



Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor Michael Vincent, Resources Portfolio Holder	Council	14 April 2022

Executive Report: Resources Portfolio Holder

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1** To inform Council of progress on key objectives and the current position on issues within the Resources Portfolio, as set out below.

2. Finance

- 2.1** Members should now have received their council tax bills for the 2022/23 financial year reflecting this Council's decision to increase its element of the bill by just £5 on a Band D equivalent property to £214.74 or just 59p per day.
- 2.2** Whilst the total band D council tax (excluding parish precepts) is now £2,042.75, I wish to remind members that the Wyre element is just over 10% of the charge with the costs of Lancashire County Council (74%), the Police and Crime Commissioner (12%) and the Fire Authority (4%) all contributing to the final bill that drops through our residents' letterboxes.
- 2.3** 2022/23 sees a one year settlement deal for the fourth year running and our forecasts contain a higher level of uncertainty than previously experienced as a result. Our most recent financial projections in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) indicate a gap between expenditure and income of £3.2m in 2026/27.
- 2.4** This year, we expect Central Government to progress the postponed Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Retention Reform. We anticipate that more detail will be available in late summer with the next round of settlement figures available in December. Realistically this will be when we know the impact on Wyre in sufficient detail to be able to accurately update the MTFP. A briefing will be provided to Members later in the year to accompany the MTFP report in October.

3. Human Resources

- 3.1** Congratulations to Olivia Cordingley in Human Resources who won the Blackpool and Fylde College 'Rising Star Apprentice of the Year' Award. This is a popular category which receives many nominations, so it's a

fantastic achievement as she was met with tough competition locally. This is well deserved recognition and reflects not only Olivia's efforts but also the commitment and dedication of the team during a challenging period.

- 3.2** At the end of February 2022 agreement was reached on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2021 with staff on the lowest grade - SCP 1 receiving 2.75% and all other grades receiving 1.75%. Back pay for staff was implemented in March 2022. (Agreement on the pay award for Chief Officers and Chief Executives for 2021/22 had already been reached and implemented at 1.5%.) This pay award puts SCP1 at £9.50 per hour. On the 1 April 2022 the national living wage will increase to £9.50 which means that there is no headroom; something that the National Employers have tried to maintain over the past few years. The National Employers do not believe that Local Government should be a minimum wage employer and with forecasts that the national living wage will increase to £10.70 by 2024 this creates a challenge for subsequent pay awards. As yet the 2022/23 pay award has not been agreed and negotiations are expected to commence in May.

4. Contact Centre

- 4.1** In November 2021, Lancashire County Council allocated £270,000 to Wyre in Household Support Grant funding, which has been used in order to provide additional financial assistance to those Wyre residents who are on low incomes and struggling with rising household costs.
- 4.2** The scheme opened for applications on 17 December 2021. After a slow take-up initially, a surge in applications following a letter to families claiming localised council tax support led to the funding being allocated in full before 31 March 2022.
- 4.3** On 3 February 2022, the Government announced a £150 council tax energy support rebate for households whose homes are in council tax bands A to D, with a discretionary hardship fund (to be administered by the council) for those households on low incomes in Bands E to H.
- 4.4** Guidance received from the Government at the end of February 2022 stated that the award of the payment was conditional on occupation of the property on 1 April 2022. Therefore, payments have only started to be made after that date.
- 4.5** Wherever possible, payment of the £150 is being made by BACS using the council tax payer's Direct Debit (DD) details. We wrote out to DD payers in March advising them of the process and timescales for paying the rebate. We are looking to make payment within 14 days of collecting their April 2022 council tax instalment from them.
- 4.6** Over 14,000 of the households with homes in bands A to D don't pay their council tax by DD. We are in the process of writing out to these payers with instructions of what they need to do in order for payment of the rebates to be made to them. It is likely to take a significant amount of time to contact all concerned and verify their entitlement to claim the £150 payment.

4.7 Following its launch in July 2021, the popularity of the MyWyre account on the council website continues to increase with membership in March standing at over 14,000. The account gives citizens 24/7 access to council services without the need to speak to a council officer and all residents are encouraged to sign up.

5. Comments and questions

5.1 In accordance with procedure rule 10.3 any member of Council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue, which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with Procedure Rule 10.5.