

**PORTFOLIO:**

**GOVERNANCE & RESOURCES**

Report of  
Portfolio Holder:

**COUNCILLOR JOHN  
MALLINSON**

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **Legal Services**

The Legal Services section underwent its annual Lexcel inspection on 20<sup>th</sup> March and has retained its accreditation again.

Lexcel is the Law Society's international practice management standard. It is a scheme for solicitors' practices to certify that certain standards have been met following independent assessment. The Lexcel practice management standard is only awarded to solicitors who meet the highest management and customer care standards. Lexcel accredited practices undergo rigorous independent assessment every year to ensure they meet required standards of excellence in areas such as client care, case management and risk management. The inspection includes examination of policies and procedures in the legal section and an audit of files.

Carlisle City Council's legal section is one of only five solicitors' practices in Carlisle to achieve this accreditation.

The auditor highlighted ten areas of good practice and did not identify any areas of non-compliance with the prescribed standard. He commented that these were "a good indicator of the organisation's continued commitment to maintaining high levels of service".

### **Electoral Services**

Preparations are being made for the Local Elections to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012. This year the City Council elections are scheduled to be held in 17 of the City's 22 Wards. Parish elections are also scheduled to be held in 6 parishes.

Preliminary arrangements are also being made in connection with the arrangement for the election of a Police Commissioner. That election is scheduled to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

## **RESOURCES**

### Financial Services

#### 2011/12 Final Accounts Process

Work is continuing on the production of both the revenue and capital outturn reports, which will be considered by the Executive on 1<sup>st</sup> June and by Council on 17<sup>th</sup> July. These will show the year end outturn position and highlight any slippage against the annual budget.

The annual Statement of Accounts are also being produced which will be prepared in accordance with the Accounts & Audit Regulations in time for the Audit Commission to commence the audit of the accounts in early July. The main change for 2011/12 is the requirement for local authorities to recognise their heritage assets within the Accounts and work continues to both identify and establish an appropriate valuation basis for all of the Council's heritage assets.

The Audit Commission has recently announced the award of contracts for the auditor appointments for 2012/13 and subsequent years. Grant Thornton has been awarded the contract for the North West area, and their appointment will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012, following a consultation period, with a series of introductory meetings being held during April and May.

### **Audit Services**

The Strategic Audit Plan for 2012/13 has been updated. The agreed method is to use a risk-assessment model to calculate the relative risk related to each area of the Authority's activities. This approach is in line with best practice. The Audit Plan, which is the annual programme of work for Internal Audit, is prepared using the updated Strategic Plan. The Audit Plan for 2012/13 has been formulated on the basis of 540 direct audit days available under the Audit Shared Service arrangement.

Audit Committee received both the Strategic and Annual Audit Plans at its meeting on 16th April 2012. Also at this meeting, the Audit Committee received an update on the 2011/12 Audit Plan for the final quarter period. In all, a positive outcome is reported for the year end position.

Eight audit reports were also received by the Audit Committee – these were Capital Programme and Partnerships, with the remaining six reports relating to main financial systems. Members considered the key findings reported in each of these audit reports.

## **Property and Facilities**

### **Asset Review Disposal Programme**

Work on the Disposal Programme has progressed with the completion of the transactions to sell a further 8 assets which went to auction in late February through the Auctioneers Pugh and Co. A total of just under £400,000 was realised at the auction, this was a good result ahead of predictions and market expectations. The overall position with the programme at this juncture is that out of the 51 assets identified for disposal within the Asset Review Plan the sale of 15 assets has been completed and a total just under £1.8 million realised. More recently sales have been agreed with the majority of the sitting tenants on Willowholme Industrial Estate and these are now in the hands of solicitors for legal documentation and completion. Officers are continuing with the preparatory work to bring forward the next tranche of assets earmarked for sale during this financial year 2012/13.

### **Accommodation Review**

The demolition contract at Bousteads Grassing is now complete and the new boundary fence has been erected.

### **Renewable Energy**

Two medium sized solar PV projects have been commissioned at the Civic Centre and the Sands Centre. Both have been performing well with above average outputs due to the recent sunny weather. Display panels will be installed in the reception areas of each building indicating the current and total generation from the panels.

### **Market Cross**

Stabilisation work has now been completed to the market cross monument. The opportunity was taken to clean and repaint the monument while the scaffold was available.

**Councillor J Mallinson**  
**Governance & Resources Portfolio Holder**