



Report of:	Meeting	Date
Councillor Michael Vincent, Resources Portfolio Holder and Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities	Cabinet	7 September 2022

Technical studies and updates to the Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone Masterplan

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To approve the release of funding from the Enterprise Zone Business Rates Growth Reserve for the commission of technical studies and to update the masterplan and marketing materials for the Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone (EZ).
- 1.2 To seek approval for exemption to the Council's financial procedure rules for the procurement of consultancy services for the commission of technical studies and updates to the masterplan and marketing materials for the Hillhouse Technology EZ.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Use of EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve to help support delivery of the EZ.
- 2.2 New detailed site information to update the masterplan and marketing materials and help respond informatively to investment enquiries.
- 2.3 Data to inform Local Plan housing projections as well as estimates for income to the council from business rates.
- 2.4 Support businesses to grow and prosper.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Approve the release of up to £150,000 from the EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve (created from retained business rates on the EZ) for the purpose of providing funding to commission services including, but not limited to:

- Undertaking a Flood Risk Assessment for the entire EZ, with the results used to inform the overall site layout;
- Commissioning a Traffic Impact Assessment and Sustainable Transport Study to understand off-site traffic impact and sustainable transport options;
- Undertaking topographic and utility capacity surveys focussing on the Northern sector of the EZ to provide accurate site information including on the utilities infrastructure;
- The review and update of the masterplan – providing data to inform the Local Plan as well as estimates for income to the council from business rates;
- Specialist input to support responses to major investment enquiries.

3.2 That the Resources Portfolio Holder delegates authority to the Corporate Director Communities to enter into any and all necessary documents and agreements to commission the required services and to make any funding of commissions conditional on suitable further agreement(s) being reached with NPL Estates (majority landowner within the EZ) and other land owner(s) or related companies to provide complementary investment, as necessary, to make full use of this investment by the council.

3.3 That the Resources Portfolio Holder delegates authority to the Corporate Director Communities to allow for the commission of services by Blackpool Council under the exemption to Contract Procedures contained within the Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules as part of the ongoing support package provided by Blackpool Council to develop and promote the EZ. The exemption category being “Tenders are invited on behalf of any consortium or collaboration, of which the Council is a member, in accordance with any method adopted by that body. Where however, a Council officer invites tenders on behalf of the consortium the receipt, opening and acceptance of tenders must comply with the Council’s Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules or any overriding legislation”.

4. Background

4.1 Wyre Council is the accountable body for the EZ and as such entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government, Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership in 2016. Provisions within this MoU saw the council retain business rates income from the EZ for 25 years (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2041) for investment in services and to support the delivery of ambitious economic objectives as set out in the approved Masterplan.

- 4.2 A dedicated EZ team within the Growth and Prosperity team at Blackpool Council are commissioned annually to provide development and marketing support.
- 4.3 As at 31 March 2022 the EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve had a balance of £862,635. Approximately £40,000 to £50,000 each year is committed to fund resources both internal and external to support the marketing of the site and the co-ordination of strategic projects such as the masterplan. If no further top-ups were made to the EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve, there should be just about sufficient funding to continue to fund this support for the remaining 19 years. However, it is expected that further investment in the EZ will prompt additional business rates growth and the Reserve is not expected to be exhausted prior to the expiration of the EZ. This position will be continually monitored as any new proposals are received.
- 4.4 The approved masterplan included an economic appraisal of the EZ. This data directly fed into the economic evidence base to support the Local Plan. An update of this evidence base is required to support the emerging Local Plan Full Review. In the absence of an updated masterplan and economic appraisal, a gap in the economic evidence base for the emerging Local Plan would exist and be unfunded.

5. Key issues and proposals

- 5.1 Wyre Council intend entering into a contractual agreement with Blackpool Council, where Blackpool Council would procure and oversee the commission of services alongside the agreed ongoing support package.
- 5.2 An exemption from the council's financial regulations is therefore sought to allow the Corporate Director Communities to collaborate with other councils and to procure consultants and services in accordance with any method adopted by other collaborating councils, provided it complies with the council's financial regulations.
- 5.3 As at 31 March 2022, the EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve had a balance of £862,635. This level of investment would represent just over 17% of the fund. When balanced against the benefits of the investment to the wider business community and surrounding residential properties, this investment is considered to be value for money.
- 5.4 Commission of site documentation should support the wider development of the EZ in line with the Masterplan and help to fulfil the council's obligations under the MoU.

Financial and legal implications	
Finance	As at 31 March 2022, the EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve had a balance of £862,635. It is proposed that the reserve funds all costs associated with updates to the masterplan and marketing materials including

	reasonable fees and expenses incurred by Blackpool Council to a value up to £150,000. It should be noted that between £40,000 and £50,000 each year is committed to fund resources (internal and external) to support the EZ. If no further top-ups were made to the EZ Business Rates Growth Reserve, there should be just about sufficient funding to continue to fund this support for the remaining 19 years. However, it is expected that further investment in the EZ will prompt additional business rates growth and the Reserve is not expected to be exhausted prior to the expiration of the EZ. This position will be continually monitored as any new proposals are received.
Legal	A contractual agreement will be entered into with Blackpool Council. Contract(s) will also be entered into with any appointed consultant or service provider to comply with the council's Financial Procedure Rules and Contracts Procedures or that adopted by Blackpool Council.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
sustainability	✓
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
climate change	✓
ICT	x
data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

report author	telephone no.	email	date
Mark Fenton	01253 887612	mark.fenton@wyre.gov.uk	2 August 2022

List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
-	-	-

List of appendices

None.