

## **Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources 2021-22**

### **Outcomes Based Resourcing**

Setting a balanced budget has become increasingly challenging year on year since 2010, due to reduced funding from Central Government. In order to tackle the predicted future budget deficits, enable the Council to be financially resilient and deliver services that residents and businesses need and rely on, an outcomes based resourcing project has been initiated. This will involve a review of all of our costs, and the development of a balanced budget that delivers the positive outcomes for the district presented in our Core Plan 30. The first phase is using external advisers to help create an outcome focussed framework for investment and expenditure, undertake a benchmarking analysis of our income and expenditure and provide a plan for a programme of transformational strategic work packages.

### **Financial Services**

I should like to thank Paul Thompson and the Financial Services team for all their hard work in helping to maintain a sound financial basis for the Council and in producing a balanced budget for 2022/23. This last year has also seen the continuation of additional financial challenges and grant funding schemes related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The team are still largely working from home and have managed to accomplish the following :

- Successfully achieved all statutory deadlines including closure of the 2020/21 accounts, delivery of the Council's General Fund and HRA 2022/23 revenue budget and capital programmes as well as supporting Treasury Management and Capital Strategies.
- Processed over 16,000 grant transactions to local businesses with a value of over £64M, with the majority of successful applicants receiving their grants within 3 working days
- Provided government returns in allotted timeframes regarding business grants (plus subsequent post payment assurance checking), additional covid expenditure and loss of sales, fees and charges
- Assisted in the Outcomes Based Resourcing project
- Successfully Implemented the Government Debt Respite Scheme Launched on 1st May 2021. A standard breathing space is available to any client with problem debt. It gives them legal protections from creditor action for up to 60 days. To date, there have been 94 Lancaster applications to the scheme

### **Revenues and Benefits**

I should like to thank Adrian Robinson and the Revenues and Benefits team for all their hard work in developing and administering Covid grant schemes this year, in addition to their normal activities.

The service has succeeded in:

- Developing and administering a range of Business Grant schemes in line with Government Guidance and handling increasing customer service demands within existing resources.

- Increasing business rate collection rates year on year (2021/22 98.3% in year, 2020/21 97.2% in year)
- Working in partnership with the Business Improvement Districts, collecting £385k on their behalf, to benefit initiatives in the local area.
- Handling increased Housing Benefit take-up within existing performance targets (New claims processed within 22.6 days, change events within 5.4 days) ensuring that vulnerable customers receive assistance in a timely manner.
- Administering Self-Isolation payments to those suffering financial hardship as a result of an instruction to self-isolate
- Developing and administering the Council Tax Energy Rebate schemes in line with Government Guidance

## **Procurement**

I should like to thank Helen McMahon for all her efforts to enable social value to be incorporated into Council procurements, following approval in 2020 of a local procurement strategy and revisions to the contract procedure rules. This has included:

- Subscription to the Social Value Portal, which has included three officer training events, access to the Social Value Portal for tender submissions and availability of support from the Social Value Portal
- Creation of a page on the Intranet to provide officers with help, guidance, documents and links.
- Spending a significant amount of time creating template documentation and supporting technical officers to include social value in tender documents.

**Cllr Anne Whitehead**  
**Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources**