



Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor Lesley McKay, Resources Portfolio Holder	Council	12 September 2024

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 pre-audit final accounts for 2023/24 were published in line with the statutory deadline of 31 May 2024. It should be noted that the 2021/22 and 2022/23 post-audit accounts are not expected to be signed off before the end of September owing to the delayed implementation of the national 'backstop' arrangements for local government audits. The General Election has caused further delays and many local authorities across Lancashire, and the country as a whole, are in the same position with approximately 500 local government accounts audits behind schedule.
- 2.2** Revenue slippage has typically been around £1.2m following the introduction of a minimum threshold of £10,000 and in relation to 2022/23 the value was (net of reserve funding) £1,197,750. This figure has risen in 2023/24 to £2,217,580 owing to a small number of large one-off items including staffing related slippage (£0.39m) which includes a provision for agency staff and training; asset maintenance which includes the dilapidations provision for work to be undertaken to Marsh Mill (£0.21m); delayed Local Plan Consultants Fees (£0.22m), and; a provision for VAT pending the completion of a review of Fees and Charges by PSTax and any interest due linked to the voluntary declaration at Fleetwood Market (£0.23m).
- 2.3** Around 10% (12% in 2022/23) of the slippage listed represents external funding that has not yet been spent so it would be counter-productive to refuse it on the basis that the money would ultimately be repaid to the funding body. As the slipped expenditure still needs to be incurred, the saving is returned to balances to be spent in the following year.

- 2.4** In summary, additional income from minor adaptations, Housing Benefit rent allowances, car parking fees, green waste subscriptions and container admin fees, various grants, HMO licence fees, investment interest and investment property totals £1,223,781. Savings in various employee related costs, car allowances, community payback scheme, tools and equipment, materials and consumables, postage, fuel, bad debt and ICT total £846,634. These positive variances have been used to compensate for reduced income on market stalls and planning application fees and increased expenditure on utilities, external audit fees, asset maintenance and wheeled bins – in total unbudgeted adverse variances of £303,778.
- 2.5** The net savings of £1,766,637 together with other miscellaneous under spends of £301,663 (less reserve funded items £66,650) have meant that the amount needed to be drawn-down from earmarked reserves has reduced by £2,001,650.
- 2.6** When you consider that our gross expenditure on services for last year was £54m, a net underspend of £2m equates to 3.7% and when Covid-Outbreak Management Funding is excluded, this reduces to 2.9%.

3. Revenues and Benefits

3.1 Household Support Fund:

The fifth round of the Household Support Fund began in April 2024 with Wyre receiving 80% of the funding from Lancashire County Council (LCC) in May 2024 and the rest in June 2024, totalling £417,026. Direct awards of £50 supermarket vouchers were made to those on Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) with dependent children totalling £79,400 and those on LCTS who are disabled pensioners totalling £31,400. An application-based scheme was launched on the Wyre Council website on 3 June 2024 and there have been over 290 applications so far.

- 3.2** Payments have been sent directly to seven foodbanks and the Fylde Coast Women's Refuge totalling £42,000. Internally, £13,500 has been allocated to the Housing Options team to help people who do not qualify for a Discretionary Housing Payment or a Homelessness Prevention Grant. So far, this money has been used to help nine individuals secure tenancies. Additionally, £5,000 has been allocated to the Affordable Warmth Scheme which helps those struggling to afford essential costs relating to heating and energy. Alongside LCC, Wyre are also supporting care leavers with a £200 supermarket voucher. LCC are responsible for contacting care leavers, who must then make themselves known to Wyre to receive this. They can apply on our website here: www.wyre.gov.uk/careleaver.

4. Transformation and Change

4.1 NJC Pay Award:

In response to the unions' pay claim seeking an increase of £3,000 or 10% to pay scales, whichever is greater, the National Employers have submitted a full and final offer of an increase of £1,290 to NJC pay points and 2.5% on any above. As at the time of writing only one of the three unions involved in the collective bargaining process have

accepted the offer – GMB. Unison and Unite members have both voted to reject it. For the pay offer to be confirmed a majority on the union side must agree to it. A further ballot is expected in the autumn. The current medium term financial plan assumes a pay award amounting to an equated 5.5% increase across all spinal points. This is in line with recent messages from central government in relation to public sector pay.

4.2 Chief Officers and Chief Executives Pay Award:

The pay claim for Chief Officers and Chief Executives is for any increase to be no less favourable than the NJC claim. A full and final pay offer of 2.5% on basic salary has been put forward by the National Employers. This has been welcomed by the Chief Executives but will not be formally accepted until the NJC pay agreement is finalised. The Chief Officers pay award has been agreed at 2.5%.

4. Property and Development Projects

4.1 At Marsh Mill the dilapidation works are progressing well with some recent delays owing to bad weather. The anticipated completion date is now the first week in September 2024 and expenditure to date is in line with the approved budget.

4.2 The Civic Annexe redevelopment project is progressing to plan. External project managers James Scott Associates have been appointed to complete the concept design and cost estimation for the proposed demolition and redevelopment of the site for start-up office accommodation.

4.3 At Cottam Hall Pavilion the concept design and cost analysis for the proposed refurbishment of the building has been completed and a Portfolio Holder report has been approved for the allocation of UKSPF to fund the project which is targeted for completion before the end of March 2025.

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.