

Meeting Date: 14th September 2021

Public/Private*: Public

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

The most recent meeting of the Business & Transformation Scrutiny Panel covered several issues. This firstly included the outturn position for Business Rates in the previous year which was dominated by Covid-19. There was during lockdown several concerns expressed in 'local government' media over the impact lockdowns will have on business rates, and Council's ability to collect NNDR income. Thankfully the worse-case scenarios given at the time failed to appear in the Council's present position. However, it is worth noting that High Street and building vacancies in properties which as a Council we own or have a stake in will have an income effect on our position. The 'pooling' system which we use with other Cumbrian Local Authorities also held up to the pressure the events of last year brought.

What did come through clearly in the Report was the ability and aptitude of the Council in processing the various relief schemes that came through the Business Rates system. It will have been no easy scheme to administer at the best of times, but add to that the need to work from home, the pressures – both in questions and concerns coming from NNDR payers at the time, and the additional pressure that delays might have contributed to business failures in the Carlisle economy, then I feel the Officers deserve praise for the professionalism they showed in this matter.

In discussion of the Carlisle Plan, Members offered suggestions and questions. The item is for the full agenda of the City Council meeting in September, and therefore Members may wish to consult the Minutes for further comments.

Sadly, the most important and interesting Report of the meeting is a Part B agenda item and I am limited as to the scope of information I can put on public record, which is rather frustrating! Members could do well to ask other Group Members present about the issues it raised or seek a copy of the Report themselves through Legal & Democratic Services. We have asked for an update in the next quarter.

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

Cllr James Bainbridge
Chairman