

Meeting Date: 03 March 2015

Public/Private*: Public

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

Electoral Registration

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to address concerns with the accuracy and completeness of the Electoral Register which was published on 1st December.

A household notification letter was sent to every house in the Carlisle City Council area with details of electors who are currently included in the electoral register. The letter informed residents that if the details were correct they need take no further action but if the details were not correct they should either register using the on line address or contact the electoral registration section.

Two student registration sessions have been held at the University Campus. These sessions have been run in conjunction with a campaign to increase student registration which has been run by the Student Union. Contact has been made with Residential Homes to improve the registration of residents of the Residential Care Homes in the City Council area. Letters have been sent to young people who have recently turned 18, or who will be 18 before polling day on 7th May, reminding them that if they wish to vote at the forthcoming elections they should ensure that they are included on the register of electors.

The annual refresh of postal voters is being progressed. Slightly under 1000 postal voters were written to in January requiring them to provide a new signature as it is 5 years since their original postal vote application. The majority of postal voters have responded with new signatures.

Arrangements are being made for the forthcoming Parliamentary, City Council and Parish Council elections to be held on 7th May.

Organisational Development

Over 40 managers and supervisors have now taken part in or booked onto the series of workshops which were developed to support the Carlisle City Council Management Competency Framework. The six key areas which the authority considers all its managers should be competent at are Personal Performance, Self Management, Leading Others, Realising Potential, Delivering the Service and Making Things Happen. Feedback from the workshops has been really positive and a fourth cohort will start in April 2015.

The Carlisle City Council Assessment Centre offers a range of vocational qualifications to support staff including Business Administration, Customer Service, Advice & Guidance, Team Leading and Learning & Development. The centre is currently supporting 17 staff to achieve qualifications at levels two to four. It is also training four staff to be assessors.

A workshop for Members called '28 Community Engagement Strategies' will take place at the Civic Centre on 24 June from 1.30pm to 4.30pm. If you are interested in attending please contact Linda Mattinson at linda.mattinson@carlisle.gov.uk or 01228 817076.

Risk Management

Work continues on the aligning Council objectives and risks, looking at both the positive opportunities and negative threats. The training delivered so far has covered key areas including the new draft Carlisle Plan priorities and event management.

Property Services

Disposal Programme

Gross receipts from the programme have now reached £9.4 million and the number of assets sold totals 31. The residential building plot at Lonnin Foot, Rockcliffe was the latest asset to complete; it sold for £47,500 to a local purchaser. Terms for the sale of the residential investment at Whinnie House Road have also been recently agreed with a prospective purchaser, legal completion is anticipated before the end of February. Stanwix House and Cottage, let to the University of Cumbria, went onto the market in mid January. The agents, Sanderson Weatherall, are inviting offers for the property, a Listed Grade II Building occupying a 1.8 acre site with investment and development potential.

The Property team, in conjunction with colleagues in Legal, Planning and Housing, are continuing work to progress the portfolio of sites within the programme which have potential for residential development, both private market housing and social housing, and discussions on several bulk housing sites have begun with interested national and local builders.

Financial Services

Strategic Planning

The Council, at its meeting on 3rd February, approved the revenue and capital budgets for 2015/16, including a council tax freeze for 2015/16 for the city and surrounding areas. Tonight's Council will formally approve the overall council tax for the Carlisle area.

2014/15 Final Accounts Process

Work is commencing on providing the timetables and instructions to budget holders to support the year end process and training sessions are also planned to enable the Statement of Accounts to be prepared and approved by the Director of Resources by the statutory deadline of 30 June.

Licensing

The Licensing Act 2003 states that the sale of alcohol must be authorised by a Personal Licence Holder. This licence was issued either under 'grandfather rights' in 2005, or by the applicant passing a relevant course and disclosure check. The licence lasts for 10 years.

In 2014 the Government consulted on abolishing Personal Licences altogether. There was strong opposition from both the trade and licensing authorities and the Government decided to retain them, however they would last indefinitely rather than 10 years. The appropriate legislation has not yet been made and the first 10 year licence renewals are due in February 2015. Interim guidance has been issued by the Government for those licences due for renewal before the new legislation becomes law. We have sent letters to holders of all personal licences that expire up until April 2015 but only a handful have responded. This interim procedure has created considerable additional work to ensure that licences are renewed on time, however some premises may have to close where the personal licence holder has not responded to the renewal letter.

Digital and Information Services

Metro Wi-fi is now deployed and implemented across the city centre. In December 5,154 users had used the service consuming 240GB of data with a total surfing time of 20,200 hours.

The council has selected British Telecom as its preferred provider for the Council's Wide-Area Network (WAN). This will provide improved security and resilience, as well as revenue savings.

We are currently upgrading our corporate firewall. This will ensure that the council is protected from the latest threats and has the ability to react promptly to new threats.

Information Management

Recent counts for information requests (From 29 November 2014 to 31 January 2015):

- Environmental Information Regulations requests received - 8
- Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to - 10
- Freedom of Information Act requests received – 123
- Freedom of Information Act requests responded to - 110
- Data Protection Act subject access requests received - 2
- Data Protection Act subject access requests responded to – 2
- Data Protection Act s29/s35 requests received - 9
- Data Protection Act s29/s35 requests responded to – 6