

Report to:

Council

Agenda
Item
11(b)(ii)

Meeting Date: 5th March 2019

Public/Private*: Public

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

FINANCIAL SERVICES

The 2019/20 budget was debated at Council on 5th February with an amendment being accepted and referred back to the Executive on 18th February; the amendment was subsequently approved for inclusion in the Executive's revised Budget Proposals which was debated at full Council on 20th February 2019.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Celebration of Learning event took place on the 31st January and celebrated over 50 employees achieving a recognised formal qualification, these ranged from entry level maths to law at Level 6. Many of these achievers attended the evening which was held at The Old Fire Station.

We also attended the Skill Fair at the Sands Centre; which provided a good opportunity to market our apprenticeship vacancies; the stand was covered by our Organisational Development colleagues and other colleagues from around the Council. Over 60 people stopped to talk to our team and take away literature about working for the Council.

On the 7th February, a 'tea and a chat session' was held on the block floor to celebrate 'Time to Talk' day. Juliet from Every Life Matters attended the event to provide information on mental health in young people and information on support for employees who are also parents.

ELECTORAL SERVICES

The section are working on the refresh of the Absent Vote Signature process. This year there were 1700 signatures which required a refresh.

The section are also making arrangements for the City Council elections which this year will be held on Thursday 2nd May.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Census Rehearsal

In preparation for the 2021 Census, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) will conduct a census rehearsal across four local authorities in England and Wales during autumn 2019 (Rehearsal day will be 13 October 2019). Carlisle City Council has been chosen as one of the rehearsal areas.

Carlisle was selected because it includes rural and urban areas and has some student populations. It has a range of broadband connectivity and areas with low broadband take up. The other rehearsal areas which the Office for National Statistics have chosen are Ceredigion, Tower Hamlets and Hackney.

Data from the census underpin so many important policies and decisions that affect us all and the 2019 Rehearsal is an important part of their preparations. It is to test ONS systems and services and finalise the design of the 2021 Census. All households across the four local authorities will be sent letters with a unique access code allowing them to fill in the online questionnaire. A temporary local field force will be recruited to provide support to householders who need it.

REVENUES AND BENEFITS

We are preparing for the annual billing exercise for our 52,500 Council Tax and 4,600 Business Rates customers, which will include 6,500 bills being issued through our e-billing service. Under the new Retail Relief scheme approximately 1,000 business will qualify for a reduction of 1/3 off their rates bill from April 2019.

ICT SERVICES

Digital Workplace Programme:

The roll-out of new laptops, which includes Window 10 and Office 365, to officers is complete. The rollout of Office 365 to elected members will begin in May, after the council elections.

The roll-out of smartphones to officers is also complete. Officers can now 'tether' their smartphones to their laptops to provide access to the Internet, and therefore the council's IT services, from anywhere; creating a mobile and connected workforce.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Recent counts for information requests (From 4 December – 4 February 2019):

- Environmental Information Regulations requests received – 11
- Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to - 11
- Freedom of Information Act requests received – 110
- Freedom of Information Act requests responded to - 102
- Data Protection Act subject access requests received – 2
- Data Protection Act subject access requests responded to – 2
- Data Protection Act s29/s35 requests received - 1
- Data Protection Act s29/s35 requests responded to – 1