

Report of:	To:	Date	Item No.
Cllr. Alan Vincent, Resources Portfolio Holder	Council	5 June 2014	9(b)

EXECUTIVE REPORT: RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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 Members will recall that in my last update report in April, I mentioned that because the most recent financial projections indicated a gap between expenditure and income of £1.2m in 2017/18, we were in the process of identifying potential efficiencies. I am pleased to report that since February 2013 the Senior Leadership Team has already delivered savings totalling £786,000 and has earmarked for release a further £327,000. Applying these savings to the most recent projected gap for 2017/18, as reported to Management Board in May 2014, still leaves us with an ambitious savings target of £788,000. The enormity of the task must not be underestimated and reinforces the importance of managing our finances responsibly. The continued protection of our front line services and the council tax freeze is our primary objective and one that we cannot afford to risk by incurring additional responsibilities that belong to other tiers of government and for which we receive no funding.
- 2.2 The final accounts for 2013/14 are currently being compiled and will be considered by the Audit Committee at their meeting later this month. Early indications suggest a small under spend which will be used to top up the Capital Investment Reserve in anticipation of future commitments.
- 2.3 I can now confirm with certainty that in spite of the current economic climate the Contact Centre team have managed to collect 98.05% of the council tax due for 2013/14 – only falling marginally from the collection rate of 98.25% in 2012/13. This is the second best performance in the whole of Lancashire with only Ribble Valley beating us to the top slot. Performance in respect of NNDR collection is slightly up on last year at 98.29% (from 98.23%) and is the best in Lancashire.

2.4 In relation to the new Business Rate Retention Scheme and its first year of operation, the unaudited grant claim indicates an improved financial position at year end which together with the monies allocated to the Non-Domestic Rates Equalisation Reserve total £326,000. The implications of this going forward will continue to be monitored as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

3. Human Resources

3.1 I am particularly pleased to report that sickness levels for the year ended 31 March 2014 have reduced to 5.46 days. This is lower than our ambitious target of 6 days, an improvement on the previous year (6.88 days in 2012/13) and the lowest ever level since records began. I would ask Members to join with me in saying well done to all concerned; not only the staff who keep themselves fit and healthy and return to work as soon as possible after a sickness absence but also to all of our managers who tirelessly carry out return to work interviews and monitor absence in liaison with Human Resources and Occupational Health.

4. Procurement

4.1 The contract for the Restoration of Memorial Park in Fleetwood has now been awarded and work will be starting in the park on the 19th May 2014.

4.2 Other ongoing procurement exercises involve the new Skateboard Park in Fleetwood, hot and cold catering requirements, dog kennelling, and multi-functional devices (photocopiers) to replace the existing machines.

5. Asset Management

5.1 In accordance with the Community Right to Bid legislation, the Council's intention to dispose of Garstang Business Centre will be considered by the Cabinet at their meeting later this month to allow the interim and full moratorium end dates to be published along with the end date of the protected period as follows:

- Interim moratorium ends 6 weeks from notice of intention to dispose received
- Full moratorium ends 6 months from notice of intention to dispose received
- Protected period ends 18 months from notice of intention to dispose received.

5.2 During the interim moratorium, a community interest group may request in writing to the Council, to be treated as a potential bidder for the asset. The community interest group must be either:

- a charity;
- a community interest company;
- a company limited by guarantee that is non-profit distributing; or
- an industrial and provident society that is non-profit distributing.

The receipt of a written request to be treated as a potential bidder, triggers a full moratorium, which prevents the owner from disposing of their asset for 6 months from the date on which the Council received the notification of the intention to dispose of the asset.

- 5.3** After the moratorium period (either the 6 weeks if there has been no community interest notification to be treated as a bidder, or the full 6 months), the owner is free to dispose to whomever they choose and at whatever price. No further moratorium will apply for the remainder of the protected period, lasting 18 months from the date the owner notified the Council of their intention to dispose of the asset.
- 5.4** Members may also be interested to note that the full moratorium for the Mount Methodist Church in Fleetwood expires 19 June 2014.

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.