

Meeting Date: 8 January 2013

Public/Private*: Public

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

GOVERNANCE

Licensing

The run up to Christmas is always busy for the licensing team which includes the following:

- A large number of temporary events throughout the Council area have been granted for Christmas functions
- With support from Carlisle & Eden CDRP, we are issuing information leaflets on under age sales to stores that sell alcohol
- Liaison with Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Trading Standards regarding test purchase operations
- Joint enforcement visits on licensed premises have been arranged with Cumbria Constabulary
- In house Disability Awareness Sessions have begun for all licensed drivers, these will continue throughout the year
- Gambling Policy adopted by City Council to be published by 3rd January 2013.

Electoral Services

A mini review of polling stations has been carried out following the recent Police and Crime Commissioner elections and the report and recommendations are considered elsewhere on the agenda.

Preparations for the County Council elections to be held on 2 May 2013 have commenced.

The Registration Officer is required to carry out a refresh of postal votes in 2013. This will require a new signature in respect of any postal votes which are 5 years old i.e. in respect

of applications made between January 2007 and January 2008. Officers will write to any voters affected in January with a request that they supply a new signature. If a new signature is not provided within a six week period the postal vote will be cancelled and voters will need to make a new application or make arrangements to vote in person. A reminder will also be sent to voters within the six week period.

RESOURCES

Financial Services

Annual Audit Letter 2011/12

The Audit Commission have issued their annual audit letter which contains very positive comments in respect of the work undertaken by the authority during 2011/12. This report is being considered by the Audit Committee on 11th January.

Strategic Planning

The budget reports for 2013/14 to 2017/18 have been considered by the Executive and relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panels, with the Executive issuing its draft Budget Proposals for consultation purposes at its meeting on 17th December. The consultation process will end on 14th January with feedback being considered by the Executive later that same day, following which the Executive will make final budget recommendations to Council on 5th February 2013.

Audit Services

The first meeting of the Shared Internal Audit Service Strategic Board took place in November 2012 and this was hosted by Carlisle City and chaired by the Vice Chair of the Audit Committee. This Board comprises of Chairs of Audit Committees and/or Portfolio Holders and S151 Officers, with the Head of Audit also attending.

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board received a presentation from the Head of Audit covering the establishment of the shared service and its rationale in terms of the robustness and efficiency of the service; governance arrangements; progress and benchmarking; and issues arising. Expansion of the service was considered and the potential for Member involvement with their counterparties.

Property and Facilities

Asset Review Disposal Programme

A November auction sale saw the successful disposal, subject to final legal completion, of an additional 2 assets in the Disposal Programme, the Workshops at South John Street and a former Depot at Raffles. The plan continues on track with overall proceeds still running ahead of budget projections. Of the 51 assets originally earmarked for disposal sales have now been completed or agreed on 23 properties. Work continues to bring a further portfolio of workshops, along with several ground lease freehold investments, to the market before the close of the current financial year.

Refurbishment Work

Work has now started on the refurbishment and re-wiring of Floor 1 of the Civic Centre. Refurbishment work on the railings around the Cenotaph in Rickerby Park was completed in time for Remembrance Sunday; and the replacement of a large Victorian roof light at Tullie House has been completed. The new bereavement services office is now complete.

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

Service Standards

Service Standards have now been part of our approach to performance for over 8 months. The standards have kept the services that are the most important to our customers at the forefront. The standard for processing benefit claims has shown an improvement over the last 5 months, standards have improved as a result of focused effort from Community Engagement and the Revenues & Benefits Shared Service.

Data Security

The roll out of data security training has resulted in 66 officers being trained in good practice. A set of data record and retention principles are being developed to reinforce this training and detailed work with managers to improve our records management will begin in the New Year.

Information Requests

Recent counts for information requests (From 24 October to 10 December 2012):

Environmental Information Regulations requests received - 10

Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to - 10

Freedom of Information requests received – 48

Freedom of Information requests responded to - 59

Data Protection Act subject access requests received - 0

Data Protection Act subject access requests responded to – 2

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Member Learning and Development

A Member/Officer Forum took place in November to highlight initiatives that the City Council and partner organisations are working on. Staff from the Enforcement and Education Team, the Benefits Advice Service, Carlisle's Home Improvement Agency, Environmental Health Service, Building and Facilities Team and Green Spaces were on hand to talk to Members about their work. The Love Where You Live, Empty Homes Initiative and Discover Carlisle projects were also showcased. Partner organisations were there to talk about the Cumbria Compact, Public Health and the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. Over thirty Members and staff attended the Forum.

An Emergency Planning for Members course is taking place at the Civic Centre on 15 January from 1.30 – 4.30. If any Members are interested in attending please contact the Organisational Development Team on 01228 817310.

Organisational Development

The sixth annual Celebration of Learning event took place at Tullie House on 4 December to celebrate the success of staff who have achieved qualifications in 2012. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive spoke of the importance of investing in staff development and how this benefits the city as well as the organisation. Three members of staff also spoke about their experiences of learning and how it had benefited them. Five staff were presented with special certificates in recognition of their achievements at Northumbria University, Newton Rigg College, Carlisle College and Lakes College.