

PORTFOLIO:

GOVERNANCE & RESOURCES

Report of
Portfolio Holder:

**COUNCILLOR JOHN
MALLINSON**

GOVERNANCE

Electoral Services

The deadline for the Refresh of Postal Vote signatures is 12th March 2012. The Council has written, at the end of January, to just over 4,900 electors whose signature on their postal vote is more than 5 years old. In the middle of February reminders were sent to non responders. Any voters who have not responded to either the initial notice or the reminder before the deadline of 12th March 2012 will have their postal vote cancelled and will be informed accordingly. Any voters whose postal vote is cancelled can submit a new application for a Postal Vote.

Preparations are being made for the Local Elections to be held on 3rd 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 15th November 2012.

RESOURCES

Financial Services

Strategic Planning

The Council, at its meeting on 23rd February, approved the revenue and capital budgets for 2012/13, including a council tax freeze for 2012/13 for the city and surrounding areas. Tonight's Council will formally approve the overall council tax for the Carlisle area.

2011/12 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 statutory deadline of 30 June.

Audit Services

The last Audit Committee on 13th January received the Audit Services' progress report along with a copy of the Audit Plan, which detailed the progress made up to 16th December 2011.

The following matters were noted by the Audit Committee:

- Progress made on the audit follow ups relating to the Insurance and Bereavement Services audit reviews was noted.
- The outcomes of the audits undertaken on Value Added Tax and Improvement Grants were considered by Members. Both of these audit reviews provided reasonable assurance ratings.

The first meeting of the Audit Shared Service Operational Board was held on 26th January 2012. The Director of Resources attended for Carlisle City.

Property and Facilities

Asset Review Disposal Programme

Officers continue to progress work on the disposal programme in accordance with the timetable. 8 assets went under the hammer at Manchester on Wednesday 22nd February through the auctioneers Pugh and Co. Parts of the Willowholme Industrial Estate have now gone onto the market to a targeted audience of investors/purchasers and it is anticipated the agricultural land adjoining Carlisle Airport will be brought onto the market through the agents Smiths Gore over the coming months. Meanwhile, the preparatory work to bring forward the sale of assets scheduled for disposal in the financial year 2012/2013, including several portfolios of workshops, is getting underway. Montagu Evans continue to progress and advise the Council on the disposal of both the retail and residential land at Morton.

Accommodation Review

The demolition contract at Bousteads Grassing is now complete. The boundary fencing has not yet been completed due to a planning issue which has now been resolved by consultation between the client department and the planning officers.

Renewable Energy

Two small solar PV projects have been commissioned at the Civic Centre and the Sands Centre. Although there is still some uncertainty surrounding the feed in tariffs, the current situation will provide a very good return on investment if the project can be connected and registered by 2nd March.

Market Cross

Investigation work has commenced into improving the stability of the Market Cross monument. The monument is presently scaffolded and enclosed for the protection of the public.

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