

Report to:

Council

Agenda
Item

10(b)(ii)

Meeting Date: 9th September 2014

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Dr Les Tickner**

Organisational Development

The City Council has taken on three apprentices through the Apprenticeship Growth Bid approved as part of the 2014-15 budget. An apprentice mechanic started in the garage at the Bousteads Grassing depot in July and two ICT apprentices will be joining the Digital and Information Services team in September. A new graduate has also been recruited to a temporary graphic design post through the project as there was no local provision for apprenticeship graphic design training.

The City Council is working with Tullie House, the University of Cumbria, Sellafield and Allerdale and Copeland councils to develop a Cumbria Coaching Academy. The programme will train staff to be business coaches within their organisations and with partners. The first programme starts in September.

Licensing

The football World Cup passed without any major incidents amongst licensed premises. Cumbria Police reported that although many supporters took advantage of the large screens in some pubs, it was a relaxed atmosphere with no disorder.

Following the May elections, in house training has been carried out for existing and new members of the Licensing Committee and Regulatory Panel. It is equally important that new members receive this training and previous members receive a refresher on the areas that they may be required to deal with.

July/August are traditionally busy months for licensing as the majority of hackney carriage vehicle and driving licences are renewed. Currently we license 201 vehicles and 260 drivers. This follows a peak of 218 vehicles two years ago.

Digital and Information Services

Work is underway to rationalise the provision of broadband to our users, this will generate revenue savings from April 2015. Any members affected by this project will be kept informed of progress.

Legal

Prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court of five individuals (13 separate offences) have been taken for benefit fraud, in respect of fraudulently claimed city council benefits (Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit) amounting to in excess of £45,000. Prosecution were also instigated for planning enforcement breaches, littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping. There have also been proceedings brought against the council in the Crown Court in respect of a taxi driver suspension, and an appeal from the Magistrates' Court against conviction and sentence from an individual convicted of a dog fouling offence; both matters were successfully defended and costs awarded in Carlisle City Council's favour.

Property Services – Disposal Programme

Gross receipts from the programme have now reached £6.67m following the recent completion of the sale of Staffield House, London Road for a figure slightly in excess of £200,000.

The Council's proposals to sell and exchange land at Morton with the Church Commissioners for England have now been concluded between the parties. This is another step towards furthering the Council's ambitions and Master Plan for Morton. It will see the release by the Council of 25 acres of land for residential development; a school site and amenity open space, in return for 20 acres of land allocated for future employment use.

Corporate Planning

The Corporate Programme Board met on 15 July to assess progress with the major projects delivering the Carlisle Plan. Updates from a number of new projects were also discussed including the PRISM project.

The PRISM (Projects, Risks, Issues and Service Performance Management) project is now well under way. It will involve the roll out a corporate system called PRISM to manage resource allocation for projects and other Council activities. The associated risks, issues and other performance information will also be managed using this system. The software will provide the appropriate views and reports to stakeholders.

Alongside the PRISM project the early stages of a project looking at the Council Management Information Systems has commenced. The scope of this project is to create a management information system (MIS) that can be queried to answer complex questions, a system that is automatically updated from existing systems collecting customer data. This system must also be capable of presenting the information in a series of nested graphic and tabular tools, providing current management information at the appropriate level of management.

Corporate Plan and Performance management

The First Quarter Performance Report has been reviewed by SMT at their meeting on 12 August 2014. It will go through the civic process starting at Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 11 September 2014 and ending with the Executive on 13 October 2014.

Policy development

A Social Media Policy has recently been developed and a consultation period is currently being held. It is due to finish on 31 August 2014 after which time the policy will be adopted. It can be viewed at

<http://intranet.carlisle.gov.uk/hr/Lists/Consultation%20Area/AllItems.aspx>

Operational and Corporate Risk Registers

The Corporate Risk Management Group met on 20 August to review the current risks. As part of our ongoing training two programmes have been put in place:

1. Risk and Insurance training sessions for Community Centres 19th August and 2nd September.
2. Strategic Risk Management session is being arranged with the Council's insurance broker for 29th October. This session is for SMT, Corporate Risk Management Group, Members of Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Audit Committee.

The 2013/14 sickness absences figures were reported at Resources Overview and Scrutiny in June. For the second year running the number of days lost per employee has decreased.

Service Standards

The First Quarter Performance Report which includes the service standards has been reviewed by SMT at their meeting on 12 August 2014. It will go through the civic process starting at Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 11 September 2014 and ending with the Executive on 13 October 2014.

Financial Services

2013/14 Final Accounts Process

The annual statement of accounts (subject to Audit) were scrutinised by the Audit Committee on 10th July and are currently subject to audit by Grant Thornton which will continue through to the end of September. Grant Thornton will report the outcome of the audit process through its Annual Governance Report which will be considered by the Audit Committee on 24th September, following which the Accounts will be formally approved by Members. The statutory deadline for the completion of the audit and approval process is 30th September.

Internal Audit Services

The Audit Committee on 10 July 2014 received 9 completed audit reports. The outcomes from these reviews were noted by members and no major concerns were raised.

The position of the follow up of previous audit recommendations was received and it was noted that no responses were overdue.

The Annual Internal Audit Report provided the Audit Manager's opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's systems of risk management, governance and internal control from the work undertaken by Internal Audit for the year ended 31 March 2014. The opinion was that Carlisle City Council's overall framework of governance, risk and internal control was reasonable and audit testing had confirmed that controls were generally working effectively during the year.

Strategic Planning

The Medium Term Financial Plan and Corporate Charging Policy, the Capital Strategy and the Asset Management Plan for 2015/16 onwards have been considered by the Executive and the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel. These are presented elsewhere on this agenda for formal approval by Council, and once approved, will inform the detailed work required to enable a balanced budget for 2015/16 to be approved by Council in February 2015. A timetable for the process will be prepared and reports on the core budgets, individual spending pressures and savings, and the charging reports will be considered by the Executive and the relevant overview and scrutiny panels in November and December.

Information Management

Recent counts for information requests (From 17 June 2014 to 15 August 2014):

- Environmental Information Regulations requests received - 14
- Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to - 17
- Freedom of Information Act requests received – 103
- Freedom of Information Act requests responded to - 104
- Data Protection Act subject access requests received - 0
- Data Protection Act subject access requests responded to – 0
- Data Protection Act s29/s35 requests received - 7
- Data Protection Act s29/s35 requests responded to – 8