

Report to
Council

Agenda
Item
13 (ii)

Meeting Date: 20th July 2021

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Business & Transformation Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Report –
Councillor James Bainbridge**

Chairman's Report: Business & Transformation 3rd June 2021

The good news is we held our first face to face meeting for Business & Transformation. It was however not without a teething issue in the presently socially distanced age, and members have rightly commented over hearing difficulties due to mask and visor wearing. This should hopefully be resolved by the next meeting. Please accept my apologies if it spoilt your enjoyment or limited your participation in the meeting.

In consideration of the Covid-19 Report, it would be worthwhile members reading the Appendix of the Report to see the sheer volume and scale of grants and business support which has passed through Carlisle City Council, for us to administer, to support both our operations and that of the commercial NNDR payer. It is probably the nearest that most of us will have got to the command economy that was put in place during the World Wars. It is certainly an achievement by Officers of this Council to have processed these grants within tight timescales, whilst keeping the existing services of the Council 'on the road' as much as is possible.

The Panel also considered the Outturn Reports for the Revenue, Capital Investments and Members Allowances for the 2020/21 year. In general, when you consider the previous 52 weeks, the financial stability of the Council has emerged relatively intact, as I type this the news has broken that Slough has issued a Section 114 Notice and will in all likelihood become restricted to statutory duties. The health of a Council is very much tied into the wealth of a Council. Since the meeting members will be aware of the recently announced £50,000 localised fund to enable local villages, Village Halls and Community Centres adopt their own version of the fund which has been seen to positively impact the High Street recently with the Hawker Festival.

The full Report for the Sickness & Absence was also presented to the Panel. The headline figures are positive, showing a reduction in sickness and absence over the last year, which I can understand members will be surprised at. This has of course been an unusual year, with many of the standard working practices turned on their axis. However,

within the Council, stress whether it from a source external to the Council or from within the Council is the highest area of absence and remains stubbornly so.

We also received an update on the Sands Centre. Members will of course be seeing the structure of the building take form. The Panel had a robust question and answer session on the update covering a broad range of topics and were content to accept the update and Report provided.

Full details of the discussions are to be found within the Minute Book

Cllr James Bainbridge
Chairman