

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: BRIAN BAILEY

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CATHEDRAL QUARTER UPDATE

Office lettings are accelerating with Govnet and Capita now occupying the 1st and 2nd floors. Further announcements for new tenants on the 3rd, and 5th floors are planned for this quarter. Significantly both tenants are new to the Borough. Further interest in the 4th floor and part of the 2nd floor is being progressed. A successful employment day for the Turtle Bay restaurant was held at Ewood Park in early January. The restaurant fit out will be completed this month. On the back of the opening of Turtle Bay in February (date tbc), marketing of the retail and restaurant units under the office building is being relaunched. The office building has been nominated for the British Council of Offices Awards for Excellence 2017 by BDP architects and the award will be announced at an event in Manchester in April.

KINGSWOOD HOMES DEVELOPMENT

The Planning and Highways Committee meeting on 15TH December resolved to approve the planning application for 167 new homes, subject to the signing of the Section 106 legal agreement for contributions towards off-site highway works and transport initiatives. The agreement was signed and sealed on 5th January, and so planning permission was formally issued on the same day. Kingswood Homes intend to be on site before the end of January. This will form Phase A of the Gib Lane Development, with Wainhomes already building 79 new homes at Phase B. A planning application for Phase C is expected within the next few weeks.

GREAT BRITISH HIGH STREET AWARD

Blackburn town centre has beaten hundreds of high streets across the country to be named Britain's best overall. More than 500,000 votes were cast in the third annual Great British High Street Awards and Blackburn scored well enough to take home the crown, beating 26 other finalists. Blackburn will now receive the £10,000 grand prize, as well as a trophy awarded at a ceremony in London on 12 December 2016. Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said: "Our high streets are going from strength to strength as this year's [Great British High Street competition](#) shows. Town centres are being revitalised, with vacancy rates falling over the last year, and Blackburn is a great example of how hard work and support for local businesses can turn things around. The strong Business Improvement District is working closely with the Council to invest in the town and put on a vibrant calendar of events that has seen visitors flock in their thousands to the town centre – long may it continue." DCLG judges praised the Partnership's hard work to turn around the town and hailed it as an inspiration to high streets across the country.

HOUSING ZONE

Housing Zone designation was approved by HCA on 11th November 2016 and an invitation to bid for capacity funding to support delivery of the HZ in SE Blackburn was submitted on 9th December. If successful, extra resource will enable a full package of site investigations and additional studies to be undertaken to be included as part of the procurement and marketing package. In the meantime work with Local

Partnerships (consultancy agency owned by the Treasury and the LGA) continues with a potential opportunity to obtain commercial and procurement advice to support officers between now and end of March when capacity funding may become available to support additional resource. Soft market testing continues with potential partners who have expressed interest in taking the HZ forward.

PLANNING PERFORMANCE

The Government's performance tables for planning services were published in December, confirming that the Council has exceeded government targets. The performance is measured over a 2 year period ending September 2016. It is expected that the target will be increased in 2018. If the Council's performance continues at the same level during 2017 it should easily achieve the revised 2018 performance targets.

HIVE UPDATE

Hive's offer to our businesses in 2017 continues to improve. Lancaster University and Nat West Bank are bringing their successful Business Masterclass events to Blackburn with three events planned starting on 16th February in the lecture theatre at the University Centre at Blackburn college and subsequent events planned for May and September.

Hive Business School is progressing well with an increasing number of the schools in the borough now taking part and linked with a local business providing support for young people in learning about work and career choices. The Hive supported Primary Engineer Project has 11 primary schools taking part to encourage young people into engineering subjects and careers. The Supported Internship programme is also progressing well with the first internships in place by September 2017.

A21 LATEST AWARDS

The Portfolio's Assistance to Industry grants provide modest but very useful capital grants to businesses in the borough helping to bring forward investment, create jobs and improve properties and the streetscapes. 31 businesses benefitted in the first three quarters of 2016/17 resulting in the creation of 100 jobs with a further 51 jobs expected in the near future. This has enabled many businesses in the borough to expand and add value to the economy and has also contributed to an improvement in the quality of the town centre offer in both Blackburn and Darwen town centres.

BUS SERVICES

Darwen Coach Services ceased trading on Thursday 15th December 2016 which has meant that a number of key local bus services throughout Blackburn and Darwen stopped operating. School services have been covered on a temporary basis and are now in the process of being re-procured. The Council has had ongoing discussions with local bus operators about taking on bus services withdrawn by DCS.

Services to Wensley Fold and Lammack, Sunnybower and Little Harwood and Highercroft will recommence on the 16th January 2017 (Blackburn Private Hire). The former 33 service linking Darwen, Lower Darwen, Royal Blackburn Hospital and Blackburn will be partially reinstated from the 30th January 2017 (Moving People) as will replacement Darwen Town and rural routes (Travel Assist).