



Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor Michael Vincent, Resources Portfolio Holder	Council	15 September 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 The draft statement of accounts for 2021/22 was published on 29 July, just prior to the 31 July deadline. Nationally only 62% of council's achieved this deadline and Audit committee will now review the draft accounts on 27 September.
- 2.2 Revenue slippage has reduced significantly this year after increasing the minimum threshold from £5,000 to £10,000, and in relation to 2021/22 the value (net of reserve funding) is £1,195,710 compared to £1,815,040 in 2020/21. As the slipped expenditure still needs to be incurred, the saving is returned to balances to be spent in 2022/23.
- 2.3 In summary, additional income from benefits and rent allowances, interest, sales, fees and charges (mainly legal fees), Housing Benefit Administration Grants and council tax annexe grant total £431,427. Savings in employee costs, non-domestic rates, special works, maintenance and hire of tools and equipment, materials-consumables, postage, the Mayor's attendant service, bank charges, advertising, external coaching, the YMCA Subsidy and private contractors total £1,442,023. These positive variances have been used to compensate for reduced income on rents totalling £19,264 and increased expenditure on water rates, legal costs and bad debt provisions of £100,385. Other minor positive variances total £177,909. The net savings have been used to top up the Council Tax Equalisation Reserve by £1,137,498, the IT Strategy Reserve by £498,898, the Leisure Management Reserve by £250,000 and the Capital Investment Reserve by £22,800. The remaining balance on the Performance Reward Initiatives (PRI) Reserve has been transferred into the Value for Money (VFM) Reserve to top this up by £22,514, allowing the PRI Reserve to be closed.

- 2.4** When you consider that our gross expenditure on services for last year was £54m, a net saving of £1,931,710 equates to less than 3.6%.
- 2.5** Our final position as at 31 March 2022, subject to audit, shows that we have £13.3m in general balances and £22m in Earmarked Reserves.

### **3. Human Resources**

- 3.1** In July it was reported that the 2022/23 pay award had not been agreed. The Unions had submitted a pay claim to the National Employers looking for a substantial increase with a minimum of £2,000 or the current rate of RPI, whichever is the greater, on all spinal column points. Other requests were also being considered and following a consultation with local authorities the response from the Employers in late July was to offer a £1,925 increase on all pay bands with an additional day's leave from 1 April 2023.
- 3.2** This would equate to around a 7% increase on Wyre's current payroll and although not yet accepted, it will form the basis of the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) assumption next month, subject to any further updates. Unison are running a neutral consultation with its members on whether the offer should be accepted or rejected from 15 August to 19 September and if an agreement with the employers is reached before the MTFP update is finalised then it will be incorporated.

### **4. Electoral Services**

- 4.1** Two by-elections have been held over the summer months and we welcome Richard Rendell, the new Conservative member for Cleveleys Park and Collette Rushforth, the new Independent member for Preesall.

### **5. Contact Centre**

- 5.1** £1.2m (75%) of our Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) which provides business rate relief for businesses adversely impacted by the pandemic, who weren't eligible for other reliefs, has been awarded to over 250 businesses under the first tranche of support. A further tranche is to follow this month with the expectation that our full £1.6m allocation will be utilised.
- 5.2** The council tax energy rebate schemes (mandatory and discretionary) have seen a high volume of £150 payments being made since its launch earlier this year (over 39,700). In total, £5.8m (over 85%) of our £6.9m allocation has been distributed so far to households in Bands A to D and those living in Bands E to H on low income. Further details on the energy rebate schemes and CARF are available on the council's website at [www.wyre.gov.uk](http://www.wyre.gov.uk).
- 5.3** Under the pooled Household Support Fund and Discretionary Energy Rebate scheme, further payments of £90 have been made to all pensioners on Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) (3,210) and £50 has been paid to all working age LCTS recipients (4,528). These payments are in addition to the £150 council tax energy rebate scheme

and other schemes administered by the Department for Work and Pensions, related to the cost of living crisis.

- 5.4** We are supporting Lancashire County Council (LCC) by making payments to sponsors of Ukrainian refugees with nearly £30,000 pass-ported so far to 30 sponsors. The funding for these payments will be provided by LCC in due course.

## **6. Asset management**

- 6.1** We completed the purchase of Neptune, fish and food processing park, on 9 August 2022. The site on Fleetwood dock consists of 11 industrial units. Leases have been drafted and are with the tenants solicitor for signing. It is hoped that the new tenants will soon start fit out and take up occupation of units prior to the end of 2022.

## **7. Comments and questions**

- 7.1** 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.