, Head of Planning and Regeneration, Fylde Borough Council
Shaun Fensom, Chair of the Broadband Co-op for Item 5 only
Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, Blackpool Council
Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council
Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities, Wyre Borough Council
Andrea Wallace, Enterprise Zone Adviser, Wyre Borough Council
Paul Walker, Director of Development Services, Fylde Borough Council
Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Manager, Blackpool Council

Apologies:

Neil Farley, Co-opted Private Sector Representative, Fylde

No members of the public or press attending the meeting. The public parts of the meeting were broadcast via YouTube.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Martin Long, Business Representative, declared that his company did legal work for companies based within the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone but that none of his clients were included in the update report at this meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2020

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on 3 June 2020.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board meeting held on 3 June 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The Board considered matters arising from the last meeting.

- 1) The Board noted that Councillor Simon Blackburn had been replaced as Leader of Blackpool Council by Councillor Lynn Williams. The position of Vice-Chairman of the Board was now vacant due to this change. It would be considered at the 17 December 2020 meeting as Councillor Williams had not been able to attend this meeting.
- 2) The Board received an update on the item related to the potential medical isotopes development at the Westinghouse site at Springfields. The Board noted that shortly after the last meeting a joint letter in support had been sent by the Leaders of the three Councils. A decision on the site had been anticipated soon and the potential for applications to be made to Councils' Business Loans funds in support of the application was noted.

4 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved:

That the public and press be excluded from Agenda Items 8 and 9: Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Progress Report and Hillhouse Enterprise Zone Progress Report as this includes the likely disclosure of Exempt Information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

5 FULL FIBRE NETWORK

The Board received a brief presentation on the development of a full fibre network by Mr Tony Doyle, Head of ICT, Blackpool Council. Shaun Fenson, Chair of the Broadband Co-op was also in attendance.

Mr Doyle explained that rather like roads, railways or electricity, fast internet connectivity represented an essential piece of infrastructure required for modern businesses. It had been clear for a while that ensuring that the area either had reasonable access or better than average would be essential in facilitating inward investment.

Mr Doyle highlighted that Blackpool Council had been successful in bidding to the Department Of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) for a Full Fibre Wave 2 Grant under the Asset Reuse method by using an existing ducting asset in the Tramway to build a fibre optic spine along the Tramway. The effect of the award had been to create a spinal fibre network infrastructure to connect Council assets and to service both Enterprise Zones, the new Conference Centre at the Winter Gardens as well as establish a series of Meet me chambers across the Promenade. Work on this spine was now nearly complete and already businesses were reporting on the advantages of that to their business.

Mr Doyle went on to explain the benefits of Cooperative Network Infrastructure notably to be able to work collaboratively across public and private sector organisations, make savings, improve services and maximise the opportunities for further deployment while minimising disruption (the “dig once” approach).

Mr Doyle highlighted an open invitation from Fibre Blackpool and Cooperative Network Infrastructure for both Fylde Council and Wyre Borough Councils to join the broadband

coop. He then emphasised the potentially opportunities to target rural areas to bid for further funding from DCMS.

Resolved:

To recommend to both Fylde and Wyre Borough Councils to the join the cooperative and enter into further dialogue with Tony Doyle Head of ICT Services at Blackpool Council who leads on the Full Fibre initiative in Blackpool and Shaun Fensom the Chair of the cooperative.

6 FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND UPDATE

Nick Gerrard provide the Board with an update on the Future High Street Fund bidding process for Blackpool, Fleetwood and Kirkham.

The report outlined the applications submitted on behalf of the three authorities.

Blackpool's bid included 11 schemes based around improving experience, driving growth and future sustainability seeking investment of £25m. The two key projects already approved had been the Houndshell extension and the Abingdon Street Market.

Wyre Borough Council's bid for Fleetwood had sought £22.3m and had been submitted on the 3 June 2020 grouped under three complementary themes - enabling town centre living, reviving town centre assets and public realm and restoring town centre access

Fylde Borough Council's bid had been submitted on the 17 August 2020 and had sought £9.58m based around the town of Kirkham seeking a combination of property acquisitions, public realm improvements and building refurbishment.

Resolved:

To note the report.

7 RESPONSE TO COVID 19 UPDATE

The Board considered the issue of Coronavirus and Economic Recovery. It noted the significant help provided by central and local government under various schemes to help small business and the furlough scheme.

Mr Nick Gerrard highlighted the three funds namely the Small Business Grants Fund, Retail, Hospitality, Leisure fund and the Covid discretionary funds. Figures were outlined in the report for the amounts provided under each Council area.

Mr Gerrard explained that business support that subsequent to the reopening of businesses emphasis had shifted to steps to support businesses to operate in accordance with guidance. A number of the attendees had reported that tourism on the Fylde Coast had been relatively positive during the situation with lots of visitors taking advantage of the mild weather but not travelling far from home or abroad.

Members expressed thanks to the officers involved in the administration at all three Councils and especially the speedy way that assistance and support had been provided.

Resolved:

To note the report.

8 BLACKPOOL AIRPORT ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATE

Mr Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, provided the board with an update on the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

The report started by outlining the programme for updating the Masterplan to reflect substantial changes to the physical development around the eastern gateway access, sports field re-provision revised airport proposals and the change of direction for the future of the Squires Gate Industrial Estate (former Wellington Bomber Factory) this had been further delayed after the June board meeting. The revised interim delivery plan would now be presented to Blackpool Council as Accountable Body in October 2020 before submission to Fylde Borough Council, the Lancashire Local Economic Partnership and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Further to the last meeting Mr Green emphasised that central to the Enterprise Zones would be a request to government extend the period in which the 5 year business rates relief would be available from expiry in March 2022 to financial year 2025/26. With full Local Enterprise Partners support officers have joined nationally with The Local Enterprise Partnership Network to put a proposal to HM Treasury. This would be to seek an extension of business rates relief to 2025/26 as a low cost focus and engine for post Covid-19 economic recovery and growth, and to recognise the delays in all Enterprise Zones being able to bring forward enabling infrastructure. It was reported that the submission to HM Treasury was imminent so that it could be reflected in the Autumn spending review.

Resolved:

To note the update.

9 HILLHOUSE ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATE

Mr Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zone presented an update on Hillhouse Enterprise Zone.

Mr Green spoke about the continued exploration of the opportunities of utilising Hillhouse for the generation and storage of hydrogen with meetings continuing and the hope that this project's remit would in time expand to encompass all forms of renewable energy.

Further to Item 8 Mr Green emphasised that central to the Enterprise Zones would be a request to government extend the period in which the 5 year business rates relief would be available from expiry in March 2022 to financial year 2025/26. With full Local Enterprise Partners support officers have joined nationally with The Local Enterprise Partnership Network to put a proposal to HM Treasury. This would be to seek an extension of business rates relief to 2025/26 as a low cost focus and engine for post Covid-19 economic recovery and growth, and to recognise the delays in all Enterprise Zones being able to bring forward enabling infrastructure. It was reported that the submission to HM Treasury was imminent so that it could be reflected in the Autumn spending review.

Resolved:

To note the update.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Prior to considering the date of the next meeting.

The Board held a brief discussion on the focus that future meetings of the Board should have especially the next meeting. The Board noted that it had been operational for a period of just over three years and agreed that it would be timely to review the past three years of the Board and to plan forward for the next three years of economic development across the Fylde Coast. The Board also agreed to consider how moving forward it could act to coordinate its approach with neighbouring Councils, other public and private sector bodies including the Local Economic Partnership either through involvement at Board meetings or by other steps.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of next meeting as Thursday 17 December 2020 at 2pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 2.15pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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