

Public Document Pack

Executive Board

Thursday, 8 July 2021

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: King George's Hall,
Blackburn

AGENDA

Information may be provided by each Executive Member relating to their area of responsibility

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
Executive Board Minutes June 2021 4 - 11
3. **Declarations of Interest**
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FORM 12
4. **Equality Implications**
The Chair will ask Members to confirm that they have considered and understood any Equality Impact Assessments associated with reports on this agenda ahead of making any decisions.
5. **Public Forum**
To receive written questions or statements submitted by members of the public no later than 4pm on the day prior to the meeting.
6. **Questions by Non-Executive Members**
To receive written questions submitted by Non-Executive Members no later than 4pm on the day prior to the meeting.
7. **Youth MPs Update**
To receive an update from the Youth MPs along with any issues they would like to raise.
8. **Executive Member Reports**
Verbal updates may be given by each Executive Member.

Leader

Adult Services & Prevention

8.1	Safer Streets Funding	
	Safer Streets Funding Report	13 - 16

8.2	Anti-Terrorism Traffic Restriction Order (ATTRO)	
	Deferred to next meeting.	

Children, Young People & Education

8.3	Q4 Quarterly Fostering Report	
	Q4 Quarterly Fostering Report	17 - 33
	Appendix 1 Q4 Quarterly Fostering Report	

Environmental Services

Public Health & Wellbeing

Digital & Customer Services

8.4	Digitally Connected- Microsoft 365 and Unified Comms	
	Microsoft 365 and Unified Comms Report	34 - 38

Growth & Development

8.5	Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation responses and amended Local Development Scheme Timetable	
	Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation and Responses Report	39 - 57
	Local Development Scheme	
	Item 8.5 Addendum	

Finance & Governance

9. Corporate Issues

10. Matters referred to the Executive Board

PART 2 – THE PRESS AND PUBLIC MAY BE EXCLUDED DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

11.	Digitally Connected - Microsoft 365 and Unified Comms	
	Microsoft 365 and Unified Comms enc. 1	58 - 62

Denise Park, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE BOARD Thursday 10th June 2021

PRESENT

COUNCILLOR:

Councillor Mohammed Khan CBE
Councillor Julie Gunn
Councillor Jim Smith
Councillor Vicky McGurk
Councillor Phil Riley
Councillor Damian Talbot
Councillor Quesir Mahmood

PORTFOLIO:

Leader of the Council
Children, Young People and Education
Environmental Services
Finance and Governance
Growth and Development
Public Health and Wellbeing
Digital and Customer Services

EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Councillor John Slater

NON PORTFOLIO

Leader of the Conservative Group

ALL IN ATTENDANCE:

Zara Hayat
Muhammed Bapu

Youth MP
Deputy Youth MP

	Item	Action
1	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u> The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mohammed Khan, welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillor Mustafa Desai and Deputy Youth MP Zainab Dassu.	
2	<u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</u> The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 th April 2021 were agreed as a correct record.	Agreed
3	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> There were no Declarations of Interest submitted.	
4	<u>Equality Implications</u> The Chair asked Members to confirm that they had considered and understood any Equality Impact Assessments associated with reports on the agenda ahead of making any decisions.	Confirmed
5	<u>Public Forum</u> In accordance with Part 4 of the Executive Board Procedure Rules for questions/statements by members of the public, the following questions/statements have been received, details of which are set out below:-	

	Item			Action
	Name of Person asking the Question	Subject Area	Response by	
	Rick Moore, Lindsay Nuttall, Fee Fleming and Heidi Nuttall	Questions relating to Appropriation of Land and Disposal of Open Space of Land and Communal Gardens and Land off Old Gates Drive, Blackburn (the land) Agenda Item 8.5	Phil Riley, Growth and Development	
	<p>Councillor Riley gave a response to the question from Rick Moore, and advised that answers to the other questions received would be provided together with the response to Councillor Russell's question in the next agenda item.</p> <p>In terms of the question from Rick Moore, Councillor Riley gave details of the Section 106 funding received and how it would be used. Councillor Riley's full response would be sent to Mr Moore who was not able to attend the meeting.</p>			
6	<p><u>Questions by Non-Executive Members</u></p> <p>In accordance with Part 4 of the Executive Board Procedure Rules for questions/statements by Non-Executive Members, the following questions/statements had been received, details of which are set out below:-</p>			

	Item			Action
	Name of Non-Executive Member asking the Question	Subject Area	Executive Member and Portfolio	
	Councillor Mark Russell	Question relating to Appropriation of Land and Disposal of Open Space of Land and Communal Gardens and Land off Old Gates Drive, Blackburn (the land) Agenda Item 8.5	Councillor Phil Riley, Growth and Development	
	<p>Councillor Riley's previous response under Agenda Item 5 was referred to and he gave a joint response to the remaining public questions and the question from Cllr Russell, advising of the legal position and the purpose for the appropriation of the land.</p> <p>Following a supplementary question from Councillor Russell in relation to proposed covenants relating to the land transaction, Councillor Riley confirmed that this would be in place and he would speak to officers to ensure this happened, and agreed to a request for the wording of the covenant to be provided to Councillor Russell and Councillor John Slater.</p> <p>Councillor Riley's responses to the questions received would be sent to the people who had submitted questions, who had been unable to attend the meeting.</p>			
7	<p><u>Youth MPs Update</u></p> <p>The Youth MP and Deputy Youth MP verbally reported on recent events and activities including :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing work relating to a mental health first aid course for young people. • Attendance at a child poverty stakeholders meeting . • Updating of the YPS website. • Attendance at Civic Sunday on 6th June. • Attendance at the Lancashire Youth Commission to discuss mental health. • A recent meeting with Head Teachers about the impact of the pandemic on young people. • Continuing work with the National Young Inspectors. • Attendance at the Covid Community Champions Meeting and work to highlight and encourage take up of the vaccine availability by young people. <p>Executive Board Members reflected on the excellent work of the Youth MPs and Youth Forum</p>			Noted

	Item	Action
	<p><u>Executive Member Reports.</u></p> <p><u>BwD ongoing response to Covid-19</u></p> <p>Members received a report which gave an update on the Council's response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>8.1 The Council had implemented strong governance and democratic oversight of its response to Covid-19 and a number of internal groups and cells were established.</p> <p>The Council had worked within the framework and structure of the Lancashire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and from April 2021, the Council's Chief Executive had been Chair of the LRF's Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG).</p> <p>The new Coronavirus Act 2020 became law in March last year, and provided public sector bodies, and the Government, additional duties and powers to react quickly to the pandemic.</p> <p>With support from Elected Members, the Council's Senior Management Team had taken swift and decisive action within the regulations of the Act and statutory responsibilities of the Civil Contingencies Act, to keep residents safe and ensure they, and local businesses, received the support needed.</p> <p>The report outlined some of the key resource requirements to support the Council's ongoing Covid-19 response and moving into recovery, ensuring that our plans remained flexible to adapt the approach to the pandemic as and when needed over the course of 2021/22.</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <p>That the Executive Board:</p> <p>a) note the content of this report.</p> <p>b) acknowledge the significant council resource and capacity that has been prioritised to respond to the pandemic to date.</p> <p>c) agree that the Council will continue to resource activity related to the Covid-19 continuing response and local recovery, utilising funding allocated for this purpose</p> <p>d) agree that further updates be provided to elected members during the year.</p> <p>8.2 <u>Year-end Corporate Plan Performance</u></p> <p>A report was submitted which provided the Executive Board the with the opportunity to review progress against the Council's strategic priorities documented within the Corporate Plan (2019-23) and to provide assurance that appropriate actions were being taken to address key areas of concern.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p> <p>Approved</p>

	Item	Action
	<p>RESOLVED - That the Executive Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the overall performance against the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives as illustrated in Appendix One Performance 2. Note the remedial action to improve delivery against the 2019-2023 Corporate priorities which are giving cause for concern, as outlined in Appendix Two Exception Reports 	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
8.3	<p><u>School Holiday Pattern for Community and Controlled Schools for 2022/23</u></p> <p>Members were reminded that the school holiday pattern for 2021/2022 was agreed by the Executive Board in June 2020 and the dates were agreed and circulated to schools.</p> <p>In November 2020 the Government announced that the Spring Bank Holiday in 2022 would be moved to Thursday 2 June and an additional Bank Holiday on Friday 3 June would see a four-day weekend to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Since these dates fell within the previously determined published dates for the 2022 Summer Half Term break, the Community and Controlled schools would already be closed for half-term during that whole week, so no amendment was required to the already agreed school holiday pattern. However, the DfE had confirmed its firm intention to reduce both the number of days that children were required to be in attendance during the 2021-22 academic year (from 190 to 189) and the number of days teachers are required to work (from 195 to 194).</p> <p>The report set out the necessary process for schools to select an additional holiday date in 2021/22.</p> <p>A draft School Term and Holiday pattern for Community and Controlled Schools for 2022/2023 was also submitted with the report.</p> <p>RESOLVED- That the Executive Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes the anticipated changes to normal attendance requirements for both pupils and staff in the 2021/2022 academic year, as a result of the additional bank holiday which will result in children attending for 189 days and teachers being available for work for 194 days in that academic year; • Agrees that once the necessary legislation has been published, the Governing Board of each Community and Voluntary controlled school will select a date within the previously determined term dates for the 2021-22 School year (based on their school priorities) which will then be 	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

	Item	Action
	<p>taken as a holiday by the staff and pupils of that school in lieu of the additional bank holiday;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agrees the school term and holiday pattern for Community and Controlled schools for 2022/2023 (as set out in Appendix 1 ' Draft School Term and Holiday Pattern 2022/2023) 	Approved
8.4	<p><u>Local Transport Plan 2021-22</u></p> <p>The Executive Board received a report seeking approval for the detailed Local Transport Plan programme for the financial year 2021/22.</p> <p>RESOLVED – The Executive Board:</p> <p>1) Approves the Local Transport Plan detailed programme for 2021/22;</p> <p>2) Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Development, to amend, seek and accept tenders subject to adequate budget provision</p>	<p>Approved</p> <p>Approved</p>
8.5	<p><u>Appropriation of Land and Disposal of Open Space of Land and Communal Gardens and Land off Old Gates Drive, Blackburn (the land)</u></p> <p>Members received report outlining proposals for disposal of a public open space and the appropriation of land for planning purposes and inviting the Executive Board to consider the objections received to the proposed appropriation of Council owned land at Lomond Gardens and land off Old Gates Drive for disposal.</p> <p>RESOLVED -</p> <p>The Executive Board:</p> <p>1) Acknowledges and considers the objections received for the appropriation of land at Lomond Gardens and land off Old Gates Drive.</p> <p>2) Acknowledges and considers the objections received for the disposal of open space at Lomond Gardens and land off Old Gates Drive.</p> <p>3) Having considered the objections, approve the proposed appropriation of land and disposal of open space of land at Lomond Gardens and land off Old Gates Drive for the reasons set out in this report.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>

	Item	Action
9.1	<p><u>Disposal of Residential Plots on Milking Lane, Blackburn</u></p> <p>A report was submitted seeking approval to proceed with the sale of residential development parcels off Milking Lane, Blackburn, as shown in Appendix A via Barnfield Blackburn Ltd, a company in which the Council was part shareholder.</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <p>That the Executive Board:</p> <p>2.1 Approve that the Council as shareholder of Barnfield Blackburn Ltd authorises the nominated directors to sign off the sale of residential development parcels off Milking Lane as shown in Appendix A to an identified developer.</p> <p>2.2 Authorise the nominated Council Directors to finalise and complete the terms of the disposal.</p> <p>AT THIS STAGE OF THE PROCEEDINGS THE PRESS AND PUBLIC WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</p>	<p>Approved</p> <p>Approved</p>
11.1	<p><u>Local Transport Plan 2021-22</u></p> <p>Further to the report submitted at Agenda Item 8.4, an additional report was submitted, containing commercially sensitive information.</p> <p>RESOLVED – The Executive Board:</p> <p>1) Approves the Local Transport Plan detailed programme for 2021/22;</p> <p>2) Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Development, to amend, seek and accept tenders subject to adequate budget provision.</p>	<p>Approved</p> <p>Approved</p>
11.2	<p><u>Disposal of Residential Plots off Milking Lane, Lower Darwen, Blackburn</u></p> <p>Further to the report submitted at Agenda Item 9.1, an additional report was submitted, containing commercially sensitive information.</p>	

	Item	Action
	<p>RESOLVED –</p> <p>That the Executive Board:</p> <p>2.1 Approve that the Council as shareholder of Barnfield Blackburn Ltd authorises the nominated directors to sign off the sale of residential development parcels off Milking Lane as shown in Appendix A to an identified developer.</p> <p>2.2 Authorise the nominated Council Directors to finalise and complete the terms of the disposal.</p>	<p>Approved</p> <p>Approved</p>
	<p>Signed at a meeting of the Board</p> <p>on 8th July 2021</p> <p>(being the ensuing meeting on the Board)</p> <p>Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were confirmed</p>	

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Members attending a Council, Committee, Board or other meeting with a personal interest in a matter on the Agenda must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and, if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Interest under paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Conduct, should leave the meeting during discussion and voting on the item.

Members declaring an interest(s) should complete this form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer at the commencement of the meeting and declare such an interest at the appropriate point on the agenda.

MEETING: EXECUTIVE BOARD

DATE: 8th JULY 2021

AGENDA ITEM NO.:

DESCRIPTION (BRIEF):

NATURE OF INTEREST:

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY/OTHER (delete as appropriate)

SIGNED :

PRINT NAME:

(Paragraphs 8 to 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council refer)

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Adult Services and Prevention

LEAD OFFICERS: Strategic Director of Adults and Health (DASS)

DATE: Thursday, 8 July 2021

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Adult Services and Prevention

WARD/S AFFECTED: Blackburn Central; Wensley Fold;

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT:

EB: Safer Streets Funding

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safer Streets Fund (2) is a second round of funding made available to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Local Authorities in England and Wales in 2021/22 to help support areas with higher crime rates. Following a successful bid, Blackburn with Darwen has been awarded £432,000 from The Home Office for a scheme in the Whalley Banks and Bank Top area. The scheme includes Capital spend, and as such requires Executive Board approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board: Gives approval for the council to spend in line with grant funding requirements.

3. BACKGROUND

The purpose of the scheme is to work with partners to design and deliver local crime prevention plans in hotspot areas with the outcome of reducing neighbourhood crimes through situational prevention.

Two Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) have been identified as suffering significantly higher rates of acquisitive crime in comparison to the wider borough and, in some instances, Lancashire as a whole. This involves offences where the offender derives material gain from the crime.

As such, there are a number of primary objectives that the fund will focus on:

- Reducing neighbourhood crime (burglary, vehicle related theft, theft from the person, robbery).
- Continuation of evidence building around the impact of targeted investment in situational crime prevention in high crime areas.
- Growing local capability to undertake data driven problem solving and capture evidence and practical learning about how best to implement situational interventions to prevent crime.

To achieve this, specific measures will be used including:

- Property Target Hardening for privately owned properties
- Vehicle security provisions
- Green space improvement

- New CCTV infrastructure
- Tailored advice and awareness raising through education and communications

As part of the programme's 'operational design phase' we will use our standardised logic model to confirm milestones and track progress and outcomes.

The activity planned is consistent with individual approaches that are tried and tested, both locally and in other areas.

A Project Manager has been appointed who will oversee the Project. A detailed project plan has also been drafted which incorporates costs, timescales, deliverables and procurement. The programme will be completed before March 31st 2022 as is required through the grant.

The Project Manager will be responsible to a project implementation group, to be chaired by the Head of Service.

Overall governance will be through the legally constituted Pennine CSP Board, who will govern the programme and on which the Executive Member for Adults and Prevention sits.

Ward Councillors will also receive monthly updates on progress.

Capital spend includes:

CCTV - £140k &

Street lighting, External Security & Greening - £95k

Total capital - £235k

There is a further £197k allocated to revenue works to include domestic and vehicle security measures for local residents and community engagement. The total estimated scheme cost including both capital and revenue elements is predicted at £432,000.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

Any key risks to delivery are managed through the project manager who oversees the risk register a key part of the programmes management.

The Home Office have a fixed deadline for completion of the 31st March 2022 which is a short period of time for such a large capital and revenue programme. This again will be managed through the programme board, who with procurement support and project management team in place will ensure the programme moves forward quickly.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Existing policies, procedures and approaches to delivery are available to use to include strong governance arrangements noted.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has been awarded Safer Streets funding of £432,000 from The Home Office for the financial year 2021/22. Estimated capital and revenue costs as part of the grant bid are summarised below and are anticipated to be fully covered by the grant.

The match funding noted in the bid is 'in kind support' at circa £92,000 and this will be managed from within existing budgets. Any additional ongoing maintenance costs which may arise in the ensuing years as a result of the initial capital outlay will need to be considered at the time and are anticipated to be managed from existing resources.

Expenditure Profile (Safer Streets Funding)		£	£
Capital			
CCTV		140,000	
Street lighting, External Security & Greening		<u>95,000</u>	
Total Capital			235,000
Revenue			
Works to include domestic and vehicle security measures for local residents and community engagement		<u>197,000</u>	
Total Revenue			197,000
Total Expenditure			<u>432,000</u>

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate additional financial requirements for the Council at this stage. All costs are expected to be fully met by the grant funding. Any maintenance requirements in future years in relation to the capital outlay will require consideration but it's assumed it will be covered from existing budgets.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

10. CONSULTATIONS

Consultations took place with elected members from the LSOA areas, partners and departments, to cost and provide support for delivery before the bid was submitted. The areas were chosen using in depth crime analysis of the area and the strength and deliverability of the programme plan.

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

CONTACT OFFICER:	Victoria Holmes, ,
DATE:	
BACKGROUND PAPER:	N/A

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

LEAD OFFICERS: Strategic Director of Children's & Education (DCS)

DATE: Thursday, 8 July 2021

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Children, Young People and Education

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT:

EB Q4 Quarterly Fostering Report 2020-21

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information on the management and performance of the Local Authority's Fostering Service and is revised each quarter. This report, alongside Appendix 1, provides analysis of the period January to 31st March 2021, and reflects upon data and any patterns within the Service to determine development and progress. This report also outlines how the Service has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report will reference comparisons with Quarters 1-3 of 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board notes this Quarter 4 end of year 2020/21 report alongside Appendix 1 with service development updates and recommendations.

3. BACKGROUND

The Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services requires that the Council Executive:

- Receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the Fostering Service every 3 months;
- Monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children;
- Satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

The report has been written to address the areas identified above. It will be taken into account by OFSTED when inspecting the service

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

Appendix 1 provides a detailed overview of the Fostering Service and children in our care data analysis. This report provides highlights included in Appendix 1 for Executive Board information and summarises key issues for the service.

- The period of 2020/21 has seen the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and new ways of working virtually and creatively, while continuing to ensure that children and young people in our care are seen and safeguarded, and our foster carers are well supported during such challenging times. The impact of the pandemic has been more significantly felt in Quarters 3 and 4 in terms of placement disruption and the emotional influence upon children, young people and their carers specifically. This report will provide an overview of Quarter 4 figures but with a focus and comparison over the past year. What has been evidenced is the sheer resilience and determination of our foster carers, residential staff, children, young people and Children's Services employees, to ensure 'business as usual' despite being home based and a commitment to supporting placement stability, education and health needs continuing to be met.
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic initially in Quarters 1 and 2 showed little impact in terms of placement stability and disruption. However, Quarter 4 has highlighted this impact with an increasing number of children in both foster placements and residential placements experiencing disruption to placements, and placement moves as a result, despite attempts to stabilise and support them to remain. The impact of the pandemic cannot be underestimated in terms of the impact over a year down the line despite the resilience of our foster carers. The residential sector has also seen the impact resulting in placement disruptions for teenagers specifically.
- Children in our Care Teams, Fostering and Safeguarding Teams have continued to work collaboratively to 'RAG' rate placements in order of priority throughout Quarters 1, 2 and 3. The aim is to identify additional support needs and to offer enhanced communication with foster carers to promote placement stability during the pandemic. Priority risk assessments for children, young people, foster carers and residential carers has continued throughout the pandemic. The Independent Reviewing Officers also have had oversight and input into achieving placement stability, offering emotional support to our children and young people and working with Children's Social Care and Education to provide an enhanced support plan in this time of need. The RAG rating of children and foster carers has enabled the most vulnerable and fragile placements to be identified and continually supported, with intervention offered in a timely way.
- Blackburn with Darwen have been involved in the DfE fostering Seed-funding partnership with Blackpool, Cumbria and Lancashire (Consortium known as BBCL), a partnership working together with Outcomes UK to improve commissioning and sufficiency planning. This feasibility study aims to improve the fostering offer by looking at collaborative approaches to recruitment, training and commissioning. The Consortium of BBCL have been holding regular 6 weekly Fostering Exchange Days to promote children and young people requiring long term foster placements and good quality matching processes. This involves Independent Fostering Agencies attending virtual events which BwD host to hear profiles of children and young people who are hard to place requiring foster placements. We have had some great success with this process and over the six months BwD have identified placements for five young people one of whom with disabilities being placed in a long term matched foster placement moving from residential provision.
- REVIVE delivers consultation to Foster Carers, training and direct intervention on emotional health and well-being for children and young people via therapy and also supports life story work. The Team are proactive in early intervention work and their focus is supporting placement stability alongside emotional and psychological therapy and intervention. Blackburn with Darwen have called upon the support of the team over the past year to help children in our care and their carers to feel supported throughout the pandemic and to have strategies to assist them alongside training and consultation. There were 31 new referrals made to the REVIVE Service in Quarter 4, with 11 from the Children in Our Care Team, 19 were from the Assessment and Safeguarding teams and 1 from the Fostering team. There were 71 young people or carers having direct or indirect contact with Revive in the period January 1st to March 31st 2021.
- The recruitment of mainstream foster carers has been an increasing challenge, even more so during a pandemic and this is echoed on a national scale. The Service saw 3 new approvals in Quarter 4, making an annual new fostering household total of 12 for 2020/21. This largely enabled the loss of foster carers to be replaced, with the addition of 3 new households.
- Placement sufficiency and stability will continue to be a key area of focus, with areas for learning taken from disruption meetings and case auditing. Blackburn with Darwen are part of the cohort of North West Authorities collaboration for the DfE SEED funding and research project, which looks specifically at recruitment, retention, sufficiency and producing a Market Position Statement. The aim is to form a new local commissioning framework and to continue to hold regular Exchange Days to focus on long term matching opportunities. The Exchange Days are going ahead 6 weekly and will continue to do so. The Fostering Front Door will be a key priority. An experienced fostering Social Worker will be responsible for the front door taking in foster carer enquiries, supporting

placement requests and matching. The service will develop closer working relationships with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and will establish a more personable and enthusiastic approach.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No Policy implications have been identified.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Fostering Budgets are closely monitored as part of the regular portfolio review.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications identified.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

No additional resource implications.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

10. CONSULTATIONS

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

CONTACT OFFICER: Pamela Price, pamela.price@blackburn.gov.uk

	Ailsa Smith, Ailsa.Smith@blackburn.gov.uk
DATE:	17/06/2021
BACKGROUND PAPER:	Appendix 1 to be considered alongside this report.

Fostering Service Quarter 4 Report

1st January - 31st March 2021

Executive Report



Quarterly reports to the Executive Board are a requirement of the Fostering Service to meet Standard 25.7 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. They are a key part of the documentation considered by OFSTED when conducting a Service inspection.

Introduction

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service aims to ensure that:

- The best foster carers are recruited for our children;
- All placements receive high quality support, effectively targeted according to need;
- Children are found permanent families without delay;
- Children and young people in foster care achieve the best possible outcomes.

Overview:

The period of 2020/21 has seen the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and new ways of working virtually and creatively, while continuing to ensure that children and young people in our care are seen, safeguarded and our foster carers well supported during challenging times. The impact of the pandemic has been more significantly felt in Quarters 3 and 4 in terms of placement disruption and the emotional influence upon children, young people and their carers specifically. This report will provide an overview of Quarter 4 figures but with a focus and comparison over the past year. What has been evidenced is the sheer resilience and determination of our foster carers, residential staff, children, young people and Children's Services employees, to ensure 'business as usual' despite being home based and a commitment to supporting placement stability, education and health needs continuing to be met. The figures and data below will evidence this.

Children in Our Care in Foster Care

The period from Quarter 3 to Quarter 4 2020/21 saw a small decrease in the figures for Children in our Care from 377 in Quarter 3, down to 374 by the end of March. As a comparison figure, back in April 2020 there were 411 children in our care which shows a decrease of looked after children at the end of this year of 8%. There has been a decrease in the number of children and young people in independent fostering placements with the largest number being placed in-house which is positive. Over the past two years, the figure for family and friends placements has increased alongside Special Guardianship Orders made which have doubled over the past 18 months meaning that more children are exiting the care system and achieving permanence with connected carers.

Comparison Figures

	31st March 2018	31st March 2019	31st March 2020	31st March 2021
Number of Children in our Care	377	407	412	374
Number of CioC in Foster Care	215 (57%)	262 (64%)	270 (65%)	246 (65%)
Number of children in in-house foster care placements	118 (31%)	151 (37%)	142 (34%)	125 (33%)
Number of children in family and friends foster care	48 (13%)	43 (10%)	68 (16.5%)	67 (17.9%)
Number of children in independent fostering agency placements	49 (13%)	68 (16%)	60 (14.5%)	54 (14%)

Comparison figures per Quarter for 2019/20

	Q1 June 2020	Q2 Sept 2020	Q3 Dec 2020	Q4 March 2021
Number of Children in our Care	407	394	377	374
Number of CioC in Foster Care	264 (64)	269 (66.7%)	261 (65.4%)	270 (65%)
Number of children in in-house foster care placements	148 (36%)	143 (35.4%)	131 (32.8%)	142 (34%)
Number of children in family and friends foster care	50 (12%)	58 (14.3%)	67 (16.8%)	68 (16.5%)
Number of children in independent fostering agency placements	66 (16.2%)	68 (16.8%)	63 (15.8%)	60 (14.5%)

The gender ratio of children in our care remains higher for males which is a consistent pattern year on year, particularly in the 11 to 15 age group, which has been a consistent pattern. The teenage cohort remain the most challenging to place and the most costly in terms of placement commissioning. Blackburn with Darwen's short break offer alongside the therapeutic support from Revive, is key to identifying, sustaining and supporting foster placements for this group of young people if residential provision is to be reduced further. However, for some young people in the 11-15 age bracket, a residential placement is the preferable option for example those with more complex emotional and mental health/therapeutic needs, or children with complex health needs and disabilities. By the end of Quarter 4 there were 23 children and young people placed in agency residential placements which again is a largely consistent figure over the year 2020/21.

The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic initially in Quarters 1 and 2 showed little impact in terms of placement stability and disruption. However, Quarter 4 has highlighted this impact with an increasing number of children in both foster placements and residential placements experiencing disruption to placements and placement moves as a result despite attempts to stabilise and support them to remain. The impact of the pandemic cannot be underestimated in terms of the impact over a year down the line despite the resilience of our foster carers. The residential sector has also seen the impact resulting in placement disruptions for teenagers specifically.

Children in our Care Teams, Fostering and Safeguarding Teams have continued to work collaboratively to 'RAG' rate placements in order of priority throughout Quarters 1, 2 and 3. The aim is to identify additional support needs and to offer enhanced communication with foster carers to promote placement stability during the pandemic. Priority risk assessments for children, young people, foster carers and residential carers has continued throughout the pandemic. The Independent Reviewing Officers also have had oversight and input into achieving placement stability, offering emotional support to our children and young people and working with Children's Social Care and Education to provide an enhanced support plan in this time of need. The RAG rating of children and foster carers has enabled the most vulnerable and fragile placements to be identified and continually supported, with intervention offered in a timely way.

Gender and Age Comparison as of 31st March 2021

	All children in foster care	In-house	Family and Friends	Independent Fostering Agency
Male	138	71	37	30
Female	108	54	30	24

Age breakdown end of Q4	
0-2	43
3-6	37
7-10	41
11-15	93
16+	32

No of BwD Foster Carers March 2021	124
No of Mainstream Foster Carers (U4, U5 and U6 placements only)	82
No of Family and Friends carers (U1 and U3 placements)	42

Ethnicity of Children in our Care:

Of the 377 children and young people in our care, 296 were from a white, British ethnic origin. There were 43 from the Asian ethnic group, 15 from mixed ethnic origin and 15 recorded as 'other' in terms of their ethnic origin according to Government recommended grouping definitions.

Children with disabilities in Foster Care

There are 9 children and young people in our care who have disabilities. This is a low figure in comparison to our North West Local Authority neighbours, and is largely due to the supportive and preventative packages that Blackburn with Darwen provide for children with complex needs and disabilities. Short breaks, both commissioned and our 'Local Offer', assists families to support their children within their own home as opposed to requiring alternative accommodation.

It remains a continual challenge for the Service to identify in-house or Independent Fostering Agency placements for children with disabilities specifically; largely due to the more complex needs of young people being referred for placements but also the practical and environmental factors impacting upon potential Foster Carers, where adaptations to accommodate the young person may be required. Foster carers are provided with the relevant training and support to meet the specific needs of the child they have in placement and are able to access support from the Children with Disabilities Team with aids and adaptations, Disability Links registration and information and advice where needed. Children with disabilities primarily are placed in residential placements out of Borough.

Placement Stability and Sufficiency.

The Department uses a definition of placement stability based on 3 or more placements in a 12 month period that is calculated on a cumulative basis over the year with the average figure for England being 11% and North West average at 9%. The percentage for Blackburn with Darwen at the end of Quarter 4 is 8% so this is positive when compared to average figures for the region and nationally.

The placement framework is competitive for both fostering and residential provision, with Local Authorities competing for placements and both foster carers and Independent providers being able to 'take their pick' of referrals which is a challenge, especially when placing children who are in their teenage years with significant emotional or mental health needs.

Blackburn with Darwen have been involved in the DfE fostering Seed-funding partnership with Blackpool, Cumbria and Lancashire (Consortium known as BBCL), a partnership working together with Outcomes UK to improve commissioning and sufficiency planning. This feasibility study aims to improve the fostering offer by looking at collaborative approaches to recruitment, training and commissioning. The Consortium of BBCL have been holding regular 6 weekly Fostering Exchange Days to promote children and young people requiring long term foster placements and good quality matching processes. This involves Independent Fostering Agencies attending virtual events which BwD host to hear profiles of children and young people who are hard to place requiring foster placements. We have had some great success with this process and over the six months BwD have identified placements for five young people one of whom with disabilities being placed in a long term matched foster placement moving from residential provision.

Disruption meetings are held in order to identify learning and inform future planning for any child whose placement has been disrupted.

Engagement with Children & Young People and the VOICE Group

The impact of Covid-19 has had a significant impact upon the more typical methods of engagement and participation, towards virtual methods with children and young people. While this works for many, there is still a cohort of children and young people who prefer face to face interaction and feel virtual or telephone communication does not work for them. The VOICE group is continuing to take place virtually with some small group face to face meetings where possible. Young People met this year with senior leaders and discussions around corporate parenting took place, and they also discussed the Corporate Looked after Children's pledge offering views and feedback which has been collated into a LAC strategy. The VOICE group members have also been consulted about The Limes Hub project in Darwen which is being renovated to offer therapy sessions from Revive, direct work, family time base and independence skills for care leavers.

Feedback from Children in Foster Care:

The views of children and young people are gathered via:

- The Voice Group
- Participation in the recruitment of staff/interview process
- Support Groups for Children/Events
- Foster Carer Annual Review Feedback
- Feedback from Social Workers/Supervising Social Workers
- The Investors in Children process

The following comments have been made by children and young people in Foster Care:

'I love living with my foster carers they make me feel included'

'I can talk to my foster carers when I feel sad, they always listen'

'She talks to me when I feel sad about my family'

'I wish I could stay up later at bedtime!'

'I haven't missed being in school, I have enjoyed doing fun things like going for walks and baking'

'I feel safe with them even though I have felt scared about Covid'

'I wish I could see my family more in person'

Social Workers said:

'The feedback about the young person was lovely to hear'

'The foster carers have really embraced home tuition this year and she has made progress'

Promoting Children's Health, Emotional Development, Education and Leisure:

Looked After Children and young people are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities in which they can succeed and are supported in achieving better outcomes. All local Looked After Children and care leavers are provided with a Be Active card, which enables them to access free sport and leisure activities within the Borough, albeit this has been largely suspended during the pandemic. Foster carers are provided with a MAX Card, which offers heavily discounted access to a range of leisure parks and facilities around the North West. This is funded by the Fostering Service in partnership with the Foster Carer Association.

Children in foster care have regular medicals at the statutory frequency appropriate for their age. There is a Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, who takes an active role in following up health issues and assisting with health promotion work. Foster carers have a Health Passport for each child in their care, which is a record of all of the child's health details. LAC Medicals were impacted initially due to Covid-19 with some delay in Quarters 1 and 2, but there has been regular communication around this and in Quarter 3 this has started to see improvement. The impact on all medical appointments nationally has been affected. The Health Sub-Group meets bi-monthly and this enables both Health and Social Care professionals to discuss pathways and how to resolve any health related issues for looked after children and care leavers, as well as issues of concern for foster carers and also adopters. In Quarter 4 there were two foster carer representative identified to participate in the Health Sub-Group and they have already attended two sessions.

The REVIVE Service is a partnership between Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Children's Services and East Lancashire Hospital Trust to provide emotional health support for children known to the Local Authority and is based at Duke Street. REVIVE delivers consultation to Foster Carers, training and direct intervention on emotional health and well-being for children and young people via therapy and also supports life story work. The Team are proactive in early intervention work and their focus is supporting placement stability alongside emotional and psychological therapy and intervention. Blackburn with Darwen have called upon the support of the team over the past year to help children in our care and their carers to feel supported throughout the pandemic and to have strategies to assist them alongside training and consultation.

There were 31 new referrals were made to the REVIVE Service in Quarter 4, with 11 from the Children in Our Care Team, 19 were from the Assessment and Safeguarding teams and 1 from Fostering team. There were 71 young people or carers having direct or indirect contact with Revive in the period Jan 1st to March 31st 2021.

In line with Standard 8 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, the Department implements a written Education Policy prepared in partnership with the Virtual Head Teacher and the Education Manager for Children in Our Care. The Virtual Head's role is to ensure that the educational needs of all Children in our Care are being met and that levels of achievement and aspiration among our children and young people are raised. The working relationship between Children's Social Care and Education staff specifically has shown real commitment to ensuring that our children in care continue to receive education and meet their attainment targets. Children in our care and vulnerable learners were ensured school places during lockdown as a priority group. Quarter 3 saw the Celebration of Achievement of Children in our Care and Care Leavers. Considering this was the first time the event was held virtually, it was proven to be very successful. Attendance was high and there were performances from 2 young people. All students received a £20 voucher and also meal vouchers to celebrate their successes. The event albeit different this year, was equally as well received and enjoyed by all. The roll out of laptops for children in our care was also a priority over 2020/21 to ensure that home education could be accessible for all. A proportion of Pupil Premium funding was also paid directly to foster carers to enable

home based learning to be achieved back at the very start of the pandemic in Quarter 1 and this was greatly received.

Transitions

The Leaving Care Service has the Investing in Children Award, and the Service was rated as 'Good' by Ofsted from the last 2017 inspection. The Leaving Care Service has achieved one Staying Put placement this Quarter, and also continues to offer supported lodgings and supported accommodation which increases choice for young people leaving foster care and residential placements in favour of semi-independence. The Nightsafe at St Silas project continues to be a valuable resource for young people and referrals continue to be managed by the Leaving Care Team. The joint commission between Nightsafe and the Local Authority commenced in Quarter 3 with a post 16 provision being established at Whalley New Road to create further supported accommodation placements for this age group 16 plus. At the end of this Quarter there were three young people in placement and they had settled in well. This is another much needed provision for our post 16 group of looked after young people, with a commitment to keeping them in the Borough with a mix of independence and support in placement.

The Leaving Care Service has eight advisors. Three advisors are working with the 16 to 18 year old age group resolving issues with accommodation, education, training and employment and Staying Put. Five advisors are providing advice and guidance to the 21 to 25 year old age group, and in addition, all advisors have a caseload of at least twenty 18 to 21 year olds for whom they provide general support.

Children and young people with disabilities who are in our care are also referred at 17 years of age to Adult Social Care for an assessment of need prior to turning 18 years, and there is a period of twelve months for planning to be undertaken around post 18 years provision. This process prevents any delay in identifying post 18 provision for young people with specific care needs and/or specific needs for their physical living arrangements with adaptations required.

Care Planning

The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 provide a revised definition of 'permanence' for Children Looked After, including for the first time the definition of a long term foster placement. The responsibilities of the Local Authority in assessing the ability of the foster carer to meet the needs of the child now and in the future, and identifying any support services needed to achieve this are also set out. Local Authorities are required to achieve long term matching within reasonable timescales. The Permanence Tracking Panel meets frequently to discuss and monitor progress for Care Orders at Home, Special Guardianship Orders, Section 20 Accommodated and both non-matched and long term matched placements. There is an emphasis given to achieving a formal matching decision for those children and young people in long-term foster placements, to promote their emotional stability and achieve a permanence plan.

The Fostering Service:

Quarter 4 saw all vacant posts recruited to in both the mainstream and permanence teams. There has also been a much needed addition of a Special Guardianship Support Worker, supporting SGO planning, permanence and post SGO support given that numbers of SGO's achieve continues to rise with double the figures granted over the past 18 months. The focus of the service is foster carer recruitment, retention of our carers, the addition of Exchange Days for family finding which has been facilitated by Blackburn with Darwen and Lancashire County Council and has been a huge success, even though held via a virtual platform. The focus over Quarter 4 has been implementing the Fostering Service Development Plan, focusing upon increasing enquiries for potential foster carers and working towards a more robust fostering front door.

Foster Carer Recruitment

The recruitment of mainstream foster carers has been an increasing challenge, even more so during a pandemic and this is echoed on a national scale. The Service saw 3 new approvals in Quarter 4, making an

annual new fostering household total of 12 for 2020/21. This largely enabled the loss of foster carers to be replaced, with the addition of 3 new households.

The bus stop campaign was revisited in Quarters 3 and 4 and did see enquiries received from this campaign, alongside the Heart North West Radio advertising and Google ads as our main source of interest from the public.

The focus upon social media due to the pandemic has been the primary method over 2020/21 and learning has been taken from the research undertaken as part of the SEED funding project. An enhanced drive on social media with a 'constant presence' is the focus teamed with digital marketing and refreshing campaigns more frequently.



Foster For Blackburn with Darwen

Psychological Support

Supplimentary Allowances

Transfer Bonus for Existing Carers

Great Local Offers for Foster Carers



Heart Radio North West advertising has been renewed as with people working from home and on furlough the target audience has grown. Reaching out to potential applicants with a new radio campaign and increased air time has been one strategy, with online recruitment events being held monthly. There has been a steady stream comparable to 2019/20 of enquiries, which is encouraging but the conversion into approvals rate has been moderate.

A remand fostering campaign was also initiated in Quarter 4 to look towards sufficiency of PACE and remand beds for young people when placed in custody or awaiting trial. This form of recruitment is challenging and needs to be an ongoing and consistent appeal for specialist carers.

COULD YOU BE A REMAND FOSTER CARER?

**BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN IS
LOOKING FOR REMAND FOSTER CARERS.**

Remand fostering offers young people who are remanded by the courts with a remand foster carer while they await court proceedings. A remand placement is usually a short term arrangement and involves a foster carer working closely with youth justice officials.

TO FIND OUT MORE VISIT

LETSFOSTER.CO.UK
OR CALL US 0800 328 6919

The overall brand of 'Lets Foster' which is used by Blackburn with Darwen will be reviewed to look towards a more personalised 'BwD' brand which identifies us as a Local Authority. Research has told us that 'Let's Foster' could be confused with IFA branding so this is an area of focus for 2021/22.

Foster Carer Retention, Fostering Panel and Short Breaks:

During Quarter 4, there have been a total of 6 resignations presented to the fostering panel. Two resignations received were a result of carers making the decision to retire from the fostering service due to considerable length of service. A further 2 resignations received were due to connected carers being granted Special Guardianship Orders and were no longer required to remain as connected carers. A further resignation was received due to approved carers making the decision that they no longer wished to remain as foster carers following their terms of approval being reconsidered at panel within the first annual review.

As stated 12 fostering households have been recruited in 2020/21 overall, which with the loss of 6 households and 3 short breaks carers has seen an increase by 3 fostering households overall this year.

Short breaks over 2020/21 were suspended due to the pandemic and the health needs or personal circumstances of many of our short breaks carers. Quarter 3 and 4 saw risk assessments being undertaken to reintroduce short breaks packages, however the service did see the loss of 3 short break carers due to personal circumstances or ill health. A short breaks carer recruitment campaign commenced in Quarter 4 and will run into Quarter 1 of 2021/22.

Foster Carer Training

During this Quarter period, there have not been face to face foster carer training sessions provided due to the pandemic and the restrictions with indoor meetings. The Service liaised with work- force development and also responded to what the foster carers themselves have asked for in respect of specific subject training. This was opened up on a virtual platform and made available through 'Me Learning' for all foster carers to access, in order to offer a variety of mandatory and bespoke training courses to be accessed online.

From December 2020 (Q3), foster carers started to access a more varied training programme. This included examples such as Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, LGBT Awareness, Disability Awareness, Autism Awareness, Epilepsy Awareness, Diabetes Awareness, Understanding the Behaviours of Children and Young People, Eating disorders, Effective communication with Children and Families, Loss and Bereavement, Substance Misuse, Suicide prevention and Managing Continence.

Feedback received has been that foster carers are accessing these training programmes and finding the content useful, and this continues to be explored during their supervision. Foster carers have stated they are missing the face to face group sessions and completing training alongside others. Some foster carers continue to have anxieties around attending direct face to face training and prefer at this time to complete online training. The courses can be accessed at any time and are flexible.

In response to this, and for Quarter 4, the Service is offering virtual workshops and training sessions through MS Teams, which include; Attachment and Trauma delivered by the Psychologist from Revive, Pathway Plans; The role of a Leaving Care worker, PACE/Child Sexual Exploitation. Allegation training and a Tax workshop with The Fostering Network is also to be offered, alongside Education 'Question & Answer' sessions with the Virtual Schools Team being planned. The Fostering Service is also offering group support sessions which will take place on a monthly basis.

The Permanence Team are holding monthly support groups also for Special Guardians and family and friends carers, and the mainstream Fostering Team have also commenced virtual support groups in Quarter 4 for foster carers in the evenings.

There has been an online fostering forum held in 2020/21 with guest speakers covering subjects requested by foster carers. It is hoped that these 6 monthly forums will be able to take place once again face to face subject to Government restrictions easing and the number of Covid cases in the Borough reducing.

Fostering Managers meet monthly with the Foster Carer Association to discuss issues and feedback and to promote service development.

Review Panel

Annual Review Panel was resumed and saw 24 reviews in Quarter 4. For the majority of 2020/21 Annual Reviews were undertaken by Agency Decision Maker and Team Manager, but Quarter 4 saw these resume once more and on a virtual platform. Foster Carers are asked to provide their feedback to be considered as part of their review paperwork.

Complaints

There have been no complaints during Quarter 4.

Compliments

During Quarter 4, there has been 1 compliment received from a foster carer regarding the support that she received from the Deputy Team Manager in Fostering.

Allegations

During this quarter period there has been no allegations received within the service however, a previous allegation has been concluded and is due to be presented to the next fostering panel to consider carers approval.

Specific Incidents and Restraints

During Quarter 4, there were 22 Specific Incidents received within the service. 5 of which were classified as serious illness or accidents a further 5 were correlated to missing from home incident reports. During this quarter there were 2 disclosures made regarding young people where strategy discussions and investigations were appropriately convened. The mental health needs of children and young people have also seen an increase during this Quarter and referrals made to Revive for emotional support have been made. All incidents are recorded with manager oversight.

Serious Illness and Accidents

Within this quarter period, there were 5 accident and illness reports received all of which resulted in appropriate A&E attendance. Two reports were regarding young people's mental health needs.

Missing from Home

During this quarter period, there have been 19 reports of missing from home. Of all the reported incidents of missing from home involved a total of 14 young people. Missing from Home protocol is followed and return interviews offered and/or carried out.

Bullying:

There have been no reports of bullying this Quarter.

Exemptions

There have been no new exemptions made and none that remain in place at the end of March 2021.

Engagement with Foster Carers

Blackburn with Darwen has a Foster Carer Association (FCA), which meets regularly and has an Elected Committee. Members of the Committee meet the senior managers and since the pandemic this has been at least a monthly basis. The Chair of the FCA sits on the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group. Foster carers also have access to independent support commissioned from the Fostering Network to provide support and advocacy services in the event of complaints or allegations.

A small group of foster carers are recruitment champions, who help the team to drive recruitment forward and are involved with planning events.

The Fostering Service usually holds a Foster Carer Forum every six months as an opportunity to have guest speakers and interaction between foster carers and staff. This is usually held in April and November annually. Since the restrictions due to the pandemic, an online virtual forum was held with speakers from LAC Education, Revive and the Permanence Team. This was held in Quarter 3.

Both mainstream and permanence teams have coordinated support group meetings for carers which are held 4-6 weekly and these are facilitated by staff.

Budget

Current placement pressures in-house and across the independent fostering agency landscape continue to place budgets under pressure, as increasingly adolescents and children with disabilities are placed in costly residential placements due to the lack of foster placements across the region and at a national level. There is an increase in the number of children and young people placed in-house and this is positive. However, there are still complex young people who require specific, therapeutic and residential provision and this understandably proves more costly and impacts upon the commissioning budget. A step-down approach is always considered for such placements, and the success of the fostering exchange days has assisted in placing 5 children in long term placements, one of whom moved from a costly residential provision into a foster family.

The Special Guardianship figures impact upon the budget overall, but on a positive note the increase in achieving SGO' is a reflection upon securing permanence for our looked after children in the longer term.

The increasing numbers of Special Guardianship placements is reflected in the financial position for 2020-21, which saw an overspend of £777k against a budget of £1.7M.

The foster care service returned a combined overspend of £319k across both the staffing and payments budgets in 2020-21.

Whilst demand pressures remain in relation to the commissioned placements budget, 2020-21 saw a reduction in net expenditure of over £3M compared with the previous year. This was a reflection of both the reduced numbers in external placements and additional contributions from Health following work to establish a joint commissioning framework.

Commissioned Placements

In Quarter 4, the pressure and challenge upon the Local Authority to identify foster placements and in-house residential provision has remained significant. The disruption of placements for teenagers for example both in fostering and residential has been seen and it is almost as though the impact of the pandemic is just being felt in terms of placement stability. The service continues to be as creative as possible and offering short breaks to maintain existing placements and prevent disruption where this is achievable, albeit the impact of Covid-19 on the availability of short break carers and the availability of foster placements has been seen greatly this year. The Local Authority are privileged to have our own Revive Psychology Team for looked after children and children on the edge of care and this is utilised as early as possible to try to reduce placement disruption and to ensure early assessment and intervention both for foster placements and our in-house Lytham Rd and Seeds provision.

Requests for parent and child placements and assessment units, placing sibling groups and the age group 11-15 years, remain the most challenging for the service. Lytham Road Residential Children's Home (BwD) has remained at full capacity with 4 young people in placement consistently. Nightsafe at St Silas has also been well utilised for post 16 young people and the referral process overseen by Leaving Care Manager and the Commissioning Panel, and the newly commissioned Gatehouse at Whalley New Rd (Nightsafe) has also been frequently accessed for post 16 placements.

Going forward, the BBCL Seed funding project will assist us to establish a sub-regional framework to promote local placements for local children, maintaining BwD children within the footprint of Lancashire as opposed to being placed out of Borough. The table below offers a breakdown of the current placements in March 2021 at the end of this

Placement Type
Adoptive Placements - 16
Foster Placements (in-house) - 125
Foster Placements (agency) - 54
Friends & Family - 67
Placed with Parents - 61
Independent Living - 0
Children's Homes (in-house) - 5
Children's Homes (agency) - 23
Secure - 1
Prison/HMYOI - 1
NHS - 1
Residential Accom Not Subject to CH Regulations - 13
Other - 7
Residential School - 0

New Service Priorities for 2021/22 going forward:

1. The Service has a target of recruiting 20 new fostering households over the coming year.
2. A Team Development Day will be an annual event to value and support the staff, and ensure specific training and development areas are actioned.
3. Foster Carer training will continue to develop, led by a Fostering Team/Deputy Manager. The Service will focus on the continued development of online training in the current climate, and the overall training offer in line with Foster Carer requests and Minimum Standards. Nurturing Attachment sessions will continue to be delivered by Revive with the aim to enable all newly approved foster carers to access this early in their fostering journey.
4. The management team will continue to monitor compliance with Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards and will increase the number of case file audits completed each month to support this.
6. Placement sufficiency and stability will continue to be a key area of focus, with areas for learning taken from disruption meetings and case auditing. Blackburn with Darwen are part of the cohort of North West Authorities collaboration for the DfE SEED funding and research project, which looks specifically at recruitment, retention, sufficiency and producing a Market Position Statement. The aim is to form a new local commissioning framework and to continue to hold regular Exchange Days to focus on long term matching opportunities. The Exchange Days are going ahead 6 weekly and will continue to do so.
7. The Fostering Front Door will be a key priority. An experienced fostering Social Worker will be responsible for the front door taking in foster carer enquiries, supporting placement requests and matching. The service will develop closer working relationships with IFA's and will establish a more personable and enthusiastic approach.
8. Recruitment will focus upon emergency and short break foster carers, alongside general recruitment for foster carers to respond to the increasing demand for urgent placements for teenagers. This will also enable a support package of short breaks to be considered for those young people who are more challenging to place and/or in fragile placements currently and will seek to assist with placement stability alongside our Revive offer.
9. The recruitment of foster carers will become a team and service approach; recruitment will be promoted by fostering staff and foster carers alike with more robust campaigns taking on board recommendations from the DfE Seed funding research and reviewing our fostering 'brand' of 'Let's Foster' making this more Blackburn with Darwen Council focused.

Pamela Price
Service Lead, Placements

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Digital and Customer Services

LEAD OFFICERS: Strategic Director of Resources (SIRO)

DATE: Thursday, 8 July 2021

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Digital and Customer Services

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT:

Digitally Connected - Microsoft 365 and Unified Comms

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to upgrade the Council's Microsoft licences from E3 licences to M365 E5 licences and to introduce a new Unified Communications telephony solution from June 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

Further to the Capital Programme at Finance Council in March 2021, the Executive Board is asked to approve the reallocation of £625,000 from the earmarked ICT Capital Reserves to fund the programme.

Approves the potential revenue increase to the portfolio as detailed below;

2022/23 Financial year - £178,000

2023/24 Financial year - £274,000

2024/25 Financial year - £330,000

2025/26 Financial year onwards - £345,000

3. BACKGROUND

The Council previously entered into a 3 year agreement for Office 365 licences in 2019 with a capital investment of £43k this was to move emails to the cloud hosted solution which was completed, this agreement is due to expire in June 2022. The Council is currently signed up to Microsoft E3 licences which gives the Council access to core Microsoft products but does not include the full suite of products that are available.

Over the last twelve months the Council was well placed due to technology previously deployed to adapt and change ways of working with the following being achieved;

- Microsoft Teams has allowed us to collaborate like never before with over 50k Teams meetings with video, 500k chats, documents in shared safe & secure working, dedicated project spaces
- We use Microsoft Teams Live for public meetings and consultation providing online access to citizens and businesses
- We use M365 tools such as the bookings app, to book Covid tests, briefings and internal appointments
- We use M365 apps to enable lone workers check in at locations and to book desks in Covid secure environments

- M365 forms allow us to collect internal information quickly and without burdensome administration such as tracking equipment, contact information, and daily checklists. We've also been able to run survey polls and receive instant feedback
- Microsoft SharePoint allows us to collaborate with our external network, such as local election information, and FOI requests

Whilst it was envisaged that a move to more enhanced licencing (M365 E5) would be required, as a result of the pandemic the Council's operating model and reliance on technology has changed significantly and as a result there will be a requirement to access the full capability of the Microsoft toolset including Business Intelligence capabilities and external sharing/collaboration with multiple agencies.

The transition of telephony from Skype to Teams is being accelerated due to the age and instability of the legacy platform. The current telephony solution runs across 6 separate systems which is complex and problematic when issues arise. The proposal is to have a Unified Communications solution which will offer a consistent set of products to manage all of the Council's requirements. The current licence model restricts the ability to fully deploy the required benefits available across the Council in a post pandemic environment.

To support current and future ways of working and to enhance the current security arrangements it is now necessary to upgrade to an improved licence model from the next renewal date of June 2022. Amongst other features the new licence package will enable the Council to benefit from the following features;

- Microsoft Teams Full Package including instant messaging, call functionality, voicemail, audio and video conferencing
- Enhanced analytics capability
- Identity and Access Management - enhanced control, including the ability to detect security vulnerabilities
- Advanced Threat Protection - providing addition protection for files, emails and outlook applications, real time checks of web links and use of machine learning to identify trends.
- Advanced Information/Data Governance with auto classification and labelling – includes scanning content to apply the appropriate governance protocols to data.
- Enhanced Cloud Security
- Additional support for secure external sharing
- Access to Microsoft Office online
- Microsoft translator service

The department will execute the new agreement for licences with Phoenix Software Limited through the KCS framework with the supplier providing the licences at cost.

The Executive Board approved the Council's Digital Strategy for 2021 to 2024 in April 2021 which sets out the vision of enabling digitisation across the borough for our people, creating the conditions for a high performing Council organisation and providing the best experience to our customers. Digital transformation is a cornerstone of national and local government modernisation, particularly in the context of economic development and recovery. During the course of the last few years, the Council has progressively upgraded a number of core systems, which have been moved to the cloud. Our remaining digital foundations now require modernisation to enable the Council to collaborate and communicate more effectively internally and with partners. This will provide a platform for ongoing modernisation, enabling increased ability to collaborate and integrate across partnership boundaries into the medium to long term. Furthermore it will strengthen organisational resilience and minimise business continuity risks. This proposal meets 11 of the 17 strategic aims from the previously approved Digital Strategy.

As part of the project the team will ensure user adoption and enable the transformation within the Council by engaging with departments as follows;

- A digital declaration with each directorate with a traffic light action plan
- Working with our users to understand the way they work and how these tools will digitise and improve the way they work
- In conjunction with Business Operations teams, support the changes needed in directorates
- Help user adoption through coaching support and bite size online skills development
- KPI dashboards of directorate use of the tools, signposting where greater intervention is needed

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

The current on premise telephone system is end of support which would require capital investment to maintain it or a new system to replace it.

The Council uses an older version of Microsoft office (2016), should the Council want to move to a later version on-premise then a Capital of investment of £600k+ would be required. Even if this did occur. the Council would have to move to the Cloud offering before 2026.

Microsoft currently have a ramp up offer available for organisations moving to the M365 licence model which is discounted for the first two years of the agreement which is unlikely to be available in the future.

BwD BC's current license model for Teams allows internal use only for telephony, we are still utilising Skype for all external calling so need to move to one platform which could create efficiencies and reduce confusion amongst the workforce around functionality options.

There are currently too many ways of contacting staff internally and due to the lack of a seamless cohesion of communication solutions it means you can have multiple calls ringing in across the various platforms, this is something our staff want simplifying.

Purchasing licences separately for Microsoft products is prohibitively expensive. The new agreement bundles all required licences together giving the Council the full benefit of the Microsoft suite with the minimum of costs.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The project will enable the Council to harness the opportunities that digital offers to drive improvement across services and staff experience. It will unlock further potential efficiencies within our workforce by giving them the right tools, systems and skills to drive change. Decisions will be increasingly driven by high quality data.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Capital Costs for the solution will be funded through ICT Capital reserves as outlined below;

Area	
Third Party Capital Costs	£219,700
Internal ICT staff time	£402,500
Total	£624,950

By entering into the agreement it will save the Council having to make a capital investment of £600k+ for new Office licences in the future as well as investment to replace the current phone system.

Revenue Costs

The below table demonstrates the budget increase needed after accounting for the new licences required for the project and the confirmed savings against current costs. The costs are for years of the licence agreement starting on the 1st July 2022.

Area	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4
New licences	£522,950	£572,380	£630,109	£630,109
Unified Comms costs	£155,000	£155,000	£155,000	£155,000
Existing Systems Cost	-£390,319	-£390,319	-£390,319	-£390,319
Business Ops reduction	-£50,262	-£50,262	-£50,262	-£50,262
	£237,369	£286,799	£344,528	£344,528

There is the potential for further savings to be made however these cannot be guaranteed, as the project progresses the department will work to see if these savings can be realised and if this is the case then the budget increase requested will be reduced accordingly.

By implementing the new solution there will be an element of cost avoidance that will occur totalling £163k per annum. This would be to purchase individual elements of licences from Microsoft for business analytics & reporting, basic phone system and limited security enhancements which would be required as a minimum if we did not enter into the agreement.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The procurement process shall be in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procurement Procedure Rules.

All contracts will be in a form approved by legal officers in the Commissioning and Procurement team.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There will be considerable IT resource required to deliver the project which has been factored into future staffing plans.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

10. CONSULTATIONS

Consultations have already commenced with areas of the Council.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

CONTACT OFFICER:	Peter Hughes, , peter.hughes@blackburn.gov.uk
DATE:	17/06/2021
BACKGROUND PAPER:	Digital Strategy – Exec Board April 2021

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Growth and Development

LEAD OFFICERS: Strategic Director of Place

DATE: Thursday, 8 July 2021

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Growth and Development

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT:

Local Plan Reg18 Consultation responses and amended LDS timetable

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan which will set out the land use planning strategy for the Borough up to 2037. A Public Consultation exercise on a draft version of the new Local Plan was approved by the Council's Executive Board on 10th December 2020. Consultation then commenced on Friday 8th January 2021 and concluded on Friday 19th February 2021. A Consultation Statement (Background Paper 1) sets out who has been consulted, how they were consulted provides a brief summary of the main issues raised and outlines the next steps in Plan preparation.
- 1.2 During the six week consultation period the Council received a total of 1,796 valid representations to policies and sites from 776 separate respondents (either individuals or organisations). A summary of each representation has been prepared along with a proposed Council response and this is included as Appendix H of the Consultation Statement (Background Paper 1).
- 1.3 The proposed Strategic Housing Site at North East Blackburn (Site Ref: S195) and the proposed Strategic Employment Site at Junction 5 of the M65 (Site Ref: S179) both received a large number of representations. As a result, the proposed Council response to these representations is provided separately in Appendices I and J (of the Consultation Statement) respectively.
- 1.4 A number of other representations referred to additional areas to be considered as potential future Growth sites (i.e. allocations to consider for significant new development). These are discussed further in Section 5 of the Consultation Statement and proposed Council Responses to each are provided in Appendix K. A summary is also provided in the Background section of this report below.
- 1.5 A timetable setting out the next stages of work on the new Local Plan through to its adoption is also contained in a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) as Background Paper 2.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

1. Notes the outcomes of the Consultation Draft Local Plan Reg18 public consultation process as set out in this report and the Consultation Statement (see Background Paper 1);
2. Approves the proposed Council responses to representations (set out in Appendices H-K of the Consultation Statement);
3. Approves the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) and agrees to the updated timescales included to prepare the new Local Plan (see Background Paper 2).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's current Local Plan includes the Part 1: Core Strategy (2011), and Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2015)). Together these documents set out the land use planning strategy for the Borough up to 2026.
- 3.2 The Executive Board approved a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) in February 2018 that set out the intention to develop a new single Local Plan to replace the Core Strategy and Allocations & Policies documents. An initial "Issues and Options" public consultation was subsequently carried out between 11th February 2019 and 1st April 2019.
- 3.3 The LDS was updated in January 2020 setting out a revised timetable of work, including the key stages of consultation required to adopt the new Local Plan. The Executive Board approved publication of a "Consultation Draft" Local Plan for public consultation at its meeting of 10th December 2020. This was made available for comment alongside a significant package of supporting evidence base material between 8th January 2021 and 19th February 2021.
- 3.4 This paper reports on the outcomes of that consultation exercise, and proposes a further revised LDS and timetable. This takes account of the impacts of the pandemic and significant Government planning reforms that were put forward in the Planning White Paper (PWP) '[Planning for the future](#)' in August last year.

Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Paper

- 3.5 The "Consultation Draft" Local Plan represented a key milestone in the development of the emerging new Local Plan illustrating the Council's proposals for a "balanced growth" strategy, aiming to provide new jobs and homes as well as protecting our environment and helping to address the Climate Emergency. It was prepared in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) 2012 Regulations and consulted on in accordance with the Council's adopted [Statement of Community Involvement](#) and Regulation 18 of the [2012 Local Plan Regulations](#).
- 3.6 The Consultation Draft Local Plan covered the period up until 2037 and incorporated the following main themes:
 - A Vision, Strategic Objectives and Balanced Growth Strategy;
 - A set of Core Policies (housing, economic development, town centres, climate change, health, design, transport and infrastructure); and
 - Proposed areas for Growth, Renewal or Protection.

- 3.7 Within the Growth Areas, which were areas deemed suitable for substantial development, sites were allocated in order to meet the Borough's requirements for housing, employment, gypsy and traveller pitches, mixed use development or major infrastructure. Sites were selected via a robust site selection and sustainability appraisal process, considering any reasonable alternatives.
- 3.8 Areas for Renewal included the urban area, including Town and District Centres. These were areas deemed suitable for development where smaller scale development was appropriate. For example gentle densification, infill schemes, or regeneration initiatives.
- 3.9 Finally, Protection Areas were those which, as a result of particular environmental and/or cultural characteristics, justify more stringent development control. For example, these covered the Green Belt, countryside, our green infrastructure network including designated local green spaces, heritage sites and areas of highest flood risk.
- 3.10 The document highlighted six key schemes and ideas:
- Blackburn Growth Axis linking strategic growth sites across the Borough and beyond;
 - Darwen Town Investment Plan delivering a series of wide-ranging improvements for Darwen;
 - North East Blackburn Strategic Housing Site – a new neighbourhood on the edge of the town;
 - South East Blackburn Strategic Employment Site to attract jobs and investment at a key motorway location;
 - Blackburn Town Centre Major Development Site – a unique opportunity to boost the vitality of Blackburn town centre; and
 - Infrastructure Delivery Plan – an important series of interventions to improve infrastructure for all, such as roads, schools and health facilities.
- 3.11 The structure and content of the Consultation Draft Local Plan was strongly influenced by proposals set out in the Government's PWP. For example, the concept of areas for Growth, Renewal and Protection and their associated policies were designed to accommodate the zonal based system set out in the PWP. In addition, Development Management policies were omitted from the Consultation Draft.
- 3.12 In light of subsequent delays to the PWP proposals progressing, and increasing uncertainty in the extent to which proposals will be taken forward, the Council now proposes to revise the structure of the Local Plan for the next stage of consultation – further details are set out in the Consultation Statement and 'Next Steps' below.

Local Plan Regulation 18 Key Consultation Outcomes

- 3.13 The Consultation Statement provides the full details of who was consulted and how they were consulted. Appendices A-D provide specific information on statutory consultees, notification letters, consultation publicity material and details of the social media / PR campaign employed.
- 3.14 Alongside the formal consultation process inviting representations in writing, a number of informal events also took place that focused on specific stakeholders. These included youth engagement work (facilitated by Social Sense) and community/voluntary group workshops (facilitated by Planning Aid England). Specific outputs from these sessions are set out in Appendices E and F.
- 3.15 The success of the consultation exercise is demonstrated in the volume of responses received via a range of different methods and from a wide range of stakeholders. Appendix

H of the Consultation Statement sets out every representation in the form of a summary of comments alongside a Council response. These are ordered by the page number from the Consultation Draft Local Plan to which the comment relates. They are also grouped by their reference to Questions, Policies or Sites. Section 5 of the Consultation Statement provides an overview of the total number of responses, and response type, by each of these categories (i.e. Questions, Policies, Sites).

- 3.16 The proposed Strategic Employment Site (at J5 of the M65) and proposed Strategic Housing Site (in NE Blackburn) attracted the highest number of comments. As a result the Consultation Statement sets out a more detailed Council Response to each of the points raised by representations to those sites in separate Appendices I and J.
- 3.17 In addition to the sites set out for Growth, Protection and Renewal in the Consultation Draft Local Plan a number of further sites have been put forward through the consultation for consideration by the Council within these categories. These additional sites are set out in Appendix K of the Consultation Statement along with a brief Council response as to how these should be taken forward and considered in preparing the Publication Local Plan.
- 3.18 Many of the proposed new sites have in fact already been considered during the plan preparation stage. In total there are a further seven new sites to take forward for consideration in the published Site Assessment Methodology – these are listed in Table 2 of the Consultation Statement. They comprise three proposals for new Housing Growth sites, two proposals for new Mixed Use Growth Sites, one new Employment Growth site, and one additional area of land to consider as future Safeguarded land. An additional five sites that have been previously considered are also now recommended to be re-considered in light of additional information and representations received – these are listed in Table 3 of the Consultation Statement.

Next Steps

- 3.19 During 2020 the timetable for production of the Local Plan has been impacted by both the Covid pandemic and significant proposals for planning reform set out by the Government in its PWP 'Planning for the future' in August 2020. As a result the next stage of the Local Plan (Publication under Regulation 19) will be later than set out in the currently approved LDS.
- 3.20 A revised timetable is set out in the new LDS which states:
- Publication of the new Local Plan (Regulation 19) in January 2022;
 - Submission (Regulation 22) to the Secretary of State for examination in the summer of 2022 following Council approval;
 - Examination in Public (Regulations 23-25) led by the Planning Inspectorate typically takes a period of 12 months; and
 - Adoption (Regulation 26) of the new Local Plan expected in summer of 2023.
- 3.21 The Government's reforms set out in the PWP have also proceeded slower than anticipated over the last 9 months. The Council needs to ensure that it has an up to date plan in place no later than December 2023 to avoid Government intervention in plan making. Government has also made clear that Councils should continue to progress Local Plans despite the ongoing pandemic.
- 3.22 For these reasons it is proposed to proceed to adopt the new Local Plan under the current Regulations ([2012 Local Planning Regulations](#)) rather than await new regulations to emerge. This is in line with other Local Authorities currently progressing Local Plan reviews. This will mean reverting back to a Local Plan format that will contain both strategic and non-strategic policies. This will mean the inclusion of Development Management policies in the next stage

of public consultation. The revised LDS timetable set out above and included in this report (Background Paper 2) reflects this approach.

3.23 Between now and the end of 2021 the following key tasks will take place:

- Completing the actions set out in the Council's responses to representations at Regulation 18;
- Completing outstanding evidence base work (listed in Appendix A of the Consultation Draft Local Plan) and any further evidence base requirements identified through representations at Regulation 18;
- Completing appropriate updates to existing evidence base work to reflect changing economic circumstances, including the impacts of Brexit and Covid, to ensure the case for 'Balanced Growth' remains robust;
- Consider any new 'reasonable alternative' sites put forward appropriately through the published Site Assessment Methodology and Sustainability Appraisal;
- Prepare and consult on draft Development Management policies with statutory consultees prior to finalising them for public consultation in the Regulation 19 Local Plan;
- Continue Duty to Co-operate work with neighbouring local authorities and agree a Statement of Common Ground; and
- Complete Sustainability Appraisal and an Appropriate Assessment on policies and sites to satisfy the requirements of SA/SEA/HRA legislation.

3.24 A Publication Local Plan will be brought to the Council's Executive Board in December for approval for consultation early in 2022.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- 4.1 Local Plans are examined by an independent Planning Inspector to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements and whether they are sound. Plans are considered to be sound if they are 'positively prepared', 'justified', and 'effective' and 'consistent with national policy'. Further details of these tests are set out in paragraph 35 of the NPPF.
- 4.2 It is therefore key that all representations received during the preparation stage of the plan are considered appropriately and acted upon where they may impact on soundness. This will minimise cost and disruption to the examination process once the plan is submitted. This report is to demonstrate that all representations are being duly considered, relevant action is undertaken, and that reasonable alternative growth sites put forward are being taken forward for further site assessment where appropriate.
- 4.3 If the Council fails to adopt an up to date Local Plan by December 2023 then the Government has threatened to intervene in plan making locally. The revised timetable proposes adoption by the summer of 2023. Key risks to the Council meeting this deadline are set out in Appendix 1 of the revised Local Development Scheme along with mitigation measures.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The consultation on the Draft Local Plan marks a key stage in development of the new local plan, which (once adopted) will replace the existing two-part Local Plan. It allows the Council

to receive and assess feedback on the emerging strategy and policies, therefore adapting the Plan where necessary before finalising the Plan for Examination by Government.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The consultation and subsequent additional work to prepare for Publication is to be funded by existing budgets allocated for the Local Plan.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Local Planning Authorities have a statutory requirement to produce a Local Development Plan, as described by the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Planning Practice Guidance, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The reporting of consultation outcomes and next steps forms part of the plan preparation work towards meeting this statutory requirement.

7.2 Given one of the background documents is accessed via a weblink, all decision makers should ensure they review that background document and be in a position to confirm this for the minutes of the meeting.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The consultation and subsequent additional work to prepare for Publication will be managed by existing resources and budgets allocated for the Local Plan within the Council's Growth Team.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

10. CONSULTATIONS

The public consultation to which this paper refers took place for 6 weeks during January – February 2021. Consultation was undertaken using the Council website, direct mailing, public advertisements, and via other Council communication avenues such as social media. Exhibition material was also displayed within Blackburn and Darwen Markets and youth engagement work was carried out. Each property in the Borough received a direct mail notification of the consultation once it had commenced. A comprehensive consultation and communications strategy was also prepared involving resource from a number of Council services. Further details on the consultation process, including how people were consulted, are set out in Section 4 of the Consultation Statement.

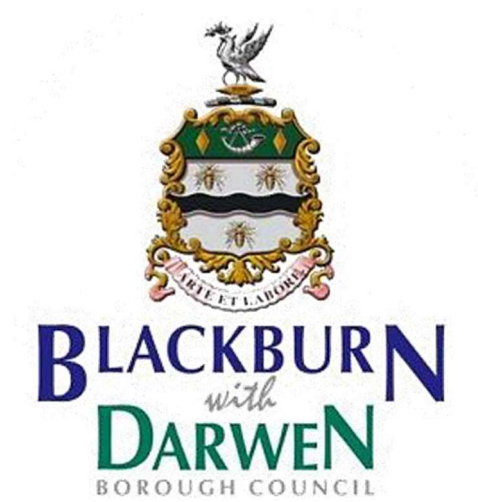
11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

CONTACT OFFICER:	Darren Tweed
DATE:	17 th June 2021
BACKGROUND PAPER:	1: Consultation Statement – not included in agenda pack due to file size - available to view on www.blackburn.gov.uk/localplan 2: Local Development Scheme (July 2021)



Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Local Development Scheme

July 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) establishes the current system of local development planning in England¹. As part of this system, the local planning authority must prepare and maintain a **Local Development Scheme (LDS)**, which sets out a list of the planning documents it intends to prepare in the forthcoming years and the timetable for the preparation of those documents.
- 1.2 Planning documents within this LDS are classified as development plan documents (referred to as local plans). Local plans are documents which:
- Are prepared by a local planning authority individually or in cooperation with one or more other local planning authorities which contains statements regarding one or more of the following:
 - Set out the amount of development and use of land which the local planning authority wish to encourage during any specific period;
 - Allocate sites for a particular type of development or use;
 - Include development management and site allocation policies, which are intended to guide the determination of applications for planning permission.
- 1.3 A local planning authority can also prepare other plans that complement the local plan including for example, Area Action Plans (to cover a specific geographical part of the local authority area) or specific plans for particular allocations or policy matters not covered by the local plan.
- 1.4 Regulations require local authorities to review local plans and their Statements of Community Involvement at least every five years from the date of their adoption. Local Authorities will need to carry out an assessment of whether a Local Plan or Statement of Community Involvement remains relevant and effectively addresses the needs of the local community, or whether policies need updating. Having carried out this assessment authorities must decide:
- that one or more policies do need updating, and update their Local Development Scheme to set out the timetable for updating their plan, and then update their plan; or
 - that their policies do not need updating, and publish their reasons for this decision.
- 1.5 The LDS should be kept up to date and was last reviewed in January 2020 to cover the period 2020-2023 and acknowledged the need to prepare a revised Local Plan. It set out the timetable involved in the Plan's preparation.
- 1.6 This July 2021 review of the LDS includes an updated timetable for production of the new Local Plan in addition to information regarding the Council's commitment to the preparation of a Statement of Common Ground to confirm the extent of joint working throughout the production of the new Local Plan.

¹ The Planning Act 2008 then the Localism Act 2011 made a number of amendments to part 2 of the 2004 Act. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the current system of plan making.

2. Local Plans and Other Documents

- 2.1 The Local Plan for Blackburn with Darwen Council consists of the Core Strategy (Local Plan Part 1) and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (Local Plan Part 2).

The Core Strategy (Local Plan Part 1)	The Core Strategy was adopted in January 2011. The Core Strategy sets the overall spatial strategy for the Borough. This is presented through written policies and a key diagram which illustrates the overall spatial strategy and priorities for development.
The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Local Plan Part 2)	The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Local Plan Part 2) was adopted in December 2015. The plan provides additional policy detail on a range of topics covered at a strategic level in the Core Strategy. It also includes land allocations and development management policies. The Adopted Policies Map has been prepared alongside the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies plan and illustrates the site allocations and land designations proposed.

Local Plan Review

- 2.2 The Council has begun significant work on updating its Local Plan. This will update both the Core Strategy (Local Plan Part 1) and Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies to produce a single Local Plan for Blackburn with Darwen. Section 3 below sets out the programme for reviewing the Local Plan.

Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan

- 2.3 Blackburn with Darwen Council is also jointly responsible with Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council for the Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan (JMWLP). The current JMWLP consists of the Core Strategy adopted in February 2009 and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies adopted in September 2013. It provides mineral and waste specific policies for use in determining planning applications for waste or mineral developments. A revised Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (JMWLP) is being prepared by the three Waste and Minerals Planning Authorities in Lancashire. Any joint Minerals and Waste Plans are prepared under a separate Local Development Scheme. This LDS does not therefore contain any details on any Minerals and Waste documents.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.4 At the present time there are no known plans from Parish / Town Councils to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) within the Borough. To date there has not been any applications for the establishment of a Neighbourhood Forum and there has not been any interest by a community groups to prepare a NDP. However, if such plans do come forward, this could have a knock on impact upon any work programme relating to a review of the Local Plan. This is because the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan, whilst a community led document, does require input from the local planning authority in a variety of ways throughout the process.

Other Planning Documents

- 2.5 The Local Plan is supported by other documents, which are available on the Council's website including a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs); Masterplans and Development Briefs; and the Authority's Monitoring Report (produced annually).

Statement of Common Ground

- 2.6 In accordance with Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) local authorities must engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in any process by means of which development plan documents are prepared.
- 2.7 The revised NPPF 2019 now requires local authorities to "*maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these*" (paragraph 27). The accompanying Planning Practice Guidance outlines what a Statement of Common Ground should contain and explains that it should be "*maintained on an on-going basis throughout the plan making process*".
- 2.8 A Statement of Common Ground will therefore be prepared with neighbouring authorities and relevant bodies and will be subject to ongoing review.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.9 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The SCI sets out how and when the Council will involve the local community in preparing local plans and processing planning applications and controlling development. The Council is legally obliged to comply with its Statement of Community Involvement.
- 2.10 The Council's current SCI was prepared in July 2020 to inform the review of the Local Plan.

Monitoring and Review

- 2.11 The Council publishes an authority monitoring report (AMR) that provides information on the performance of policies within the Local Plan. It also provides an update on how the Local Plan timetable is progressing against the published LDS. The AMR therefore provides important information to assess where future policy changes which may be required, and also helps to highlight whether a review of the local plan preparation timetable is necessary.

3. Local Plan Review - Timetable

3.1 The stages required in preparing a local plan are set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In summary the key stages are:

- Reg 18 – preparation of a local plan
- Reg 19 – publication of a local plan
- Reg 20 – representations relating to a local plan
- Reg 22 – submission of documents and information to the Secretary of State
- Reg 23- consideration of representations by appointed person (Planning Inspector(s))
- Reg 24 – independent examination by the Planning Inspector(s)
- Reg 25 – publication of the recommendations of the appointed person
- Reg 26 – adoption of a local plan

Document Details – Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan	
Content	The Local Plan will contain the overall spatial strategy for the Borough and set out the quantum of development for housing and economic development requirements. It will provide details on allocations across a range of land uses with a key focus on housing and employment land and any necessary supporting infrastructure. It will also provide topic-based development management policies.
Status	The Local Plan will be a Development Plan Document and provide a single information point for the Council's key land use policies.
Geographical Coverage	Borough wide
Chain of conformity	The Local Plan will conform to national policies and guidance.
Local Plan Production Arrangements	
Lead Team	Growth Team
Management Arrangements	The draft Local Plan will be subject to review and approvals by the Executive Board. There will be a requirement for formal approval of certain stages by Council.
Resources	Resource implications will be met from within existing Growth Team budgets.
Consultation Arrangements	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the SCI and the relevant planning regulations.

Timetable		
Preparation (Regulation 18)	Scoping the issues and options for the Local Plan and commission initial key evidence base	January – December 2018
	Consult on Issues and Options	February – April 2019
	Consider responses to Issues and Options	May - July 2019
	Commissioning and delivery of additional evidence base to inform emerging draft plan, site selection process & policy development	January 2019 – December 2020
	Consult on draft Local Plan under Regulation 18	January - February 2021
	Production of supporting technical papers for Publication Draft Local Plan	March - December 2021
Publication (Regulations 19/20)	Consult on Publication Draft Local Plan	January – February 2022
	Consider responses to Publication Draft and finalise Submission Draft	March - June 2022
Submission (Regulation 22)	Submit Local Plan for examination	June - July 2022
Examination (Regulations 23/24/25)	Process run by a Planning Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate (includes consultation on any Main Modifications to the Plan prior to receipt of the final report from the Planning Inspector).	July 2022 onwards (Planning Inspectorate estimate a period of 12 months for the examination stage) ²
Adoption (Regulation 26)	Formal Adoption by the Council	Summer 2023

² See **Procedural Practice in the Examination of Local Plans**, Planning Inspectorate February 2021 (7th Edition)

4. Resources and Risk Management

- 4.1 A separate risk assessment (attached at Appendix A) has been undertaken of the risks which may affect the Council's ability to meet the planned timetable. The main risks relate to staff turnover, recruitment, absence, competing work priorities, potential future budget priorities, and ongoing impacts of the pandemic.
- 4.2 The increased use of outside consultants or temporary staff may be required to keep Local Plan document preparation on schedule. Alternatively, if the budget does not allow this, the timetable may have to be revised.
- 4.3 Further changes to the national planning system are another potential risk that could introduce some uncertainty and delay. The Council will monitor closely emerging proposals set out in the Planning White Paper in 2020, particularly with respect to the proposed standard housing methodology and any further changes proposed to the local plan process (content and structure).
- 4.4 Mechanisms for cooperation with other authorities and organisations on strategic issues are already in place but mean that the timing of other authorities' Local Plan preparation may have an impact on the delivery of Blackburn with Darwen's Local Plan.

APPENDIX 1: Risk Assessment

Nature of the Risk	Consequences of the Risk Occurring	Likelihood before mitigation (1:5) (A)	Severity / impact before mitigation (1:5) (B)	Inherent risk score (A * B)	Mitigation	Likelihood after mitigation (1:5) (C)	Severity / impact after mitigation (1:5) (D)	Post mitigation risk score (C * D)
Staff Resources to produce new Local Plan - loss of key staff due to sickness or moving to another job	Delay in timetable for delivery of the Local Plan	3	4	12	Regular review of staff work programmes. Bring in external support where appropriate.	2	3	6
Changes to legislative framework or regulations – Government Planning White Paper (August 2020)	Additional requirements placed on the form and content of the Local Plan	4	4	16	Maintain close monitoring of any future Government announcements and take on board any necessary changes.	2	3	6
Further Covid-19 pandemic lock-down or restrictions curtailing preparation work	Delays to preparation of evidence base, the Local Plan and/or consultation events	3	3	9	Ensure work programme and prioritisation of tasks is flexible to accommodate any potential future restrictions	3	1	3
Reduction in Financial Resources required for Local Plan production (either in house council budgets or other external funding)	Delays in the production of the Local Plan	5	4	20	Budget planning to ensure cost effective delivery of the Local Plan.	5	2	10
Joint working with neighbouring authorities and other organisations	Potential delays if key evidence base documents requiring joint working are not	3	5	15	Ensure robust approach to agreeing the briefs for any jointly	2	5	10

Nature of the Risk	Consequences of the Risk Occurring	Likelihood before mitigation (1:5) (A)	Severity / impact before mitigation (1:5) (B)	Inherent risk score (A * B)	Mitigation	Likelihood after mitigation (1:5) (C)	Severity / impact after mitigation (1:5) (D)	Post mitigation risk score (C * D)
	signed off by all relevant parties				commissioned evidence base/ studies.			
Potential third party challenges to the emerging new Local Plan (including any legal challenge when the plan is found sound)	Delays in the next stage of Local Plan development where consultation comments require further consideration of next steps. Delays resulting from a legal challenge whilst legal arguments are considered by the Planning Courts.	2	5	10	Ensure robust evidence base underpins policies and spatial approach of the Local Plan. Engage in any necessary robust defence if a legal challenge is made.	1	5	5
Planning Inspectorate capacity to examine Local Plan	Delay to the examination of the Local Plan	2	4	8	Close liaison with the Planning Inspectorate in the run up to submission of the Local Plan.	1	4	4



Addendum to Executive Board Item: Local Plan Reg18 Consultation responses and amended LDS timetable (8th July 2021)

An error has been identified in material submitted to the Executive Board item above. This addendum report clarifies the error and its implications.

Error

Appendix H of Background Paper 1 (the Consultation Statement) lists all the comments received and the proposed Council Response to each. On p106 of Appendix H (in relation to Rep. ID 1953) it is stated that land to the south east of Local Plan site S042 (Bank Hey), off Bog Height Road, should be included as part of the existing Growth Site boundary. The proposed Council response states that '*Amendments to the site boundary will be considered at the next stage of Plan preparation*'. In line with this response, the site should therefore have been listed in Appendix K but is not.

Implications

- Exec Board report: Paragraph 3.18 of the Executive Board report states that '*in total there are a further seven new sites to take forward for consideration in the published Site Assessment Methodology*'. This will increase to eight sites with the additional land at Bog Height Road to now also be considered as a 'reasonable alternative' site;
- Consultation Statement (Background Paper 1): Paragraph 5.14 will need updating to reflect 32 sites listed in Appendix K in total (instead of 31). The number of new 'reasonable alternative sites' to take forward in the Site Assessment Methodology referenced and listed in Table 2 will also need increasing from seven to eight. The new site will be given Site Ref S224. Appendix K will also need to include the site plan attached to this addendum note.

Members are asked to note this error and its implications and that the Consultation Statement will be updated to reflect this new site following Executive Board approval.

Rep ID(s)	1953	Site Name	Land off Bog Height Road
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Consultation Draft Local Plan- Policy	RAP1: Urban/Village Boundary
Rep – Policy Proposal	GAP1: Housing Growth Sites
Council Response	New site – proceed to stage 3 SAM

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted