

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No 11

meeting date: 15 SEPTEMBER 2010  
title: PUBLICATION OF EXPENDITURE OVER £500  
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES  
principal author: LAWSON ODDIE

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform members of the intended future publication of details of the council's expenditure over £500.

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Secretary, Eric Pickles, has called on councils to provide financial transparency by publishing spending information over £500 online by January 2011.
- 2.2 As part of this initiative some councils are already providing details of their expenditure over £500 on their websites, including Preston in the North West and have also provided a link to this information from the website of the DCLG.
- 2.3 The DCLG have also published details of their own expenditure for 2009/10 on their website, including the main Departmental Arms Length Bodies such as the Audit Commission.
- 2.4 This requirement is a result of the Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles' belief that greater openness in spending is the best way to root out waste, spot duplication and increase value for money.

### 3 FUTURE PUBLICATION

- 3.1 It is intended that the expenditure for this council be published on the council's website on a monthly basis, together with backdated publication to the 1 April 2010. We aim to start the publication of this information in October.
- 3.2 The information to be published would be broken down to committee level and would provide details under the following headings:
- Total amount of spend (over £500) over the reporting period.
  - Creditor's Name.
  - Category of Spend (to provide a high level of categorisation).
  - Sub Category of Spend (slightly more detailed level of analysis where needed).
- 3.3 The publication of this information will be limited in order to exclude some items of spend. Excluded expenditure would cover such items as:
- Banking investments.
  - Parish precepts.
  - Employee Remuneration and Members' Allowances.
  - Reimbursement of income collected on behalf of a third party.
  - Refund Payments and Grant Payments
  - Payments relating to benefits and homelessness payments.

3.4 An example page of information that would be published is reproduced at Annex 1.

## 4 ISSUES

4.1 As there has been no formal guidance on the level of information to be published, the template used is similar to the level of information published by DCLG. The provision of this information in the format at Annex 1 is based on our interpretation of the limited guidance that is available to councils at this time and it is therefore possible that the information required in such disclosures may change if further guidance is released in the approach to January 2011.

4.2 Due to issues around potential fraud we have been mindful of providing too much detail within the published information, as a number of councils have seen these disclosures used for fraudulent purposes. However, we are confident that what we are intending to publish and the procedures that we have put into place should allow us protection from such exposure to fraud.

4.3 Supplier confidentiality has been an area of concern in presenting this information. The Information Commissioner has made a judgment with regard to this and views the public interest as over-riding standard confidentiality clauses in agreements between public bodies and companies. There are also plans for new local government contracts and tender documents for expenditure over £500 to be published in full from January 2011.

4.4 Whilst the publication of this information is aimed at improving financial transparency, it is possible that rather than reducing the number of freedom of information requests, it may lead to an increase in such requests as potential future contractors look to gain commercial information.

## 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 In addition to DCLG having started to publish their spend data on their website, a number of local authorities have also begun to publish this information.

5.2 Publication of this information will be a requirement from January 2011, together with details of contracts and tender documents. Whilst the format used is the council's own interpretation of the limited guidance that is available at this moment in time, further direction from DCLG would be welcomed.

5.3 There may be an increase in the level of future freedom of information requests as a result of the publication of this information. However, this may be resolved by carrying out a future review on the level of detail being published and by taking advantage of any feedback received.

FINANCIAL SERVICES MANAGER

AA22-10/LO/AC  
6 September 2010

### Example of the level of Information to be Published for Spend over £500

Total Amount	Creditor Name	Committee	Category	Sub Category
6,195.24	Lex Autolease Ltd	Community Services	Contract Hire & Oper Leases	Vehicle Leases
1,863.65	Pendle Personnel Ltd	Community Services	Direct Employee Expenses	Agency Staff
3,164.60	Npower Ltd	Community Services	Energy Costs	Electricity
2,706.96	E.ON UK plc	Community Services	Energy Costs	Gas
1,739.26	British Gas Business	Community Services	Energy Costs	Gas
14,256.00	TJK Logistics Ltd	Community Services	Equipment, Furniture & Materls	Other Equipment & Materials
34,159.00	Zurich Insurance Company	Community Services	Indirect Employee Expenses	Employee Insurances
1,699.73	Tribal Resourcing Ltd	Community Services	Indirect Employee Expenses	Employee Recruitment
13,568.53	Samuel Cooke & Company Limited	Community Services	Direct Transport Costs	Vehicle Fuel
23,314.07	Zurich Insurance Company	Community Services	Premises Insurance	Building Insurances
1,990.00	SecureTest Ltd	Policy and Finance	Communications & Computing	Computer Equipment
6,931.95	Royal Mail Group plc	Policy and Finance	Communications & Computing	Postage