

Meeting Date: 4 March 2014

Public/Private*: Public

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

Electoral Services

The canvass for the Electoral Register has now been completed and the Revised Register has been published in accordance with the statutory timeframe which required the Revised Register to be published this year on or before the 17th February.

Preparations are being made for the Joint European and Local Elections which will be held on 22nd May 2014.

Preparations and training is on going to facilitate the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration as from 9th June 2014.

Digital and Information Services

We have run a number of IT Drop-in sessions which have proved very popular with members and staff; more are planned for the coming months. Details of these events will be publicised well in advance.

All the recommendations from the audits of the IT Services Desk, Incident and Problem Management and Business Continuity are on track to be completed by the 31st March as agreed with the Audit team.

The Wi-Fi network within the Civic Centre, along with the ability to print to the Konica Minolta printers, are due to go live the week commencing the 17th February. This will provide a secure network for members and staff to access their emails and documents from their mobile devices from anywhere within the Civic Centre. The service will also cater for visitors to the Civic Centre by providing them with access to a time-limited secure network separate from the Council's network.

A new version of our HR and Payroll application has been successfully installed and tested; this will provide increased online access to staff's payroll and personal records.

Licensing

January is the month when most private hire operators, drivers and vehicle licences are renewed. As usual the majority leave it until the end of the month so we have an additional

150 renewals in one week. There then follows a period of high visibility enforcement to ensure that those that haven't renewed are not operating.

An increasing number of applications are being received from would be taxi drivers whose first language is not English. Some have a very limited knowledge of the language which raises the question if they are 'fit' to be a licensed driver due to their lack of understanding. A report is being submitted to the Regulatory Panel for consideration.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act is now three months old and we have written to all previously registered dealers who have not licensed under the new Act. We have also provided the Police with this list and are planning joint enforcement. Of all the applications submitted only one, where the applicant is considered unsuitable, is going to committee. Under this legislation the Executive have jurisdiction and they have delegated a Portfolio Holder and Director to consider such disputed applications.

Health & Safety

Main areas of work:

- Working with the Refuse and Recycling team to comply with Improvement Notice served by HSE currently applying for an extension for meeting notice to the end March 2014. An interim visit from the HSE on the 29th January 2014 to ensure that we were progressing sufficiently to comply with the Notice. The meeting was very constructive and confirmed that we will be in a position to comply with the contents of the Notice providing we continue as per the contents of our project plan.
- Shared Services Risk Assessment review. Allerdale was completed on 6th Feb 2014. Copeland is scheduled for completion on 13th Feb 2014. Health and Wellbeing for individuals wishing to have basic health surveillance is also being offered on these days.
- Tullie House audit. A basic review of activities has been undertaken and discussions with Senior Managers at Tullie House on the 19th Feb 2014 will determine if they wish a full audit to take place.
- Defibrillator training was successfully undertaken by 15 employees based in the Civic Centre. A third defibrillator is being purchased and will be placed within the Tourist Information Centre early March 2014.
- The annual audit of insurance certificates to ensure compliance with Councils Management of Road Risk Policy has now been completed.

Organisational Development

A wide range of health and wellbeing activities have been organised for staff in January and February which are funded with income from the holiday purchase scheme. Body stats and health check sessions have taken place and a 5th weight management programme has started in partnership with Carlisle Leisure Ltd. The City Council is also working with them to promote swimming as a good form of exercise.

Localism Act

Work is continuing on the assets nominated by parish councils and local groups under the Community Right to Bid process. We now have examples of parish councils submitting mass nominations in their community leadership role, without having any intention of bidding for a particular asset themselves.

There have also been enquiries about the Community Right to Challenge (i.e. a group carrying out services normally carried out by the City Council). Informal discussions have been had and interested groups are now considering making a formal challenge bearing in mind the responsibilities and liabilities they will need to undertake.

Examples of assets currently on the register include pubs and inns, village halls, playing fields; and shops.

Information Management

A draft Record Management Policy is currently being consulted on, this policy is part of a wider project to renew our records management framework. We are working with the existing good practice developed by service managers and new emerging issues being flagged by record management experts.

Recent counts for information requests (From 2 December 2013 to 7 February 2014):

- Environmental Information Regulations requests received - 16
- Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to - 16
- Freedom of Information requests received – 148
- Freedom of Information requests responded to - 141
- Data Protection Act subject access requests received - 4
- Data Protection Act subject access requests responded to – 5
- Data Protection Act s29/s35 requests received - 12
- Data Protection Act s29/s35 requests responded to – 13

Audit Services

At the last Audit Committee on 24th January, Members received detailed information on the progress of the 2013-14 Audit Plan. It was agreed that future monitoring reports on the implementation of previous recommendations will exclude those which are satisfactorily achieved within the desired timescales and therefore closed. Going forward, SMT will also have an overview of the reporting on outstanding recommendations.

Members received the audit reports in respect of External Funding; Electoral Registration; Performance Service Standards; Revenues Recovery and Records Management. Attention was drawn to the audit of Records Management whereby a partial assurance rating remained despite an action plan for improvements in this area being previously agreed. Members' received an update on the progress made since the time of the audit review and the steps which had been taken to date, to address the matters raised in the current action plan. Members asked for a further update on Records Management to be presented to the next Committee in April.

Members also received the report on the Effectiveness of Internal Audit. Cumbria County Council had commissioned this review of the Internal Audit Shared Service in spring 2013. The review was aligned to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which became mandatory for all UK public sector internal audit services from 1 April 2013. It had highlighted a number of strengths and good practice arrangements in place by the Internal

Audit Shared Service along with 17 recommendations which were geared to aid further service improvements.

The draft Internal Audit Charter was also received. This Charter is a requirement of the mandatory Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and sets out the arrangements for the delivery of the Internal Audit service to Carlisle City Council. There was some discussion around its content. SMT has previously received this document and the Executive will receive the final version for approval in mid March.

Legal Services

Several high profile criminal cases have been successfully prosecuted at the magistrates' courts this month, including under the Food Safety legislation and Health and Safety at Work legislation, as well as other environmental offences. Detailed legal input is being provided on various corporate projects including the Arts Centre, the City Centre WiFi project and the Bitts Park high ropes course and ice rink. Work is ongoing on the next phase of the Asset Disposal programme following legal completion of the auction sales at the end of last year. Meanwhile, Legal Services continue to provide specialist advice and support to all directorates and Members.

Financial Services

Strategic Planning

The Council, at its meeting of 4th February, considered amendments to the Executive's budget proposals for 2014/15, with the budget being debated and approved at the Special Council meeting held on 20th February. The revenue and capital budgets for 2014/15 were approved, including a council tax freeze for 2014/15 for the city and surrounding areas. Tonight's Council will formally approve the overall council tax for the Carlisle area.

2013/14 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.

Building and Facilities Projects March 2014

Tullie House

Replacement of two large single-glazed rooflights over the education room is due to commence in February. The replacements will be constructed of energy efficient double glazed aluminium.

Civic Centre

The 50th anniversary of the opening of the Civic Centre is to be marked by an open day and exhibition on 12th March.