

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW

As this report is prepared it is early days for completing a full analysis of the CSR and we will not know the full impact on funding until the local government finance settlement. We do know that we as a Council and our residents as service users are facing significant problems from severe cuts in funding over the next 4 years and there are difficult decisions for us all ahead.

IT – ENCRYPTION AND DATA SECURITY

More than 90% of PCs are now encrypted with the roll out of encryption for all removable media, such as USB memory sticks, is being programmed for February 2011. Members and staff will be kept informed of what is happening.

The procurement phase of the PC Refresh programme has been completed. Six potential suppliers submitted quotes in response to our Invitation to quote and we hope to proceed with an approved supplier soon. This will start the transition to a laptop based estate to enable more flexible working solutions to be developed.

The data centre project is going to plan although there have been some minor delays due to poor weather in September.

BT&IT are working with the council's strategic IT partners to finalise the designs for the infrastructure that will go into the centre to enable council members and officers to be more mobile and efficient and in support of the Council's need to cut costs and deliver more for less money.

FINANCE – 2009/10 ACCOUNTS

The audited statement of accounts has now been published on the Council's website <http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/server.php?show=ConWebDoc.52557> . Printed copies have been distributed to all Members.

MATRIX TEMPORARY AGENCY STAFF CONTRACT

The introduction of this service has contributed significantly to savings targets for this financial year. The total saving to departments since June is over £53,000.

Processes for procuring temporary staff (when approved) have improved by routing all requests via a single source providing a simple cost effective and efficient service. The process also manages the third party agencies including contract management, audits and invoicing.

The Internal Agency is now processing all requests when approval to appoint has been received. The whole process is conducted electronically from approval through Purchase Order, submitting timesheets and the final invoice payment.

Monthly Management Information (MI) is produced showing spend, volume of temporary staff, length of assignment and hourly rates broken down by Directorate.

COLLECTION HALL

A cross party Member Working group is meeting to consider future cash payment and collection services. We aim to provide a more accessible service with improved payment options available to members of the public and also significantly more support for businesses in the community.

HR

EARLY RETIREMENT, VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY AND FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT SCHEMES

In order to try and reduce the potential for compulsory redundancies the Council has made the above schemes available to employees as part of an ongoing workforce reduction review strategy.

- a) Early Retirement - available to employees aged 55 and above
- b) Flexible Retirement – employees eligible for early retirement may also wish to consider flexible retirement. This is where an employee draws part of their pension but continues to work part time.
- c) Voluntary redundancy – All employees can apply for voluntary redundancy regardless of age but staff with less than two years service will not be entitled to a redundancy payment.

The number of applications received by the deadline in October was as follows;

	Applications received to date
Early Retirement	53
Voluntary Redundancy	109
Flexible Retirement	9

Some employees' age 55 and above will have expressed an interest/applied for both early retirement and voluntary redundancy.

The ER/VR Panel will meet in November to consider the applications.

Each application will be assessed individually and to be approved must meet strict criteria i.e. that there are clear financial savings from each permitted early retirement, flexible retirement or voluntary redundancy.

LEGAL

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN (LGO) REPORT

The LGO has recently published a report following her investigation of 2 complaints made about the 2009 admissions and appeals processes for Tauheedul Islam Girls High School for admission in September 2009. The LGO found maladministration/service failure and that this caused the complainants injustice.

The Council and the School will jointly respond to this report. All the recommendations made in an earlier draft of this report were accepted and implemented by the Council and the School. Indeed, it is worth noting that in considering complaints from parents for the appeals for the year 7 intake for the 2010/11 academic year in 2010 for TIGHS, the LGO accepted that all recommendations arising from the 2009 appeals have been implemented.

SALE OF MOUNT PLEASANT RESOURCE CENTRE, TRINITY STREET, BLACKBURN

The Property Team recently exchanged completed the sale of Mount Pleasant Resource Centre, Blackburn. Following receipt of best and final offers the property sold for £182,500.

AUCTION SALES

The Council was successful in disposing of four lots at the Auction held by Pugh and Co on 9th September 2010. All four disposals were successfully bided over the Guide Price and the Reserve Price. Contracts were exchanged with all parties on the day of auction. The details are as follows:

- Land adjoining 47 Plane Street, Blackburn sold at £5,500
- Ground-rent interest at Gate Street, Blackburn sold at £56,000
- Ground-rent interest at Gate Street/Ordnance Street, Blackburn sold at £55,000
- Land at sites 3-13 Wensley Road, Blackburn sold at £42,000

TURTON TOWER - OFFICIAL TRANSFER

The formal transfer of Turton Tower has now been completed. By an Order of Charity Commission for England & Wales (Charity No. 513819), the Council was officially appointed Sole Corporate Trustee of the charity formally known as "Turton Tower" as of Thursday, 9th September 2010. The Council now holds the property under the terms of a deed of trust contained in the original Conveyance dated 8th September 1931.

A charitable funds committee will be created to assist the Council in its capacity Corporate Trustee. This committee will be tasked with the day to day running of Turton Tower. The charitable funds committee is the first charity committee of the Council, which must act in the best interests of the charity.