|  |
| --- |
| **BLACKPOOL COUNCIL SPECIFICATION** |

The service provided must be in accordance with the requirements detailed below and the Council Terms and Conditions (copy attached for information at Appendix B).

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Blackpool has a powerful and instantly recognisable brand. It is the best known seaside resort in the UK and one of the best known across the globe. It attracts 18 million visitors a year to world famous attractions including Blackpool Tower, Blackpool Illuminations, Blackpool Pleasure Beach and The Winter Gardens. It has a long established, extensive and very effective tourism marketing and promotional activity that supports this. Blackpool however, is also well-known in the UK as a place of social deprivation and poverty with a wide range of social problems which detract from the town’s positive image, often reinforced by negative Blackpool stereotypes portrayed in the national media.

Over the past two years, Blackpool Council has undertaken extensive marketing research on business perceptions and has developed a robust strategy and framework from which to deliver comprehensive communication campaigns.

In 2019, **Blackpool: The Place for Business** brand was created and an online strategic inward investment marketing campaign was launched. The purpose of the predominately online social media campaign ([www.businessinblackpool.com](http://www.businessinblackpool.com)) was to promote the town’s business and investment opportunities, to raise awareness and challenge perceptions of the town as a serious place for business.

A strategic approach to specific key target sectors was adopted based on the existing strengths and commercial activity of the local community, based on a 40 minute drive to work catchment area. Some strong statistics came out of the research that rivalled other, more well-known key sector commercial hubs throughout the UK, giving Blackpool credibility and an attractive value proposition in terms of available skills and training, a willing workforce and competitive land and property values.

1. **CHALLENGES**

Ongoing challenges include:

* The resort is well known as a visitor destination, not as much as a credible place for inward business investment.
* Social deprivation challenges in pockets of the inner town centre help to reinforce the prejudices against Blackpool and this detracts from reaching new markets and new audiences.
* Historically, efforts to support a business investment marketing strategy have had a limited effect as the business voice has been ‘drowned’ by the tourism and social deprivation narratives of the town.

The inward investment campaign for Blackpool is still in its infancy with the online campaign launching in May 2019 and a lot more work needs to be done to improve perceptions of Blackpool and to maintain high levels of awareness of Blackpool’s value proposition. It is critical that we maintain high levels of awareness and engagement and private sector support in order to hold our own alongside other North West destinations. Now that the foundations have been laid with a robust strategy in place and a platform established for Blackpool’s business message, the challenges over the next 12 months campaign will be to:

* Continue the momentum of Place Marketing of Blackpool as a credible and attractive place to invest
* Identify available product and investment offers and delivery of a realistic lead generation strategy and KPIs to secure investment in the town
1. **BACKGROUND**

Negative stereotypes and perceptions surrounding the town belie the truth of what has happened in recent years and what is now being done to further develop Blackpool as a business investment location, whilst supporting its major visitor economy (which annually generates £1.5bn).

Blackpool Council is fully committed to implementing the next phase of Blackpool’s £1+ billion Growth & Prosperity Programme which needs to attract greater levels of business investment if it is to be fully successful: hence the delivery of an ongoing comprehensive business investment communications campaign.

Over £570m of investment in the past decade has helped to transform Blackpool including:

* Phase 1 of Talbot Gateway Central Business District - £80m
* Renewal of the promenade and sea defences & 17km new tramway - £285m
* Investment in the Blackpool Tower and Winter Gardens - £50m
* Hounds Hill Shopping Centre - £150m
* Public spaces - £12m
* Electrification of the Preston to Blackpool train line, providing direct travel between Blackpool and the West Midlands and London
* Hampton by Hilton 3 star hotel £12M
* Ocean Boulevard Hotel 4 star hotel, South Shore £12m

Other major schemes underway/in the pipeline:

* Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone (including Blackpool Airport) – over £500m of investment projected over 25 years
* Conference & exhibition centre - £25m
* Phase 2 Talbot Gateway including a new tram extension and transport interchange - £23.4m
* Blackpool Central – £300m regeneration masterplan for a 17 acre town centre development that will deliver a world-class visitor attraction and entertainment district with the UK’s first flying theatre, interactive gaming, hotels, artisan food market, residential apartments and a multi-storey car park.
* Investment in key town centre Quality Corridors - £7.8m
* Showtown Blackpool’s first museum - £13m
* Further 3/4/5 \* hotels in the town centre including the Sands Venue Resort Hotel (5\*), Holiday Inn (4\*), Winter Gardens (3/4\*), Premier Inn (3\*)
* £200m Blackpool Business Loans Fund

The overall aim is to ensure we maximise the potential of the Growth & Prosperity programme through effective marketing. Commercial opportunities are being delivered over the next few years that will present investment opportunities but we want to reinforce our strengths, address any deficiencies, challenge false perceptions and increase our market penetration across the North West, UK and internationally to maximise future investment and job creation.

We also want to ensure that this work dovetails with, and capitalises upon Blackpool’s extensive tourism marketing as well as complementing and reinforcing the synergies that exist with Marketing Lancashire’s business plan and inward investment campaign for the county as a whole.

1. **LANCASHIRE AND THE FYLDE COAST**

Blackpool is a critical part of the Fylde Coast and Lancashire and we are working across local authority borders with Wyre and Fylde Borough Councils and with Marketing Lancashire to ensure that we integrate what we do with their work to promote Lancashire on a national and international stage. We are aware that businesses do not consider administrative boundaries in their relocation decisions and therefore any investment marketing activity needs to be customer focussed, highlighting the range of resources and skills, irrespective of the public administration they may come under.

Specifically, Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone and Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone are two of four Enterprise Zones in Lancashire under the LAMEC brand (Lancashire Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Cluster) which will be promoted at MIPIM Cannes, March 2020.

In 2020/21 Marketing Lancashire will be scaling up their Invest in Lancashire activity and various online portals will become active lead generation tools with a digital promotion and Search Engine Optimisation strategy currently being drafted. Working alongside Marketing Lancashire to provide a cohesive and strategic campaign that sits within and complements their work promoting the County, will be an important consideration of this brief.

1. **OBJECTIVES**

Many of the above projects have required intensive intervention by an ambitious Blackpool Council in order to facilitate further private investment. To support the Growth & Prosperity Programme, Blackpool Council’s objectives are:

1. Maximise the investment potential by building awareness around the business investment narrative to date, continue to challenge negative perceptions and further strengthen Blackpool’s business profile as a credible investment location
2. Identify lead generation and conversion opportunities through an integrated sales strategy and increase market penetration across the North West, UK and internationally to maximise investment and job creation
3. To provide a full *work-live-play* business relocation sales package to the market that supports the business investment opportunities in Blackpool
4. Ensure the business narrative for Blackpool complements and capitalises upon Blackpool’s extensive tourism marketing and promotion and helps to increase the number of business visitors to the town and also complements and feeds into the wider investment marketing strategy for both neighbouring boroughs of Fylde and Wyre and the County
5. To focus on high value, sector specific leads and to encourage and harness private sector support and resources to deliver a full package of investment opportunities
6. **TARGET AUDIENCES**

The key audiences should include (but not exclusively) the priority sectors identified in previous sector specific research carried out by Mickledore and subsequently Clarity Strategies. The ongoing narrative should make use of the suite of value proposition marketing materials already created to target specific sectors:

* Advanced materials
* Advanced manufacturing & engineering
* Energy
* Aerospace and aviation
* Food manufacturing
* Medical technologies
* Leisure and tourism

Previous research and summary documentation will be made available as reference materials for all bidders.

**7. THEMES**

Connectivity will be a strong theme running through 2020. Over the past 12 months, emerging sectors have presented strong opportunities for investment. 2020 will see Blackpool connect to New York in under 0.06 seconds, digitally, via the next generation subsea fibre optic cable network linking the USA with European Financial markets, giving the town faster transatlantic internet connectivity than London.

A multi-million pound investment by a worldwide specialist in the building and operations of submarine cable systems, will land the new fibre optic cable at a newly built ‘meet me point’ at Blackpool Airport, as part of the North Atlantic Loop that delivers a resilient, diverse, high capacity network connecting the USA (New York and New Jersey) with Ireland, the UK and Northern Europe. This transatlantic system supports the needs of the Pan-Atlantic hyperscale providers that underpin today’s international cloud industry for global carriers, cloud-based networks, internet service providers, data centres, IT companies and the global media.

Additionally, FibreBlackpool.com is a project that’s expanding a shared fibre infrastructure into Blackpool town centre and along the coast’s tramline, future proofing the town with a full ‘fibre to the premises’ (FTTP) connection. The new backbone fibre network will enable internet providers to connect residents and businesses with ‘full fibre’ offering gigabit speeds and higher.

In the next 12 months the council will be bidding for the Town Deal funding and the Future High Street Fund that could potentially refine and completely change Blackpool’s high street and central business district. If successful, marketing consideration will be required for town centre retail opportunities, re-purposing existing uses in the town centre to increase footfall and jobs growth.

**8. OUTLINE BRIEF**

There is a requirement to strengthen Blackpool’s business profile by investing more heavily in communications and PR management to ensure increased positive media coverage for Blackpool by targeting business and sector specific audiences.

There will be a specific requirement for the successful agency to advise the team of the most effective ways to deliver our ambitions and whether what we are proposing (i.e all 3 strands) is achievable.

To submit a proposal with three distinct elements for delivery:

* **Place marketing**
* **Investment marketing**
* **Promotion of supporting business packages for a successful *LIVE-WORK-PLAY* life balance**

The successful tenderer must deliver:

1. **A compelling Blackpool Place marketing campaign** clearly setting out a strong identity and sense of place. This will underpin future place marketing and positioning by Blackpool Council and securing the support of key partners including the Department of International Trade, the Lancashire LEP (Local Economic Partnership) and Lancashire County Council, and the endorsement and support of the private sector.
2. **A clearly defined product offer and lead generation sales and marketing campaign** designed to deliver Blackpool as a business investment location amongst key stakeholders and business sectors with the potential to invest or support Blackpool’s growth.
3. **Identify and design a supporting business package** for investors and relocating businesses for a successful live-work-play life balance.

**Approach**

The successful agency will be expected to demonstrate:

* A strong track record of delivering similar place marketing and inward investment campaigns.
* An excellent understanding of the key issues companies face when looking to relocate, an understanding of the commercial property market in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast, how to identify and develop leads, conversion of leads into positive action i.e. investment/relocation, how to support companies during the relocation process and how to support relocated companies following relocation.
* A strong emphasis on research and evaluation.
* A strong understanding of the loans, grants and funds that could be available and how to access support for companies from national programmes.
* The ability to develop innovative and creative solutions to secure inward investment in Blackpool and support the council’s priorities for inward investment.

The delivery will include the following:

* Marketing and public relations across multi-media platforms using value propositions and key messages to target businesses
* Strong focus on awareness and perception strategies and metrics
* Guidance and recommendations for advice and support for potential investors and business support for relocating companies
* Partnership working with various Blackpool Council departments, cross authority liaison, co-ordination with County-wide projects and campaigns and private sector stakeholders

The agency will work in close partnership with the Blackpool Council’s communications team to incorporate existing local key messages to provide a cohesive, clear strategy that reflects and complements the local voice and successful business narrative. The campaign needs to be effectively co-ordinated with other planned activities and channels and to secure sustainability of any new channels or initiatives that may outlast the duration of the contract.

The potential agent will highlight the resources available and the perceived percentage of time required on each element of the campaign i.e. place versus investment marketing.

The potential agent should explain how they will measure the number of jobs and investment they predict to identify and secure, and how they will rank the importance of their input to securing these investments. Baselines will be agreed before the start of the contract.

The successful agent will be required to share supporting information and evidence in relation to KPI performance with Blackpool Council officers as and when requested.

Proposals will clearly set out how this work will achieve a strong return on Blackpool Council’s investment and deliver the following outcomes:

Outcomes

* Improving the positioning of Blackpool in a national, international and regional context
* Establish a strong and clear economic identity for Blackpool that highlights key benefits through high value sectors
* Identify key stakeholders and opinion formers regionally, nationally and internationally and transform them into supporters and influencers of brand ‘Blackpool’
* To stimulate interest and enquiries, providing key information to help decision making and subsequent inward investment and job creation
* Raise the profile of strategic investment opportunities in Blackpool and compete with other locations being considered by the investor, highlighting why a company should invest in Blackpool
* Identify key achievements and messages that best portray the Blackpool business narrative through a multi-channel approach to key audiences
* Develop engagement and closer working relationships with the private sector in communicating a Blackpool that has a confident and ambitious voice
* Identify relevant marketing material and opportunities to showcase Blackpool’s investment opportunities
* Establishing an approach for maintaining close contact with companies who invest in Blackpool, supporting them to establish and grow in the town
* Inclusion of success measures regarding the effectiveness of the marketing strategy and evaluation of lead generation activity
1. **INTERVIEW AND PRESENTATION**

Bidders shortlisted for interview will be required to illustrate a clear and informed understanding of Blackpool and its current issues, to demonstrate relevant experience and competency throughout the interview process and deliver a presentation on:

**“What do you consider to be the business marketing and inward investment challenges and opportunities for Blackpool and how can we realistically build on the current business investment marketing work to make a significant difference and add value to the growth and prosperity of Blackpool and the Fylde Coast.”**

This will be followed by questions related to your proposal.

**It is envisaged that the top 4 bidders will be shortlisted to attend the presentation/ interview. The presentation/ interview is part of the evaluation process and will be scored.**

1. **MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMISSION**

Day to day management of the commission will be through Nicole Billington, Marketing Officer in the Growth and Prosperity Team.

The consultants will also be expected to meet with a Marketing Steering Group, to agree the marketing strategy and campaign proposal, chaired by Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director and comprising:

* Private Sector Members of Business in the Community Pride of Place Board (Investment)
* Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications
* Peter Legg, Head of Economic Development, Blackpool Council
* Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council
* Rachel McQueen, Marketing Lancashire

We are keen to encourage a strong relationship with the Marketing Officer, but importantly we are seeking a proactive and innovative approach from the agency, based on frequent contact and briefings from the nominated officer and an understanding of how the Blackpool messages and narrative are effectively conveyed into targeted campaigns.