

Meeting Date: 06 January 2015

Public/Private*: Public

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

Organisational Development

The eighth annual Celebration of Learning event took place at Tullie House on 2 December 2014 to celebrate the success of staff who achieved qualifications that year. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive spoke about how proud they were of staff for their achievements and how their learning benefits both the organisation and the city. Two members of staff also spoke about their experiences of learning and the difference it has made to them.

Licensing

The Carlisle & Eden Best Bar None Scheme 2014 Award Ceremony was held at the Shepherd's Inn, Carlisle on 11th November. His Worship the Mayor, Chairman of the Licensing Committee and Director of Governance represented the Council with similar guests from Eden DC. The winners for Carlisle this year were:

Overall Winner	Walkabout
Best Pub	Woodrow Wilson
Best Bar	Lloyds No 1
Best Club	Walkabout
Best Suburban	Gosling Bridge
Best Rural	Graham Arms Hotel, Longtown
CFM 'People's Choice'	Deja Vu

Over £400 was raised for the charities supported at this year's event which will be divided between CFM 'Cash for Kids' and the Royal British Legion.

Following the retirement of the City Centre police licensing sergeant, Cumbria Constabulary has reorganised its sergeant cover and we have been liaising with the new incumbent. Discussions have taken place regarding new premises applications and representation procedures, to ensure continuity of this important role. In addition a meeting has been arranged to discuss the evening and late night economy over the festive period.

Legal Services

As part of the asset disposal programme, the garages at Broad Street were auctioned on 23rd October and the legal documents have now been completed.

In all, the legal team are advising on approximately 500 matters including numerous several leases, licences and assignments, section 106 Agreements and contracts.

At the Magistrates' Court, in the last month the Council has successfully prosecuted three defendants.

The lawyers also provide legal and governance advice on a variety of matters to all Council officers, departments and Members.

Risk Management

Work has started with the Council's insurance providers to deliver a programme of risk management training sessions. This is part of a new insurance contract and will provide 9 training days over the 3 year contract. Sessions held to date have been well received. A half day session was held for Members of ROSP and Audit Committee, half day for SMT and Corporate Risk Management Group, and 2 full day sessions for managers. An emphasis is being placed on aligning Council objectives and risk (What are the risks in delivering our objectives?) These risks can be both negative (What are the threats?) and also positive (What are the opportunities that can be seized and optimised?). The training is aiming to align our processes with the risk management standard ISO31000.

Service Standards and Performance Management

The Mid-year Performance Report which includes the service standards and an update on the delivery of the Carlisle Plan was presented to the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels in November/December and Executive in December.

The half yearly update on sickness absence will be presented to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel in January (5/1/14) having been reviewed by SMT in December.

Property Services

Disposal Programme

Gross receipts from the programme have now reached circa £9 million following the legal completion of the sale and exchange of land at Morton with the Church Commissioners, the sale by auction of lock – up garages at Broad Street, and the private treaty disposal of a site at Westwood, Wigton Road for a Children’s Nursery development.

The number of assets sold since the programme commenced now totals 30. The garages at Broad Street realised £42,000 and the Westwood site £142,000. Through the exchange with the Church the Council disposed of residential, amenity and educational land, with a value of circa £2.6 million, and acquired land for employment purposes adjoining the Council’s retail site on Wigton Road, together with drainage infrastructure works to service the Council’s land holdings.

A further 2 properties are now being brought to the market for disposal. The residential ground rental investment, let to the Hanover Housing Association, at Whinnie House Road, Morton is advertised for sale through the agents Sanderson Weatherall with an asking price of £385,000. Stanwix House and Cottage, let to the University of Cumbria, will be marketed early in the New Year, again by the agents Sanderson Weatherall.

The Property team, in conjunction with colleagues in Legal, Planning and Housing, are now focusing on the portfolio of sites within the programme which have potential for residential development, both private market housing and social housing, and discussions have begun with several interested parties.

Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

The BCP has had its annual review. Version 2.0 has now been published and it will be tested alongside an emergency planning exercise in 2015.

Financial Services

Annual Audit Letter 2013/14

The External Auditors have issued their annual audit letter which contains very positive comments in respect of the work undertaken by the authority during 2013/14. Unqualified opinions have been provided on both the Financial Statements and the Value for Money conclusion. This report is being considered by the Audit Committee on 13th January 2015.

Strategic Planning

The budget reports for 2015/16 to 2019/20 have been considered by the Executive and relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panels, with the Executive issuing its draft Budget Proposals for consultation purposes at its meeting on 15th December. The consultation process will end on 12th January with feedback being considered by the Executive later that week, following which the Executive will make final budget recommendations to Council on 3rd February 2015. The savings required to ensure a balance budget is approved, whilst maintaining an adequate level of reserves, continues to be closely monitored by the Senior Management Team.

Electoral Registration

The Revised Electoral Register was published on 1st December. This is the first register published under the system of Individual Electoral Registration. There are approximately 1500 fewer electors on the register than the last register published in February 2014 and this is broadly similar to the position nationally. Just over 4400 electors that were previously on the electoral roll remain unconfirmed and whilst these electors will be able to vote in the elections in May 2015 they will, if they take no further action, be taken off the register after May 2015. Of the above unconfirmed electors just under 300 electors will lose their postal vote and, if they take no further action, they will need to attend a polling station to cast their vote in May 2015. Subject to funding being provided by the Cabinet Office, it is anticipated that a 'Mini Canvass' exercise will be carried out early in the New Year to improve the accuracy and completeness of the electoral register in the lead up to the election in May 2015.

The Annual Postal Vote Refresh exercise will be carried out in January 2015. This exercise is to refresh the signatures of postal voters whose postal vote application was

submitted 5 years ago. Just over 1000 electors will be written to and asked to submit a new signature for their postal vote.

The Polling Station Review has now been completed and the recommendations arising from the Review are dealt with elsewhere on the Council agenda.

Digital and Information Services

- New document management system and public access module successfully implemented within the Planning service.
- Completed a successful upgrade of the council telephony system on the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd November.
- Work on the Smarter Service Delivery project is progressing well and new online forms are being published on a regular basis.
- A great deal of effort is being put into ensuring the recommendations from the Liberata report for the Shared RBS service are implemented on time and within budget.