

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES**

**COUNCILLOR ANDY KAY**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: DENISE PARK**

**DATE: 28<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2012**

**WELFARE REFORM**

A Programme Board has been established to evaluate and co-ordinate the impact of welfare reform on the Council and its residents. The Board has representatives from a number of Departments, including; Finance, Housing, Legal, Childrens, and Adults.

Initially the board will start to map the welfare changes and assess the likely implications for the Council, paying particular attention to those changes which will impact residents in 2012/2013 and 2013/14.

A project team has already been established to review the abolition of the Council Tax Benefit scheme and the introduction of a localised council tax support scheme from April 2013. Initial suggestions and options are being discussed and considered by Executive Members and we are also in discussions with neighbouring authorities. A significant amount of work and consultation is still required before a local scheme can be developed fully.

A project to consider the options for the Localisation of the Social Fund has also been established. In addition to the work done internally, we are in discussions regarding joint working with Blackpool and Lancashire CC.

Further work is also ongoing regarding the 'Welfare Cap' and 'under occupation' of registered social landlord properties. These changes will be implemented in April 2013 and will have a significant impact on Housing Benefit administration.

Members will continue to be regularly updated throughout the year.

**BUSINESS RATES RETENTION SCHEME**

The government consulted on proposals for the local retention of business rates in its Local Government Resources Review. The scheme will allow local councils to retain a proportion of the business rates they raise locally and will replace the current system where business rates are collected then pooled and redistributed nationally. Businesses will not see a difference in the way they pay or how the tax is set as the national multiplier remains. Where a local authority on average collects more than the baseline it will pay a tariff to central government, where it collects less it will receive a top up.

Further information will be provided in due course.

## **IT WEB UPDATE**

Phase One of the project to replace and improve the Council's web infrastructure is nearing completion and a new web site, with improved search facilities, easier navigation and updated content is due to go live in the next few weeks. The delay, from the originally planned date, is due to a number of external factors beyond our direct control however, the delay will have no impact on the initiation and implementation of the second major phase, which will commence towards the end of the year.

The Council is currently undertaking a procurement exercise to identify a strategic design and development partner for Phase Two of the project. The procurement exercise will be completed in November and contracts should be in place by the end of this calendar year.

In the intervening period, staff will use the experience gained in Phase One to further improve the functionality and content of the Internet web site and prepare the business requirements specifications for the work identified as within scope for Phase Two.

## **APPRENTICES**

Plans continue for investment in apprenticeships with the Council during 2012/13 with recruitment due to be undertaken in the coming weeks. With over 20 places already made available across services as diverse as, Business Admin, Early Years, Catering, IT, Adult Social Care and more, it is envisaged that the Council will be able to recruit enthusiastic and committed young people from our Borough to work in local government and contribute to the delivery of our services.

Our new Apprentices will commence in post in September and will receive training, support and development to assist them to enjoy successful careers with the Council.