

Report to:

Council

Agenda
Item

11(b)(ii)

Meeting Date: 5 March 2013

Public/Private*: Public

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

GOVERNANCE

Licensing

The aftermath of Christmas is traditionally a mopping up operation, dealing with the complaints and disagreements in the alcohol and taxi trades. In addition the current work of the section includes:

- Liaison with Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Trading Standards regarding public awareness of house to house collections – clothing bags. Joint press release made by agencies.
- In house Disability Awareness Sessions for all licensed drivers are in the second month, these will continue throughout the year. To date 114 out of 340 drivers have attended.
- Carlisle City Council Gambling Policy was published on 3rd January 2013 and comes into effect on 31st January 2013.
- Private hire operators, vehicles and driver renewals, a total of 154 licences.

Electoral Services

The Electoral Services Section is beginning a significant project for the Council relating to Individual Electoral Registration. The move from household electoral registration to individual electoral registration will be the biggest change to electoral registration for almost a century.

The aim of the change is to modernise and improve the electoral registration system creating a system that has better protection against electoral fraud, is more convenient for eligible citizens to register to vote and aims to increase public trust in elections. From the summer of 2013 Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) will begin the transition from the current household system to individual electoral registration (IER).

The necessary legislation has been or is in the process of being published. The transition to IER will begin after the European Elections in June 2014 but the preparation and testing of the various systems begins in 2013. The Electoral Services Section is liaising closely with the Cabinet Office to coordinate the required work plan

which includes issues of finance and ICT systems. The Government is committed to meeting the additional cost of IER and additional funding will be provided to Local Authorities through a non ring fenced grant under S31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The grant is intended to be equal to the cost of additional responsibilities in implementing the above change over and above the normal electoral registration budget.

Safety, Health & Environment

Health and Wellbeing Health Checks

As part of the SHE teams remit regular employee wellbeing initiatives have been undertaken over the last 8 years.

The team manages the Occupational Health Services within the Council and has over the years invested in equipment and training to provide health checks.

These health checks attempt to encourage employees to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing by monitoring their cholesterol levels, blood pressures and blood sugar levels as well as providing specific measure on their weight, body water and fat percentages and their current metabolic requirements.

The team view this provision as a proactive way in which this Council can assist in addressing sickness absence levels by improving health as well as staff morale.

At a recent event, held over a two hour period, 64 employees attended to receive these health checks. Those that were unable to get all the information as a result of the high demand were offered alternative appointments the following week.

RESOURCES

Financial Services

Strategic Planning

The Council, at its meeting on 5th February, approved the revenue and capital budgets for 2013/14, including a council tax freeze for 2013/14 for the city and surrounding areas. Tonight's Council will formally approve the overall council tax for the Carlisle area.

2012/13 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 Audit Committee, at its meeting on 11th January 2013, received the quarterly progress report in respect of delivering the 2012/13 Audit Plan. In summary:

- The Plan calls for 540 direct audit days to be delivered in 2012/13 - 441 days had been delivered (82%) by 7th December 2012, which was 67 days ahead of target for that time of the year.
- The remaining time available in quarter 4 would mainly concentrate on the completion of the remaining material audit reviews.
- There was one recent change to the Audit Plan which members noted and agreed.

The Committee received an update to the progress made on implementing the recommendations arising from the audit of Records Management. After some debate on this subject, the Committee asked for a further progress report to be reported in six months time.

The outcome of 5 recently completed audits were then considered:

- External Funding
- Tullie House
- Housing Benefit Overpayments
- Improvement Grants
- Highways Claimed Rights

The main focus was on meeting the audit recommendations in improving External Funding administration to be co-ordinated by the Deputy Chief Executive.

PROPERTY AND FACILITIES

Asset Review Disposal Programme

The sales of the workshops at South John Street and the Depot behind Raffles Parade, which went to auction in November, have now been completed together with further Sites on Willowholme Industrial Estate. Negotiations and agreements for sale have recently been concluded on assets at Currock Road Industrial Estate and the Petrol Filling Station, Wigton Road. These are both freeholds, subject to long leasehold ground rents; completion of formal documentation is anticipated by the end of this financial year. Work continues to bring another two ground rented freehold assets, the medical centres at Fusehill Street and Eastern Way, to auction on 28th February 2013 through the auctioneers Pugh and Co. Delivery of the Business Plan carries on in accordance with the programme. The overall position is that of the 51 assets identified for disposal, the sale of 22 has been completed so far, realising total gross receipts of £3.27m. This is ahead of target budget projections at this stage in the process.

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

Carlisle Plan

The Carlisle Plan is now ready as a draft and will be tabled at the Executive on 11th February. The plan has a new vision and new priorities for the City Council.

Contract/Performance Monitoring

The monitoring of the Carlisle Leisure Ltd contract continues to evolve and develop. Similar work with Tullie House Trust is on going and in recent months monitoring of the YMCA contract for the Shaddongate Resource Centre and the Low Harker Dene travellers site contract has begun.

Service Standards

The set of high-level 'Corporate' Service Standards are now well established with a system in place to collect and publish the latest information. The next phase is to work with Directors and Service Managers to develop standards for discussion and review at DMTs. The same principles will be adopted as with the corporate standards. These standards will be promoted within the Directorate and supported by Learning Pool modules, developed to raise the awareness of the staff in the concept of Service Standards and the benefits of e-learning.

Information Management

Work has begun on new retention schedules; the first team to receive support is the Service Support Team for personnel records.

Recent counts for information requests (From 11 December 2012 to 1 February 2013):

Environmental Information Regulations requests received - 12

Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to - 7

Freedom of Information requests received – 79

Freedom of Information requests responded to - 60

Data Protection Act subject access requests received - 2

Data Protection Act subject access requests responded to – 0

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The 2013 Employee Opinion Survey took place in January and the results will be reported to Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 4 April.

A new learning and development programme has been created for first line managers and supervisors. This recognises that they are key members of the management team and have the closest contact with the people who produce the work. The programme includes sessions on recruitment and selection of staff, attendance management, specific IT training relevant to managers, management qualifications (ILM level 3 and 5) and newly developed workshops e.g. Essential Skills for First Line Managers and Supervisors, Interviewing Skills for Managers, Remote Relationships and Team Development.

The Workplace Health Group organised a New Year, New You session in January which 64 staff attended. Their body statistics including BMI, bone and muscle mass, visceral fat and body water percentage were calculated. Blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose tests were also on offer. Advice on health improvement was given by the Safety, Health and Environment Manager and the Occupational Health Nurse.