



Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor Lesley McKay, Resources Portfolio Holder	Council	14 September 2023

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** On 18 July, Lee Rowley MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety wrote to all local authorities to outline plans to address the significant backlog of local audits in England. The letter indicated that there will be further consultation over the summer to agree a way forward to complete the backlog and develop a sustainable solution to the timeliness challenges which the sector has faced in recent years.
- 2.2** The implementation of any changes agreed is expected to commence from December 2023, by which time it is anticipated that our 2020/21 accounts will have been signed off with progress well underway on the 2021/22 accounts. Based on the current proposed 'backstop' dates, we aren't anticipating that Wyre will be affected by the changes.

3. Governance and Business Support

- 3.1** There is currently still no agreement on the 2023/24 Pay Award. Unison's ballot for strike action ended in July and whilst they achieved the required mandate for strike action in a number of councils, most of them were smaller employers. The mandate for strike action was not achieved at Wyre. In light of this they have decided to await the ballot results from Unite before publicly confirming their next steps.
- 3.2** The National Joint Council unions recently wrote to the National Employers seeking an improvement to the pay offer. However in a letter dated 17 August the Employers reaffirmed the pay offer which for the majority of staff would be £1,925 (pro-rata to part-time employees) as full and final.

- 3.3** Two of the three local government unions need to agree the pay offer for it to be implemented but with Unite and GMB expected to continue the dispute for the rest of the summer and autumn unfortunately it is not anticipated an agreement will be reached in the near future. The Medium Term Financial Plan will be reviewed again in October and will reflect any developments.

4. Contact Centre

- 4.1** Council tax records show that 232 households in receipt of Localised Council Tax Support, are currently facing the additional financial burden of having to buy school uniforms for dependent children starting at senior schools this September. In order to help these families meet these additional costs, payments totalling £37,500 (£150 per child) have been made from the Household Support Fund (HSF) to the families concerned.
- 4.2** Applications for a payment from the HSF are currently being invited from couples or single parents with dependent children and gross incomes under £52,000 (couple) or £40,000 (single parent) per year, but not in receipt of any social benefits, other than child benefit. To date the volume of applications is low, though it is expected to increase towards the end of summer when there is a corresponding increase in household energy costs. We continue to promote the scheme through our usual channels, with adverts also taken out in local newsletter publications.

5. Comments and questions

- 5.1** In accordance with procedure rule 11.3 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 11.5.