

Report to:

Council

Agenda
Item

10(b)(ii)

Meeting Date: 4 November 2014

Public/Private*: Public

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

Organisational Development

A Member/Officer Forum is taking place on 4 November 2014 in Committee Room Flensburg from 4.00pm to 6.30pm. Carlisle City Council staff will be on hand to update Members about projects including the First World War Memorials Restoration Programme, the Old Fire Station, WiFi in the City Centre, the Development Framework and Smarter Service Delivery. Staff from Fair Food Carlisle and Cumbria Action for Sustainability will also be there.

The money Members gave up by not taking an increase in their allowances for the 2014/15 Civic year is being used to fund health and wellbeing projects for staff. The first project is refurbishing staff rest areas and the Buildings and Facilities Team have started work on the Cemetery bothy and the Tourist Information Centre staff room. The work on the Cemetery bothy will include repairing the roof, replastering and painting walls, covering the floor, replacing broken fixtures and fittings and providing new furniture. At the Tourist Information Centre the work will include moving the staff room to make it accessible to all staff, fitting a hot water boiler and providing new furniture.

Licensing

Carlisle licensing hosted the North West Institute of Licensing quarterly meeting in the Council Chamber this month. Over 40 delegates from north west England and some guests from southern Scotland attended the session. Speakers included an update from the Gambling Commission; Gary Grant, Barrister, on recent High Court appeals; Scott

Blair, Solicitor, Scottish case law; Stephen McGowan, Public Health objective and Nick Arron, Solicitor, gambling update.

We are in the middle of the 2014 Carlisle & Eden Best Bar None assessments. Licensing, Environmental Health and Police Officers are conducting the assessments which are essentially a two hour audit to ensure premises comply with the four licensing objectives, prevention of crime, public health, public safety and protection of children from harm. The top premises will be judged in October with the Award Ceremony taking place in November.

Digital and Information Services

Two apprentices have joined our service; both have settled in well and have started their studies for the HND qualification.

The development of a new Digital Strategy is almost complete. The strategy will outline the council's goals, principles and values in the use of digital technologies over the next five years.

We are implementing additional security measures to protect the council from malicious attempts to gain access to our network. These attempts take many forms and their perpetrators continue to devise new ways of attacking an organisation. It is of the upmost importance that we continually review our security.

Legal Services

Work is underway on the next phase of disposals, including the garages at Broad Street which will be auctioned on 23rd October.

At the Magistrates' Court, so far this month we have successfully prosecuted Citadel Estates Limited, a high profile planning prosecution with considerable local interest, and two Benefit Fraud matters.

Finally, this month the team has provided Witness Training for officers as part of the Ethical Governance programme. Ethical Governance training sessions are provided by the Legal, Finance and HR sections and are designed to assist City Council officers in their day to day jobs. All trainers are internal officers.

Corporate Planning

The Corporate Programme Board met on 10th October to review the programme. A number of new projects were discussed and these will now be progressed through to the Senior Management Team for approval and delivery through the Directorates.

The PRISM (Projects, Risks, Issues and Service Performance Management) project has now been merged with the work on a management information system as the cross-over between these projects was considerable. The PRISM project will be presented at the next Officer & Member Forum on 4th November.

Policy development

Waste and Recycling Framework

The waste and recycling policies have been reviewed and brought together to provide a clear framework for our services. The aims of this work are to improve our business processes and therefore our customers' experiences of waste and recycling services. The development of e-forms and the redesign of the website pages will also enable customers to communicate with the Council more effectively.

Volunteering Policy

Work is about to commence on developing this policy that will be used throughout the Council.

Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

The BCP is currently undergoing its annual review. Version 2.0 will be published next month and tested through the revised date of Exercise Cygnus.

Service Standards

The Mid-year Performance Report which includes the service standards will be produced over the next month prior to being presented to SMT.

Local Government Association: Future Council Review

The review was completed between 9th and 11th September 2014, the team spent three days onsite in Carlisle, during which time they spoke to more than 80 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners. Overall the team spent more than 240 hours on the review, the equivalent of one person spending more than six weeks in Carlisle.

The initial feedback is available on the intranet site

(<http://intranet/yourcouncil/teams/first/FCR/default.aspx>) under the heading Feedback and Position Statement. The review team were struck by the level of commitment they found to Carlisle City Council and Carlisle. A summary of there overall messages and observations included:

- Strong sense of place and opportunities for Carlisle
- Clear political direction, including the focus on growth
- Use refresh of the Carlisle Plan to enable a clearer focus on priorities to ensure you make a difference
- Well regarded Leader and Chief Executive partnership providing energy and confidence – use this to raise the profile and impact of Carlisle
- Use your engagement with business to deliver tangible outcomes in a timely and sustained way
- Achieving impact through significant cultural change that is empowering staff
- seeking to embed '**clarity, confidence and commitment**'
- Very committed and capable staff
- But you need a clearer framework within which flexibility can flourish, with performance feedback and accountability
- People are seeking clarity about how the organisation will operate
- Prioritisation and end to end transformation to deliver savings – 'salami slice' not enough
- Need to inject greater pace of change

2013/14 Final Accounts Process

The External Auditor, Grant Thornton, has issued an unqualified opinion on both the accounts and the VFM conclusion, by the statutory date of 30th September, and Members of the Audit Committee received a very positive report from the Commission at their meeting on 24th September. No changes were required to main statements although some minor changes were required to the disclosure notes to aid readership and understanding of the accounts. A separate report on Financial Resilience was also presented which concluded that the authority's arrangements meet or exceed adequate standards. The 2013/14 Statement of Accounts is now available on the Council's website and hard copies have been provided for the Customer Contact Centre.

The Auditor's notice of completion has been received for 2013/14 and this now concludes the formal audit process.

Strategic Planning

Following approval of the Budget Strategy documents by Council in September, the 2015/16 budget process has commenced. Detailed reports on the core budgets, 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, with the Executive producing its draft Budget Proposals for consultation purposes at its meeting on 15th December. This will ensure that a balanced budget is approved by Council on 3rd February 2015. Initial financial modelling indicates that there will be significant pressures on both the revenue and capital budgets and discussions are being co-ordinated by the Director of Resources to identify any mitigating actions in line with the Council's Saving Strategy.

Internal Audit Services

The Audit Committee on 24 September 2014 received 2 completed audit reports. The outcomes from these reviews were noted by members and no major concerns were raised.

Audit Area	Assurance Opinion
Income Management	Substantial
Car Parking Income	Substantial

A monitoring report on all previous audit recommendations (open and closed actions) which have been followed up during the last quarter period was received. Whilst there were no overdue responses, it was noted that a number of revised implementation dates had been agreed; these were to be carefully monitored to ensure the effective implementation is achieved within the revised timescales.

The revised audit report template was received and the reasons for the changes were discussed with members. Enhancements to performance measures and monitoring arrangements for the Internal Audit Shared Service were also noted.

Electoral Services

The City Council and County Council by elections in the Castle Ward / Castle Division were held on the 11th September 2014.

The initial write out which was carried out under Individual Electoral Registration to inform electors of their status on the Electoral Register was completed on 12th August. On the 12th September a further 2000 Household Enquiry Reminder forms and 7500 Invitation to Register Reminder forms were sent out. A team of Canvassers are visiting non responding households / individuals and it is expected that they will complete their work by the end of October. This will enable work to be carried out to complete the electoral register throughout November with the new register published by the statutory deadline of 1st December.

Work on the Annual Review of polling places has commenced and Members, County Councillors, MP's and Election Agents views will be canvassed on the polling places which are used prior to a report being submitted to the meeting of the City Council at the turn of the year.