

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

26 February 2020

### **COUNCILLOR ERIC SEWARD - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, REVENUES & BENEFITS**

For the period December 2019 to February 2020.

#### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

**Final Local Government Finance Settlement** – The Final Settlement was presented to Parliament as a written statement on 6<sup>th</sup> February. While this was supposed to be followed by a later debate on 12<sup>th</sup> February this has not yet taken place at the time of writing. This debate is now expected to take place during the week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> February. There are not however expected to be any changes from the Provisional Settlement and the Final Settlement announced on 6<sup>th</sup> February.

The funding allocations from the provisional settlement were confirmed. Despite repeated calls from Councils to increase the referendum limits on Council Tax to allow sustainable funding of services, no additional tax raising powers were granted. The impact of the settlement has been built in to the budget papers presented this evening.

**Business rates NHS appeal** – On the 12<sup>th</sup> December the Council received some excellent news in relation to this case which determined whether or not the NHS Trusts are charitable and the Court determined that they are not. It's extremely good news for the Council although we don't know yet if the NHS will appeal this element of the provisional judgement although the deadline to do so is 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

**February Reports** – a number of reports are being considered in February as follows:

- Budget and Council Tax setting – to set the Council's budget for 2020/21 and the Council's share of Council Tax for the year.
- Treasury Management Strategy – sets the strategy for the management of the Council's cash balances.
- Capital Strategy – a report which outlines the sustainability of the Council's capital programme and asset investment plans. This report also contains the debt management and MRP statement.
- Investment Strategy – a new annual item which outlines the risks of the Council's investment types and how these are mitigated, as well as the proportionality of the investments.

#### **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

**2019/20 Business Rates Pilot** – the monitoring of the business rates pilot commenced last August and has continued throughout the year. However as indicated within previous reports this additional one-off income will only be taken account of once the final year end position is established in June.

**2018/19 Final Accounts audit** – the external auditors returned in January to complete their final audit work having experienced significant capacity issues nationally. The accounts are now due to be signed off at the Governance, Risk and Audit meeting at the end of March. As at the end of January 2020, 85 organisations had not yet received their audit opinion on their 2018- 2019 financial statements. Ernst and Young are currently considering resourcing and scheduling issues for the 2019/20 audit work.