

| Report of: | To: | Date | Item No. |
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| Cllr. Alan Vincent, Resources Portfolio Holder | Council | 23 January 2014 | 8(b) |

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| EXECUTIVE REPORT: RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER |
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Council of progress on key objectives and the current position on issues within the Resources Portfolio, as set out below.

2. Finance

- 2.1 An updated forecast showing our projected spending levels and the recommended council tax for 2014/15 will be presented at the Cabinet meeting on the 19 February. I can confirm that, as in previous years, Budget Briefings will be arranged for the benefit of the two political parties.
- 2.2 Members will be aware that a provisional grant settlement of £6.499m for 2014/15 was announced 25 July and this has subsequently been confirmed, as part of the draft local government finance settlement announced in December, at £6.503. This represents a loss in grant of £1,023,000 or 13.6% from that received in 2013/14. The provisional award for 2015/16 is £5.487m, a loss in grant of £1,016,000 or 15.6%.
- 2.3 Members will recall that the new Localism Act allows local residents to veto excessive council tax rises. The Secretary of State had previously indicated that the trigger for local referenda on council tax increases would remain at 2% in both 2014/15 and 2015/16, with the approval of the local electorate being required for any council tax increase above this value, although a further announcement is expected in the New Year.
- 2.4 2013/14 is the first year of the new Business Rate Retention scheme and the Council continues to monitor the volatility in funding that is associated with it, primarily as a result of major businesses closing or moving out of the area and successful rating appeals, and the consequential loss of funding that the authority is expected to meet prior to receiving a safety net payment from the Government. The safety net has been set at 92.5% of the Baseline Funding level with any reduction in business rate income of up to £223,371 being met by Wyre.

3. Human Resources

- 3.1** The Investors in People assessment has been taking place this week from Monday 20th January to 23rd January and the results will be reported to members as soon as possible.
- 3.2** The staff satisfaction survey results are now in and I'm pleased to report that satisfaction rates have improved in 7 of the 9 areas with 1 remaining the same and 1 being a new category this year. 200 members of staff completed the survey which revealed that 84% feel that the Council is a good organisation to work for and 80% are proud to work for the Council and enjoy their work. Encouragingly, one of the most frequent comments submitted was "I like my job". Areas identified as requiring attention will form the basis of an improvement/action plan.

4. Procurement

- 4.1** A new electronic point of sale system has been procured for the Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre from International Point of Sale funded by efficiencies achieved. This will allow the use of hand held devices and hopefully increase ticket sales.
- 4.2** A new 3 year contract with Business Independent Utilities, a local energy consultancy firm who will be purchasing energy from N-Power and Total Gas on behalf of the Council through a new public sector framework, commenced 2 December 2013. The contract includes the validation of invoices, a task that was previously performed in-house, and access to energy usage information via SMART meters for both electricity and gas.
- 4.3** The Council has entered into a 2 year contract with Everything Everywhere (formerly T-Mobile) through a GPS telecoms framework. It is hoped that the contract will save £10,000 over the next two years and reflects a reduction in the number of users and a lower tariff cost.
- 4.4** Other procurement exercises underway include dog kennelling, purchase of seating, planters, lighting and paving at Victoria Road West in Cleveleys, tree works at Memorial Park and play facilities at Stanah Country Park.

5. Asset Management

- 5.1** Following the last Council meeting which informed Members that a request had been received from a Community Interest Company (Fleetwood Plus) to nominate the Mount Methodist Church for listing as an asset of community value, I can confirm that this asset has now been included on the List. In essence, this means that the owner cannot make a relevant disposal (transfer the freehold or grant/assign a qualifying lease which gives vacant possession of the property or land listed) unless the associated statutory procedure is followed, noting that a number of exemptions apply. I want to take this opportunity, however, to reiterate that the aim of the Community Right to Bid is to give local community groups a fairer chance to make a bid to buy local assets on the open market but does not confer a right to buy or a right of first refusal. It merely introduces, in certain circumstances, a moratorium on disposal of the asset.

- 5.2** There has also been a request received from Garstang Town Council to have the Garstang Business Centre listed as an asset of community value, which is currently being considered.

6. Comments and Questions

- 6.1** In accordance with procedure rule 11.3 any member of Council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue, which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with Procedure Rule 11.5.

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