



Report to
Council

Agenda
Item

10(v)

Meeting Date: 14th July 2020

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Finance, Governance & Resources Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Gareth Ellis**

HR AND PAYROLL

It is fair to say since March 2020 the Team have been heavily involved in the Council's response to Covid – specifically relating to ensuring everyone is supported, communications are done, FAQs provided and dealing with the changing Government advice. This has meant twice monthly updates via Microsoft Teams with North West Employers and working closely with the relevant HR leaders in our other Districts. The HR & Payroll Team are all working from home and we have successfully run 3 payrolls from outside the Civic so the systems are holding up well.

I-Trent has been upgraded to Electric, which is a new, more user friendly, theme. Developments were well underway towards the implementation of the Online Recruitment model – but training scheduled for end of March has had to be postponed.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT – LEGAL SERVICES

- Recent counts for information requests (From 11 February 2020– 23 June 2020):
- Environmental Information Regulations requests received - 9
- Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to - 6
- Freedom of Information Act requests received – 210
- Freedom of Information Act requests responded to - 172
- Data Protection Act requests received – 7
- Data Protection Act requests responded to – 7

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continue to support wellbeing and learning opportunities via virtual delivery and posters at point for frontline staff to see. SMT agreed the Wellbeing Strategy. Carried out a Pulse Survey to check in with staff and response rate was excellent (61%) with mainly positive comments. To launch benefits portal July for easy access to staff benefits including new

offer of retail discount scheme, which can also be offered to members. Promoted sign language on- line training with over 25 people now completing this training.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

The Council is continuing to monitor the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and is submitting returns to MHCLG on a monthly basis outlining the actual and potential financial losses being incurred. The Council is also working closely with other authorities around Cumbria to understand the impact on wider issues such as Council Tax and Business Rates.

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

The Elections Team are currently working flat out to deliver the new Reformed Canvass, which has been introduced this year. There are a number of changes to be implemented and this is currently more challenging due to the Coronavirus situation.

ICT UPDATE

ICT have working on supporting the Council through COVID-19

Following the requirement for staff to start working from home, ICT staff responded to get all staff working at home within two weeks including 165 staff who didn't have the facility to work from home including Wi-Fi capability for RBS computers due to laptop supply constraints. Additional Security Tokens and Licenses for VPN access, an additional 38 mobile phones and SIMs and 6 mobile Wi-Fi hotspots were purchased through our suppliers who could meet the demand period at the start of COVID-19.

The use of Microsoft Teams has increased from the handful of pilot areas to allow staff to carry out meetings, keep in touch with staff and collaborate with external agencies.

Microsoft Teams Live events was setup and configured in a few days to allow the Council

ICT have adapted quickly to the challenges and have been able to maintain the service as well as provide the additional levels of support that staff and Councillors need during this crisis, working remotely from home and providing appointments in the Civic Centre.

REVENUES & BENEFITS

In response to the COVID-19 Government business support measures, the Council has awarded £26,165,000 to 2,261 eligible businesses under the Small Business Grant and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant schemes.