

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING

STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY

DATE: 28th July 2022

ALL PRIORITIES:

New Local Plan to 2037

The last round of statutory public consultation on the new Local Plan for the Borough (2021-2037) has now finished. The outcomes of the most recent exercise (held in February to March 2022) are reported in a separate July Council Forum report. The report seeks approval to submit the new Local Plan (and its accompanying documents) to the Secretary of State to commence the important, and independent, Examination in Public process. The Government requires Local Plans to be adopted by the end of 2023, and it is hoped that examination process can be concluded within 12 months, allowing the Council to adopt in summer 2023.

The ambitious Local Plan proposes the creation of around 7,000 new homes and 5,000 net new jobs to 2037 through a number of committed and proposed new development sites. It also aims to help drive the Borough's Covid-19 recovery by supporting housing and employment growth, improvements to social and physical infrastructure, and helping to combat climate change in all future planning decisions.

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Levelling Up Fund 2

A bid for £20m is being made to Round 2 of the Government's Levelling Up Fund to help bring forward improvements to Junction 5 of the M65, and to deliver a comprehensive, high-quality walking and cycling network in south east Blackburn. Together these significant transport interventions (totalling £30.8m) will help tackle congestion, address safety concerns and promote active travel between key origins and destinations (including links to the town centre). This will support the Council's Local Plan and Blackburn Growth Axis ambitions, help drive prosperity across East Lancashire, and reduce emissions and improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the area.

Local Transport Plan – Annual Improvements Programme

The 2022/23 Local Transport Plan was approved at March Executive Board and includes improvements to 4.9km of roads, 14 bridges / structures and various projects across traffic signals, drainage and street lighting assets.

Department for Transport (DfT) Incentive Funding and Highways Asset Management

The service has returned the 2022/22 Incentive Fund questionnaire and can demonstrate that we have retained Band 3 Status. This ensures that the service receives additional funding from the DfT, an extra £268K annually, that we adopt a risk based approach to asset management and spend the funding received efficiently and effectively, protecting the Councils assets. The present Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) will be reviewed in 2022/23 and a revised / updated

version will be presented to Executive Board later this year. This will ensure that the service continues to demonstrate the adoption of good practices in the strategic management of its highway assets and safeguards that funding is used in the most efficient and cost effective ways, in order to keep the network well maintained for its users.

Cycling and Walking

In December 2021, the Council was notified it had been successfully considered for a Government Active Travel Social Prescribing feasibility study. Our bid was submitted in April and, if successful, funding will be provided over the next 3 years to develop project plans that will:

- Actively promote increased levels of physical activity through cycling and walking
- Demonstrate clear links between infrastructure development and the proposed social prescribing schemes
- Support a modal shift to active travel providing people with travel choices and supporting changes in behaviour

We hope to hear if the bid was successful by the end of July.

Enhanced Bus Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan

In June, Executive Board approved the Council entering into an Enhanced Partnership with our bus operators. This ensures that we are compliant with the Governments Bus Back Better, a National Bus Strategy (NBS). Two requirements of the strategy are for the Council and its operators to enter into a statutory 'Enhanced Partnership' to continue to receive funding; and deliver the improvements included within the published Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The Council was also successful in attaining funding for our BSIP, which was a joint submission with Lancashire County Council). The bid is presently being finalised with the DfT and the funding allocation will be announced over the summer.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE & CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Climate Emergency Action Plan

The Council's Climate Change Working Group continues to oversee delivery of actions set out in the latest Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) (published December 2021). The Working Group includes representatives from across all Council service areas and is co-chaired at the Director level. Priorities and a work programme, based around a number of sub-groups of officers, has now been agreed with lead officers and actions identified. Target areas include:

- Decarbonisation of Council and Borough buildings and assets;
- Alternative vehicle fuels for Council fleet and for business mileage;
- Staff training and awareness programme, including Carbon literacy training;
- Tree planting and carbon sequestration;
- Promotion;
- Citizens Inquiry; and
- Young People.

An annual report on the delivery of CEAP priorities will be presented to members.

Safer Roads Operational Group and Strategy

Following approval of the Safer Roads Strategy we continue to work collaboratively to deliver upon our action plan, focusing on Engagement, Education, Enforcement and Engineering. The primary aim of our strategy is to reduce casualties on the Borough's roads with secondary aims 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.

In addition the Council works in partnership with strategic partners across the Lancashire sub-region as part of the Lancashire Roads Safety Partnership. This group is in a transitional period with the strategy and terms of reference being reviewed. The partnership has a crucial role in enforcement, education and engaging over road safety and having our own strategy linked to the aims of this partnership will be beneficial.

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:

- Haslingden Road Housing Site – KEEPMOAT HOMES have secured planning permission to develop 300 new homes to include 160 family homes for sale and up to 50 keyworker affordable homes in the first phase. The affordable homes will be offered to NHS key workers at the Royal Blackburn Hospital
- Whalley Old Road Housing Site - Following an informal tender process the Council and co-land owners appointed VISTRY PARTNERSHIPS as Preferred Bidder for the site to deliver 165 high quality family homes. Vistry Partnerships are preparing to submit a full planning application over the coming weeks and intend to bring their flagship 'BOVIS HOMES' brand to the site. Blackburn will be the first site to offer Bovis Homes across Lancashire/Pennine Lancashire
- Holden Fold Housing Site – Tenders for the residential development site in Darwen (former Moorland School site and adjoining land), which is part Council-owned, were sent out in April and attracted 9 bidders. Bids are currently being assessed to gauge the best housing mix and quality, scheme layout and land offer for the site. A preferred bidder is planned to be recommended to the Executive Board in late summer.

Progress on other developments on Council land:

- The Roe Lee site, where Persimmon Homes are established on site and continue to build and sell new homes.
- The Griffin Redevelopment site, Seddon Homes have completed 56 new homes on phase 1 for Great Places and all homes are now occupied.
- Laneside and two private sites in Mill Hill where Great Places have completed over 80 new affordable homes for rent.
- Lomond Gardens, McDermott Homes continue a successful build programme.

- Countryside Homes and Together Housing have commenced their development of 390 new homes of mixed tenure on two sites on Fishmoor Drive and one site on Roman Road.
- Elan Homes, Milking Lane, Lower Darwen – which the Council owns as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture.
- McDermott Homes, Ellison Fold Way, Darwen, have commenced their development at 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. Part of the site was Council-owned.

PLACE, PRIORITY 7: SUPPORTING OUR TOWN CENTRES AND BUSINESSES

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

Major construction at Blakey Moor Terrace is now onsite, with the former Subway building at 3-7 Blakey Moor and part of Barton Street car park is being used as part of the site compound.

Phase II internal refurbishment of 35 Northgate (former Ribblesdale Hotel) is almost complete. The relocation and expansion of Shh Bar into the building was announced in the press at the end of June.

Two further shop front restoration schemes for 34 (Baileys Jewellers) and 36-40 (Wellcome pound shop) Northgate have been approved and will start onsite this summer.

Morrisons Relocation

Maple Grove Blackburn (Joint Venture Partnership between BwDBC and Maple Grove) has agreed heads of terms with Morrisons for purchase of the former Thwaites brewery site for the construction of a new store. The contract is now being prepared and design progressed with a planning application scheduled to be submitted in late 2022.

St Johns Refurbishment Project

A full design team including OMI Architects have been appointed to prepare the design for the refurbishment of the former St John's Church. Design proposals for an innovation hub are progressing with the aim to provide a range of flexible work spaces to support individuals and businesses thrive in Blackburn. A planning application for the refurbishment project is scheduled to be submitted in late 2022.

Levelling Up Fund - Blackburn Business Innovation District (Phase One)

A £20m Levelling Up Fund (LUF) submission has been prepared to support the first phase development of a new Business Innovation District (BID) in Blackburn. LUF funding will unlock the first phase of the town centre masterplan with a new £60m skills and education campus of national significance. This scheme is part of a £250m investment framework for the town centre – the largest development of its kind in the North West. The BID is essential to the ambitious plan by delivering 1,200 new jobs, 400 new homes and £1bn of new economic activity over the next decade, outcomes critical to levelling-up the Borough.

Darwen Town Deal

A very successful public opening and event to celebrate the refurbishment of Darwen Tower, funded by the Town Deal Accelerated Funding and Darwen Rotary (via public donations) was held as part of the Borough's Jubilee celebrations on June 2nd where a beacon was lit. The event was well attended and estimates of upwards 4,000 came to watch public vote winner, Janet Pearce, founder of Keep Darwen Tidy light the beacon. She was joined by the Town Crier, Darwen Brass Band and a lone piper.

J4 Skatepark also opened their new, stunning and Olympic standard skate and BMX facility in late June to great acclaim. The new facility is testament to the incredible hard work of the owner, Anthony Ramsey, and his team, and everyone was blown away by the quality of the new development.

Darwen Town Deal Business Cases are currently being finalised ahead of submission to Government in early August. We are expecting to receive approvals before the end of the calendar year at which point we expect Town Deal funds to be released.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The Council is currently finalising its £5.9m Shared Prosperity Investment Plan. Working with a Partnership, including a range of stakeholders, key sector, employment and skills interventions and projects have been identified to deliver against Government's required objectives of Community and Place; Supporting Local Business; and People and Skills.

Our 3-year £5.9m Investment Plan, with an overall value of nearly £20m with matched and leveraged funding support, will be submitted by the Government deadline of 1st August. Funding allocations are expected to be released in the Autumn.