

Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor Michael Vincent, Leader of the Council	Council	25 January 2024

<b>Executive Report: Leader of the Council</b>
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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1** To inform Council of progress on key objectives and the current position on a number of issues, as set out below.

**2. Lancashire Devolution Deal**

- 2.1** In November 2023, the Government announced it would be willing to enter into a devolution deal with Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council.
- 2.2** Each of the upper tier councils have since formally considered the draft proposal and unanimously voted to go ahead with a consultation. The public consultation is now underway and runs until 26 January 2024. Anyone who lives or works in Lancashire, as well as other interested parties can give their feedback. The devolution proposal is therefore still subject to the outcome of this consultation and still needs to be formally agreed by central government.
- 2.3** In summary the draft deal sets out:
  - 2.3.1** The formation of the Lancashire Combined County Authority (CCA) to provide overall vision and leadership, seek the best value for taxpayer’s money, and be accountable to residents.
  - 2.3.2** The integration of relevant functions of the Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) into the Lancashire CCA, ensuring that there continues to be a strong and independent local business voice in the form of a Lancashire Business Board which informs local decision making and strategic economic planning. In absorbing the role and functions of the Growth Lancashire Company, LEP Growth & Skills & Employment Hub, LEP Investment Team and the destination management/visitor economy, the Lancashire CCA will deliver a number of functions on behalf of the central government departments.
  - 2.3.3** New powers to better shape local skills provisions to ensure these meet the needs of the local economy. This will include

devolution of Adult Education functions and the core Adult Education Budget, and the opportunity to provide input into Local Skills Improvement Plans.

- 2.3.4** New powers to improve and better integrate local transport, including the ability to introduce bus franchising subject to approval from the Secretary of State for transport, and control of appropriate local transport functions e.g., responsibility for an area-wide local transport plan.
- 2.3.5** Subject to funding, policy and delivery considerations at the next Spending Review, UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) planning and delivery at a strategic level from 2025/26.
- 2.3.6** The ability to exercise compulsory purchase powers to help drive the regeneration of the area and to build more affordable homes, subject to the agreement of the Local Authority where the relevant land is located.
- 2.3.7** Up to £20 million capital funding in the current Spending Review period to support innovation led growth (including assets to maximise the benefits of National Cyber Force HQ) and net zero ambitions across Lancashire. This investment is subject to agreement of the relevant business cases.
- 2.3.8** Strengthening the local visitor economy, reinforcing Lancashire's attractive and vibrant cultural and creative sector through the formation of a wider Lancashire visitor offer encompassing Blackpool, which remains the UK's No1 seaside resort, and nationally significant investments such as Eden North, with facilities and events of regional and national significance, aligned to the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).
- 2.3.9** Deliver innovation-led growth, including working with government to capitalise on Lancashire's economic potential in growing the energy and low carbon sector.
- 2.3.10** Improve urban quality and help address poor health.

**2.4** Drop in consultation events have been taking place throughout Lancashire during January including drop ins at Fleetwood and Garstang libraries. We have promoted the consultation to our residents and businesses through our website, social media channels and our Wyred Up network. Further information about the Lancashire combined authority proposal document and the consultation can be found online at [www.lancashiredevolution.co.uk/consultation](http://www.lancashiredevolution.co.uk/consultation).

### **3. Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board**

**3.1** A meeting of the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board was held on 7 December where economic updates were given by each Local Authority and also updates were provided on the Blackpool Enterprise Zone and the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone.

- 3.2** Whilst little progress seems to be being made on Hillhouse, it should be noted that there have been lots of business enquiries over the last few years and this includes a number of projects subject to non-disclosure agreements. The nature of many of these large scale enquiries means that negotiations and conversion of interest takes some considerable time, with planning responsibilities spilt between LCC and Wyre Council and other external infrastructure factors such as availability of utilities, grid capacity and highways restrictions, which all add to the complexity and delay. Members will be kept updated throughout the year around any developments or progress on site.

#### **4. Theatres Review**

- 4.1** The results of the soft market testing exercise for Thornton Little Theatre were very positive which indicated there was strong market appetite for an alternative provider to take over the running of this asset. A follow up process commenced mid-December with the interested providers to determine best fit for taking on this community asset whilst ensuring that the council meets its best value duty.
- 4.2** GJG Consulting were appointed on 2 October 2023 to undertake an independent review of Marine Hall operations and provide recommendations for the most viable future operating model. They have now completed their report and the key findings are being considered. A report is being prepared for Cabinet on 14 February to provide an update and to set out next steps.

#### **5. Fleetwood Waterfront Regeneration Plans**

- 5.1** Work has progressed well on developing proposals and regeneration opportunities for Fleetwood waterfront which incorporates the Marine Hall and YMCA site. This work has been informed through a number of officer workshops and following the public consultation which was held last year. The next stage is to engage Members to help with the ranking and prioritisation of opportunities and then this will be used to inform future bids for external funding.

#### **6. Comments and questions**

- 6.1** In accordance with procedure rule 11.3 any member of council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue, which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with procedure rule 11.5.