
REPORT TO:	Cabinet Member for Resources, Economy and Economic Development
DATE:	2 November 2022
SERVICE AREA:	Revenues, Welfare & Customer Services (RWCS)
REPORTING OFFICER:	Revenues, Welfare & Customer Services Manager (<i>Julie Gillett</i>)
SUBJECT:	Local Taxation – Provision of temporary staffing resource
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL DISTRICT
FORWARD PLAN REF:	N/A

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To approve use of New Burden funding to provide temporary staffing resource through to 31 March 2023.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 To approve use of New Burden funding for:
- Provision of up to 2.5 FTE temporary staffing provision until 31 March 2023 to provide additional resource into the local taxation team to reduce backlog position and provide resilience.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASON/S FOR DECISION/S

- 3.1 To provide additional temporary staffing within the Local Taxation team to tackle the work backlog, improving customer service and helping to reduce the number of complaints received.
- 3.2 To help us meet corporate objective of providing an excellent public service
- 3.3 New Burden funding has been provided by the Government as a result of the work required to administrate the Covid Business grant schemes and energy rebate work. The majority of the work undertaken has been from within existing resource. The proposed use of this funding will invest back

into the teams with a view to reduce backlog and improve performance for the benefit of our customers.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTION/S CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION

- 4.1 To continue without additional resource will reduce ability to clear work backlog, furthering the delay in response times for customers and increasing number of complaints.

5.0 THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Revenues, Welfare and Customer Services team has played a key role in the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic, in particular has administered the award of business grants totalling over £90 million and more recently in the recent administration of over 48,000 Council Tax Energy Rebates. This work was in addition to the statutory duty to collect, administer and recover Council Tax and Business Rates for nearly 75,000 properties in the Harrogate district.

- 5.2 The Local Taxation worktray has been in a backlog situation for a prolonged period of time. This leads to repeat contact, complaints and reduced customer service. The team have faced a number of challenges, including changes in staffing and vacancies, increased workload and contacts due to the Covid response work and £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate work, all of which have increased the pressure on an already busy team.

- 5.3 New burden funding has been provided by Government in respect of the costs incurred as a result of administering the COVID-19 Business Grants and the Council Tax Energy Rebate schemes. This report seeks approval for the use of up to £42,000 of this funding to provide temporary staffing resources through to 31 March 2023, providing an opportunity to invest back into the teams, make improvements to customer service and reduce the Revenues team work backlog.

- 5.4 Revenues section has currently been using temporary staffing resources to provide experienced revenues staff with quality assurance checking for both council tax and business rates. The ability to extend this provision through to 31 March 2023 will provide resilience and continuation of consistent knowledge within the team to be able to effectively prioritise on clearing the backlog. The cost of the temporary staffing provision, as detailed at paragraph 6.2, can be fully funded through the new burden funding allocation.

6.0 REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The following were considered: Financial Implications; Human Resources Implications; Legal Implications; ICT Implications; Strategic Property/Asset Management Considerations; Risk Assessment; Equality and Diversity (the Public Sector Equality Duty and impact upon people with protected characteristics). If applicable, the outcomes of any consultations,

assessments, considerations and implications considered necessary during preparation of this report are detailed below.

6.2 **Financial implications**

All costs associated with this temporary staffing resource for the Local Taxation team will be funded from the New Burden funding allocated by the Government in respect of the administration costs, including staffing, incurred for the COVID-19 Business grants and energy rebate schemes.

The total cost for the provision of up to 2.5 FTE staff to 31 March 2023 under the current contract with NEC Software Solutions is £42,000.

Legal implications

There are no associated legal issues

7.0 **CONCLUSIONS**

This proposal for the use of new burden funding to provide temporary staff will allow the team to focus on reducing the work backlog within the Revenues team and improve customer service.

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact (Julie Gillett, Revenues, Welfare and Customer Services Manager), if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at (*RWCS/Finance PO Box 787, Harrogate, HG1 9RW*) 01423 500600 ext 59764 or by e-mail – (julie.gillett@harrogate.gov.uk)