



## **Councillor Cliff Lunn**

### **Executive Member for Finance and Resources – December 2020**

#### **National lockdown support grants**

Following the announced national lockdown for all business in the non-essential retail, leisure, personal care, sports facilities and hospitality sectors, further support has been given in the form of grants to businesses affected by these restrictions for the period 5 November 2020 to 2 December 2020.

The Government has given funding to local authorities to support businesses which have been forced to close through this time, with a Local Restrictions Support Grant.

The scheme in Selby District went live on the 16<sup>th</sup> November and within 2 weeks the Taxation and Benefits team had paid 279 applicants grants at total value of £415,818, with most applications being paid within two days of receiving the application form.

A further local discretionary scheme has been developed to provide help to those businesses which, although not forced to close, have had their income and trade severely affected by the lockdown - this is the Additional Restrictions Grant and this was launched for applications on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Both schemes will provide a vital assistance to businesses in the District during these difficult times.

#### **Financial Impacts of Covid-19**

SDC has received £1,168k of the of the additional funding announced by government to help local councils.

This extra funding is welcomed and we have used it to support emergency spending on things such as personal protective equipment, homelessness support and enabling people to work from home so we can continue to deliver core services and it is also helping to cover losses in key income streams.

An initial claim for £71k relating to the fees and charges compensation scheme was submitted at the end of September – a further claim is due to be submitted in December.

As at the end of September these income and cost pressures were estimated at around £3.4m for the year, a slight improvement on the £3.8m reported at Quarter 1 but these figures are still very much subject to further change. The financial impacts are being closely monitored and revised through monthly updates to the Government.

The Quarter 2 finance and treasury management reports were considered by the Executive last month. These highlighted the financial pressures evident to date and the potential impacts for the rest of this year. Following approval of a revised estimate which included drawdown of an additional £1.4m from reserves, although some variances on spending and income were reported, overall the budget was broadly on track.

### **Draft Budget**

The Executive approved for consultation, its draft budget for the coming year. The consultation, which includes the public, local businesses, councillors, stakeholders and Policy Review Committee, went live on the Council's website on 4<sup>th</sup> December. The results of the consultation will be considered as we finalise our proposals in advance of February Council.

### **Digital Update**

The Digital programme continues towards ensuring we all have the right technology and skills to be able to improve how services are delivered to customers, through investment in a robust and resilient IT infrastructure.

Over the last 6 months the investment made, has delivered value for money and significant benefits for the Council. Using the technology and new skills, staff have been able to continue their duties and deliver services away from the office, to best serve customers, during covid-19 restrictions.

Notably the council has used the technology to move to online 'video' meetings and digital 'chat' groups. These have proved successful to ensure decisions have continued to be made and work progressed. In the last few weeks the focus had been on rolling out Microsoft OneDrive which moves all our information into the 'cloud' - improving access to documents, freeing up storage space and improving back up protection – and SharePoint which supports the simple sharing of files and supports collaboration, including with our trusted partners.

Notwithstanding covid-19 restrictions, the new technology has reduced travel across different sites and the requirement for printing, all contributing to new greener, environmentally friendly ways of working in the future.

Improvements have also been made to the website following new regulations announced, whereby all government sites must meet a new accessibility criterion. Since January this year, we have improved our website accessibility – making it easier for our customers to use the website – from a score of 3/10 to a good 8/10 and the improvements will continue. In addition to this, public council meetings are now streamed on You Tube making them more accessible and transparent to the public.

Overall, the digital programme has been vital to delivery of our services over the last year and has ensured we have been able to continue to respond to customer needs.

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