

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

COUNCILLOR VICKY MCGURK

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
CHIEF OFFICERS: DEAN LANGTON  
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE  
Thursday, 27 January 2022

### **PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents;**

#### **Revenues and Benefits**

##### **Business Rates**

Following the budget announcements in October 2021, the full details concerning the new support measures for businesses have been issued by the Government. Included in the new measures is a new COVID 19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) for businesses not entitled to previous covid reliefs but who have been adversely affected by the pandemic. For those eligible, this relief will seek to reduce the business rate bills for the 2021/22 financial year. Funding of £3.679m has been made available for the CARF.

In addition, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure discount has been replaced with a discretionary relief for the 2022/23 financial year at the reduced rate of 50%.

A further new relief has also been announced that will extend the current transitional relief scheme and the supporting small business scheme for one year to the end of the current revaluation cycle.

A further one off grant has also been authorised by the Government for hospitality and leisure sector as a consequence of the impact from the Omicron variant. Qualifying businesses will receive between £2,667 - £6,000 grant, dependent upon the rateable value of the property they are occupying. Funding of £0.942m has been available for these grants

And the Government has increased the amount of funding for the Additional Restrictions Grant, with this third allocation specifically to provide direct business grant support. The Council's share of the additional funding is £0.221m and the Scheme for the distribution of this funding is being developed.

Work is ongoing to ensure all measures are implemented and adopted prior to the annual billing of businesses. Those business who may qualify will be contacted directly by the Business Rates team.

#### **Council Tax and Benefits**

The teams are now focused on the preparation and testing of the annual billing process.

### **COUNCIL: Delivered by a strong and resilient council;**

#### **Financial Services:**

The Team is currently working through the details and implications of the provisional Local Government Finance settlement. This is combined with work on the development of the Council's budget for 2022/23 (and at the same time as continuing to monitor the budget in the current financial year). In addition, because of delays due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, at the time of writing work is ongoing with external audit to finalise their work on the accounts for 2020-21, with the expectation that their Audit Findings Report will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in later in January 2022. Their

report on the Council's Value for Money Arrangements is due before the end of the financial year.

As indicated above, the Government has announced further funding support for businesses (details above) due to the continuing impact of the pandemic on the economy and the Council will receive further funding in relation to support for increasing vaccine uptake. We are awaiting further details of these in order to determine how much funding will be received and how it will best be utilised.

### **Audit & Assurance**

The Audit & Assurance Team has continued its work to deliver the 2021/22 internal audit plan. The Team reported its progress to the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 18 January 2022.

The Committee also received a report updating the members on the progress to date of the actions being taken to address the three significant issues identified in the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement and the timetable for the production of the 2021/22 Statement. The report noted that appropriate steps are being taken to address the issues identified. However, it also recognised that there were on-going demands in these areas leading to budget pressures, which are being managed and monitored by senior management.

A report was also presented to the Committee on the risk management activity in the period, which included the drafting of a corporate Risk Management Policy Statement and a review and refresh of the Risk Management Strategy and Framework. The Policy Statement sets out the Council's intent with the management of risks and includes an assessment of the Council's appetite for risk across a range of key strategic risk categories.

### **Corporate Procurement and Contracts**

The Contracts and Procurement team have been developing draft Procurement Strategy and Social Value Policy ready for approval shortly.

The Contracts and Procurement team have been working on a variety of tenders including for school building and refurbishment work, architectural design consultancy services, CCTV hub upgrade, CCTV hub staffing, SEND local offer website, alleygates maintenance, leadership and management development programme, carriageway surfacing, equipment for environment team, security services and traffic management.

### **HR Services**

#### **COVID-19 Support**

Due to the high rates of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, we are working closely with Directors and Managers across all areas of the Organisation on workforce planning. Daily absence updates are helping to identify where employees are unable to fulfil their duties either due being too unwell to work or having to isolate and work from home. This information is being monitored so that we can ensure critical services are prioritised and staffed accordingly.

#### **HR and Payroll System Implementation**

Stage 1 of the implementation of the new HR and Payroll Core System saw employees across BwD, schools and Nelson Town Council being paid from the new system in both November and December 2021. Ongoing work is continuing on this stage of the

process specifically relating to report building and the MI function. The recruitment module is also live and now accessible from i-Trent.

During Stage 2 the focus will be on Health and Safety, Performance and Talent Management and Case Management.

### **Legal & Governance Services**

**The Litigation Team** have undertaken a number of prosecutions under the 'Single Justice Procedure', which restarted in September 2021. This included 93 prosecutions (as at January 2022) for waste offences, which resulted in the defendants receiving financial penalty (between £220 and £660) and the Council were awarded costs ranging from £85 to £203 for each case.

**Legal Property Team** assisted on the sale of land at Fishmoor to Countyside Properties (UK) limited, which completed on 10th December 2021. The site will provide 386 dwellings, being a mix of private rented homes and affordable housing homes and will involve other developers in a joint venture arrangement. A s.106 agreement was also completed on the same date allowing for commuted sum of £395,000.00 for local educational provision.