

Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor A Vincent, Resources Portfolio Holder	Council	4 April 2019

## 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 2019/20 financial year reflecting this Council's decision to increase its element of the bill by just £5.80 on a Band D equivalent property to £199.74 or just under 55p per day.
- 2.2** Whilst the total band D council tax (excluding parish precepts) is now £1,817.26, I wish to remind members that the Wyre element is only 11% of the charge with the costs of Lancashire County Council (74%), the Police and Crime Commissioner (11%) and the Fire Authority (4%) all contributing to the final bill that drops through our residents' letterboxes.
- 2.3** 2019/20 marks the final year of the multi-year settlement deal and our forecasts contain a higher level of uncertainty than previously experienced. Our most recent financial projections in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) indicate a gap between expenditure and income of £2.7m in 2023/24.
- 2.4** This year, Central Government are conducting a Spending Review and various consultations on the Fair Funding Review, Business Rates Retention and the future of New Homes Bonus as well as responding to the impact of Brexit. We anticipate that more detail will be available in late Summer and Central Government have committed to making the next round of settlement figures available in early 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 held for Members later in the year to accompany the MTFP report in October.

### **3. Human Resources**

- 3.1** National Apprenticeship Week took place from 4 March 2019 and Wyre participated, sharing success stories on social media of past and present apprentices which showcased how apprenticeships can add real value to the organisation. A number of successful careers have begun as a result of these schemes and officers were more than willing to share their experiences as past apprentices or those currently taking part in apprenticeship training.
- 3.2** From 1 April 2018 we have enrolled five staff on new Apprenticeships. These include three existing employees who have commenced the Level 5 Operations/Departmental Manager Apprenticeship as part of a joint venture with Burnley, Preston, West Lancs and Hyndburn Councils. This experience will provide the opportunity to network with officers at other local authorities during the process and allow them to broaden their skills and experience to the benefit of Wyre.

### **4. Procurement**

- 4.1** Given the uncertainty around Brexit, negotiations on contract prices have been difficult but we have had success in the following areas to secure a price freeze for a period: Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) Clothing, Cleaning Materials, Stationery and other related Consumables. This will help to maintain expenditure within existing budgets.

### **5. Contact Centre**

- 5.1** Since Universal Credit Full Service was introduced on the Fylde coast in early December 2018, our housing benefit (HB) caseload has reduced by just over 300 claims. This is in line with expectations of around an 18% reduction by the end of 2019 and we will continue to monitor the impact.
- 5.2** We are now well under way with the project to implement a Citizens' Access Portal on the council website. Once operational the portal will give service users 24/7 access to their own records relating to council tax (including council tax support), HB, waste management and any other council service it is practical to give our customers access to. As part of the same project we have already introduced a Landlord Portal that allows HB landlords 24/7 online access to obtain information they are entitled to receive regarding their tenants' HB claims without speaking to a council officer.

### **6. Comments and questions**

- 6.1** 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.