



Committee: **FULL COUNCIL**

Date: **18 JANUARY 2023**

Title: **LEADER'S UPDATE**

Report of: **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

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I know that the end of 2022 will have been very difficult for a great many people and also that for those individuals those difficulties will still remain. I do hope that despite this people have been able to enjoy time at Christmas and the New Year with family and loved ones.

Can I remind members present in the chamber that we have all the information about support with the cost of living in one place on the councils website and can I encourage you to share this information far and wide.

I pay tribute again to our community who are rallying around to provide local support as they did during the covid emergency. I also want to thank staff who have and are continuing to provide support to those in need in our communities.

As the tourist season closed the benefits team saw a 17% increase in new applications being made for housing benefit and local council tax support (262 claims) and a 7% increase in changes to claims (3643 changes) which is more than anticipated at this time of year. The team processed new applications within 14 days and changes within 5 days of the final piece of information being provided.

As at the end of November £188k of the £221k funding for discretionary housing payments had been allocated leaving £43k for allocation over the next 3 months. The team are monitoring the fund closely to ensure the most vulnerable residents are supported and can remain in their homes.

The energy rebate scheme administered by the revenues team closed at the end of November. In excess of 56,000 payments of £150 were made to eligible households across the Island. The government is now proposing to implement an alternative energy rebate scheme which aims to provide support to those households who have not received direct funding by means of a credit on their utility bill and although government have held webinars for local authorities to provide information of their intent to launch the scheme from January the revenues team are awaiting for further guidance to be published.

For the council, it was good to end 2022 on a high with the news about the proposed new film studio investment on the island. We are already aware of how idealic the island is as a film location , if this project is successful in getting planning etc we can look forward to new careers opening up for our young people in well paid jobs in the film production sector very soon.

You will, I am sure, be aware that Ferrovial have sold Amey Plc UK. I am able to confirm that Amey's Waste Treatment business, including the Isle of Wight waste contractor, will remain with Ferrovial, but with a new name.

We want to reassure residents, businesses, and schools across the Island there will be no changes to the waste service you receive. Your current crew will continue to collect your waste and recycling. We are committed to our residents to make sure they continue to receive the high standard of service and this will not change.

We continue to develop our new website and both the Revenues and Benefits Service and Waste and Recycling services are now live on the council's new Beta website in accordance with the planned programme of work to upgrade existing website presence.

As a Council, we have renewed our commitment by signing the Age Friendly Employer Pledge which is a nationwide programme helping employers address skills and labour shortages.

As an employer we are committed to exemplary practice in the recruitment, retention and support of workers in their 50s and 60s. We understand the benefits of a multigenerational workforce, and pledge to take action that will ensure that all workers have equitable access to opportunities within our organisation. As a result of the changes to adverts and a focus on the positives of working for the Council we are seeing some key vacancies being filled for the first time in 12 months with talented and experienced candidates.