

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY
DATE: 27th JANUARY 2022**

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

South East Blackburn - Growth Deal Major Transport Scheme

The new Issa Way Link Road and the widened Haslingden Road opened in December 2021. Final landscaping and other complementary works will be completed in the coming months. This is the final project to be delivered from the Growth Deal 3 'Pennine Gateways' funding which also included the major infrastructure improvements at Carl Fogarty Way, Brownhill Roundabout, Pleckgate Road, Whalley Old Road and Four Lane Ends.

Local Transport Plan – Annual Improvements Programme

Projects included within the 2021/22 capital programme are largely completed, delivering improvements across all highway assets including carriageway improvements across circa 9km of our highway network and various upgrades and repairs on our bridges, retaining walls, traffic signals, street lights, signs and road lines.

The development of the 2022/23 programme is near completion and we are just awaiting the Department for Transport to publish our expected settlement. Last year funding was 29% down across our Highway Maintenance Grant, Incentive Funding and Transport Grant's resulting in a decrease of £540K. Whilst we have based next year's programme on the same level of funding we are hopeful of an increased settlement. Should this be the case, some of our reserve projects may be funded. It is anticipated that the 2022/23 LTP annual programme will on the agenda for March Executive Board.

Cycling and Walking

The 'Capability Funding' of £272,528 was received on 1st November and we are delivering initiatives to promote walking and cycling, and working with our local schools and businesses. Funding will support behaviour change activities, including training, cycle loan schemes, travel planning and events, and the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. To date all the contracts with local suppliers have been placed and we have already provided cycle training to over 100 of our older residents and are working with several schools to revisit their travel plans.

Enhanced Bus Partnership

In October, the Council published its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which was created in conjunction with Lancashire County Council and our private operators. The BSIP analyses current service levels and includes targets to:

- improve bus journey time and reliability; and
- increase passenger numbers and customer satisfaction.

Consultation on our Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme has commenced with our private operators and a public consultation is planned for January 2022. It is intended that the Council will enter into an Enhanced Partnership with our private operators in April 2022, subject to approval at the March Executive Board.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE & CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Safer Roads Operational Group and Strategy

The new Safer Roads Strategy will be published in early 2022 and aims to encourage safer but also healthier roads. The primary aim of this strategy is to reduce casualties on the Borough's roads and its secondary aims are to:

- Make people feel safer on BwD roads, including when walking and cycling;
- Reduce car use and increase in walking and cycling; and
- Take action to improve air quality.

We have established an operational multi-agency group to work within the strategic framework of engagement, education, enforcement, and engineering and developed a comprehensive 5-year action plan.

PLACE PRIORITY 6: STRONG, GROWING ECONOMY TO ENABLE SOCIAL MOBILITY

Housing Developments

Further to the Council's agreed Growth Programme, the following major housing projects involving Council land are progressing through the planning stages:

- Keepmoat and Progress Housing have been selected to develop the Council's Haslingden Road Key Worker Housing Site, which will provide around 300 new homes close to Royal Blackburn Hospital, including a proportion of homes for NHS key workers. The planning application has been received and will be registered this month for full public consultation.
- Countryside Homes and Together Housing have now received full planning permission to build around 390 new homes of mixed tenure around Fishmoor Drive / Roman Road. The application incorporates two sites on Fishmoor Drive and one on Roman Road, and infrastructure works on Fishmoor Drive. Construction will commence this month.

- Following outline planning permission being granted in 2021 for up to 165 new homes at Whalley Old Road, a partially Council-owned site, the Council have been working with adjacent landowners to carry out site investigations. An informal tender process has also commenced, and a preferred developer will be selected to take the site forward via a detailed planning application later this year.
- Elan Homes was selected to purchase and develop the residential development parcels at Milking Lane, Lower Darwen, which the Council owns as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture. The detailed (reserved matters) planning application for 76 homes was granted permission at the December 2021 Planning & Highways Committee.

Other developments on current or former Council land, at a more advanced stage, include the Roe Lee site, where Persimmon Homes are established on site; the Griffin Redevelopment site, where Seddon Homes are building 56 new homes for Great Places in the first phase of development. Three sites in Mill Hill are currently under construction by Great Places at Shorrock Lane (former Laneside Care Home), Bowen Street and New Wellington Street.

Applethwaite Homes have completed the new family homes at Tower Road, and McDermott Homes have commenced their development at both Lomond Gardens in Feniscowles where 30 new family homes will be built and at Ellison Fold Way in Darwen which will deliver a combined total of around 340 new family dwellings including 70 affordable houses plus contributions towards more school places, roads and improving the Blacksnape Play Area.

Townscape Heritage Project - Blakey Moor/Northgate/Lord Street West

Blackburn company Forrest Joinery and Contracts Ltd has been appointed as main contractor for the restoration and redevelopment of the Blakey Moor Terrace. Works are set to start onsite in February for 12-18 months and will convert the five small terraced properties into two larger units suitable for food and drink. Grant funded works to neighbouring 29 Blakey Moor (former Jubilee Pub) are almost completed with the new restaurant operator aiming to open in the coming months. Phase II internal refurbishment of 35 Northgate (former Ribblesdale Hotel) will start onsite mid-January and negotiations with a potential new tenant are progressing well.

Restoration works to properties along Lord Street West have now completed with three units let and one on the market to let. Proposals for restoration of 13 Northgate (former Age Concern) has secured Planning Permission and grant funded works are expected to start in the next few months. Three further schemes for 21-27 Northgate (former Mercers) and 34 (Baileys Jewellers), 36-40 (Wellcome pound shop) Northgate are in development.

Commercial Developments

The Council / Maple Grove Joint Venture company is progressing with ambitious masterplanning work for the former Thwaites Brewery site and surrounds, with details announced in December 2021.

Good progress is continuing to be made at the Milking Lane development site, which the Council is bringing forward as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Joint Venture Company. The new link road through the site opened in 2021 and detailed (reserved matters) planning applications have been granted planning permission for 3 of the commercial plots and both of the residential plots.

At Carl Fogarty Way, preferred bidders have been selected for Plots 1, 4 and 6, with legals progressing. Plots 2 and 3 will be offered to the market next year. A detailed planning application submitted by Rocplas for Plot 1 (for a new commercial building) is currently under consideration.

Darwen Town Deal

The Town Deal Board received in December formal confirmation of its £25 million funding allocation for agreed projects to help deliver the Town Investment Plan, which was submitted in January 2021. The Plan has received the maximum funding available and work is underway on the business cases required to be submitted by Summer 2022. A Communication Strategy, with regular updates on progress, is also in development. All funding will be allocated in line with Government requirements and our programme management and assurance frameworks. The Council, as the accountable body, will be responsible for the delivery of the programme over the 4-year funding period. A more detailed report on the Darwen Deal programme will be presented to February Executive Board.

New Local Plan to 2037

The final draft of the new Local Plan is due to be published for public consultation for 6 weeks, beginning on 4th February (subject to Executive Board approval on 13 January). The ambitious Plan proposes the creation of around 7,000 new homes and 5,000 net new jobs by 2037 at identified development sites.

It also aims to drive the Borough's Covid-19 recovery by supporting housing and employment growth, and improved social and physical infrastructure as well as ways to combat climate change in all planning decisions.