

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

This is a particularly challenging time to take on the Resources portfolio responsibilities and there are obviously difficult discussions and decisions ahead. In order to plan the way ahead we are reviewing **all** services so that we have a sound understanding of the priorities, key issues, challenges and opportunities in every area. Our aim is, wherever possible, to improve frontline services, to streamline and modernise back office and central support services whilst stripping out as much cost as possible to ensure that we can support the whole Council in delivering its key priorities and services. All this aimed at tackling the present strangulation of public sector funding which has had, and will continue to have an impact of significant change and downsizing on our own valued workforce and on our partners in the years ahead.

We will be reporting formally to Executive Board next month on our review of the recent cuts implemented by the coalition as well as the changes we are making to continue to provide valuable and well-used frontline services to our citizens.

The budget, for the portfolio and for the whole Council, has to be the priority and I will be working with the rest of the Executive Board, the Labour Group, Council employees, and anyone else with constructive ideas, to review **all** options for efficiencies with real and significant savings in advance of the Comprehensive Spending Review next month and the Local Government Finance Settlement after that.

Across the portfolio we will:

- begin the roll out a new e-procurement system which will enable the development of electronic invoice processing, resulting in better value for money through corporate contracts and making significant savings in administration and invoice processing undertaken by Capita on our behalf
- overhaul our Revenues and Benefits service, to reflect any national changes that are brought in but more importantly to improve the customer experience and truly enable a one stop shop approach through Customer Services
- plan for wide spread service reviews, workforce planning and organisational development are both key aspects of ensuring the Council is able to have the right people in place with the skills and abilities to continue to deliver services to the community, 'Project REACH' is taking the very latest organisational development strategies, including employee engagement and partnership to address a number of the employee related motivational, skills and learning aspects of change and encourage staff to embrace change, respecting that given the sheer size of the potential staffing reductions some compulsory job losses may not be avoided
- improve service levels and embed a customer focussed culture within the department, bring the new Data Centre online, transfer all systems across and decommission the server room in the basement of the Town Hall, deliver a mobile working solution which will enable staff to work more efficiently by providing access to critical IT systems regardless of location

- ensure Legal Services are responsive to the demands of other services and that the Council's decisions and actions are robust with sound governance arrangements for decision making
- work with the Leader to review what we as Members cost the citizens of this borough together with the support structure that is in place for Councillors, scrutiny, neighbourhood boards and all our other forums
- review our property asset release and acquisitions strategy to ensure that the portfolio performs as a good investment for the borough and that we make best use of our property assets and accommodation to reduce cost and facilitate regeneration and development where appropriate

In all areas we will:

- review management, staff structures and roles to ensure greater flexibility, eliminate duplication where it occurs and provide more efficient and responsive services
- consider options for reducing costs through shared services and joint provision either with the Care Trust Plus, with other public sector partners in the borough or with other local authorities and agencies across Pennine Lancashire and beyond. **But** - we will only do this where there are clear benefits for the borough which will and must remain our first priority.

We are preparing for funding cuts of anywhere from 25% to 40% over the next 2 – 4 years and we will not be able to achieve that without facing up to the challenge and taking difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions but we will do that openly, clearly explaining the rationale behind our decision making and being bold enough to take those decisions.

Despite recent leaks to the press and lack of involvement over the last few years, we hope that our employees will recognise the value they represent to our communities and the value this new administration places on their contributions. Without their help and endeavours no administration can operate in good times, it is self evident that it is impossible to manage without their contribution in difficult times.