



BURNLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO THE FULL COUNCIL

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PORTFOLIO: RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE
MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR MARK TOWNSEND

DATE OF REPORT: 20/12/2012

Progress on Strategic Objectives:

PF1 Improved Value for Money	
Action	Progress
PF1a- Rationalise office accommodation to reflect reducing workforce	<p>The migration of staff from Nicholas Street will produce a much needed saving of over £70k per year to assist in meeting the Council's budget target next year.</p> <p>A timetable for moves has been drawn up and the first of these moves involving the corporate engagement team is due to take place in January.</p> <p>The project is on track to deliver the saving. Most staff will be in their new locations and any remaining issues will be resolved well before the beginning of the next financial year.</p>
PF1b- Monitor savings or additional income assumed in the annual budget process and ensure that recovery plans are developed where shortfalls are identified	<p>The only outstanding area of uncertainty is in respect of increased fee income which is being monitored each month to ensure we are on track as the year progresses. Regular reports indicate that the expected additional income is being generated in most areas and that the overall expected amount of additional income is being achieved.</p>

PF1c- Apply the Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure that future reductions in funding levels are anticipated accurately and recovery plans put in place

After the detailed assessment of the entire budget by managers and finance staff the forecast deficit is now confirmed at around £2 million which is broadly in line with the projections made earlier in the year.

The main issue has been and remains the position around Government financial support next year. Most of the forecast deficit is caused by an assumed reduction in Government funding.

The Council has worked hard to argue the case for the retention of current levels of Government grant assistance. Even if the reduction in grant was limited to the Government's maximum figure for all Councils over the previous two years of 8.8% then we would still be able to balance next year's budget by making savings of £2million

The settlement announcement by the Government needs to be carefully considered to determine whether the difficult measures we have had to take to deal with the shortfalls expected over the medium term are sufficient.

The Executive has recommended savings through the deletion of around 21 occupied posts – meaning compulsory redundancies - and 16 vacant posts totalling £958,000. In addition to these savings a further £820,000 of other savings across our services has also been recommended. We have tried to limit the impact of these reductions on service delivery to the public

Despite these difficult choices there is further work to be done in reaching a balanced budget for 2013/14. During the period up to the end of February we will also be considering the medium term financial strategy following the Government grant settlement and our strategy around earmarked reserves and general balances.

PF1d- Seek savings from approved budgets in order to boost reserves and mitigate the need for service reductions in future years

The 2012/13 revenue budget is currently estimated to be around £500k underspent by the end of the year. A large proportion of this underspending is connected with the savings on vacant posts referred to earlier. Any underspending will firstly be used to meet the one-off costs of redundancies in excess of the budget provision. The balance will be transferred to earmarked reserves at the end of the year. This will increase the overall amount of funds

	available to assist in forward financial planning through the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
PF1e- Develop further measures for assessing the relative priority of the various services provided by the Council	Consideration of this issue has necessarily been deferred until the position on funding has become clearer. A report is due to be considered by Members next year for further discussions around the approach to be taken to any further savings requirements for future year's budgets beyond the £2 million required to balance the budget for 2013/14.
PF2 Improved Performance	
Action	Progress
PF2a- Undertake a review of the job evaluation assessment for all posts within the Council	Phase one of the project, where the Quality Assurance Panel and Job Analysts were to identify any potential queries in the factor scores, is now complete. The Job Analysts will be approaching Heads of Service in the new year to seek evidence for the evaluations identified.
PF2b- Develop and implement service plans to ensure that there is continuing improvement in performance across the Council	The annual review of the Council's strategic plan has begun. Our objectives will continue to focus on a cleaner, safer and more prosperous borough. Officers will make use of the recent census to inform the plan. Members of scrutiny committee will be consulted on the first major draft in the New Year, with approval sought from Full Council thereafter.
PF2c- Evaluate and update business continuity arrangements	Desk top exercise completed and minor updates have been made to respective plans. Arrangements in hand to test the Business Continuity Plan later in January 2013 along with Emergency Planning arrangements.
PF2d- Develop options for homeworking and hot desking	As previously reported, a range of improvements to our IT infrastructure will facilitate increased flexible working. One of these, Secure Sockets Layer Virtual Private Network (SSL VPN), has

	<p>been implemented and will be rolled out in the New Year. This will allow users to have access to web based systems from home.</p>
<p>PF3 Improved Services</p>	
<p>Action</p>	<p>Progress</p>
<p>PF3c- Develop proposals for key changes to Council Tax and Housing Benefit to ensure a continuing good quality service for Burnley residents</p>	<p>The Executive is recommending a local scheme for Council Tax Support for Council to approve on 20th December. The recommended option, following a widespread consultation exercise will be to calculate Council Tax Support in much the same way as Council Tax Benefit and cut the final benefit award for working age claimants by 8.5%. Support for pensioners will not be cut.</p> <p>The Executive is also recommending that additional Council Tax be levied on certain categories of empty property. Taken together, these proposals should ensure that there is no adverse effect on the Council's budget and there is no subsidy required from general Council Taxpayers.</p>
<p>PF3d- Implement the Council's Organisational Development Strategy</p>	<p>Work is ongoing in the three theme areas overseen by the Programme Board. Further to the last update the Council has been awarded the European Coaching Organisation Award in recognition of the work the Council has done under its Organisational Development Strategy to develop a coaching culture.</p>

<p>PF3f- Implement the IS Strategy</p>	<p>The council has implemented a new IT help desk system. The new application Sysaid has greater functionality and costs less than the previous system. Sysaid can scan all assets on the network and therefore effectively maintain an asset register. It can give the end user the ability to reset their own passwords and can maintain effective control of users to assets which will assist in any future accommodation moves.</p> <p>The work continues on development the corporate document management system: SharePoint which will see the replacement of the council intranet site, as well as network drives. The system will also automate processes that are currently either paper based or managed via e-mail.</p> <p>Both the move to Sysaid and Sharepoint demonstrates the council effectively using technology to reduce costs and improve performance.</p>
<p>Other Information</p>	
<p>Apart from the switch from Council Tax Benefit to Local Council Tax Support there are a number of other changes to the benefits regime that are going to impact on our residents from next April. The most significant of these is the restriction of housing benefit relating to under occupancy, now commonly known as the Bedroom Tax, for tenants of registered social landlords. We currently estimate that this will affect around 840 households in the Borough. We plan to write to all affected households in January setting out the potential implications of the changes.</p>	