
OVERVIEW OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken by the Resources Scrutiny Committee :-
 - (a) **Work Programme** – Approval has been given to the Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme for the 2004/05 Municipal Year. In compiling the work programme consideration was given the Cabinet’s Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern. The Work Programme will be reviewed at each of the Scrutiny Committee meetings during the year. I have, as Chair of the Committee, also had meetings with the Head of Human Resource Management to gather some information about recruitment and retention of staff within the Authority, which I was asked to do by the Committee. Further information is being sought from other local authorities and this will be reported back to the Committee in due course. In respect of the work we have been undertaking in relation to the employment of craft apprentices within the Authority, the Director of Community Services has been interviewed by the Members of the Review Group and has advised them that his Department employs five apprentices each year and that this will continue for the next 5 years. The Group have also established that this Council has an open approach to work related training for all. Based on this information, the Group were satisfied with their findings and we have, therefore, agreed to suspend the workings of that Group. A progress report in relation to this will be submitted to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee in the New Year.
 - (b) **Service Plan Monitoring - PerformancePlus** - We received a presentation on Service Plan Monitoring and a demonstration on how the software package Performance Plus will assist this Scrutiny in looking at and monitoring the Authority’s performance and we look forward to the training sessions which should be rolled out to all Members later this year. I have , since the meeting, had discussions with staff in the Policy Unit to discuss further the training for Members and how it will be rolled out.
 - (c) **Corporate Governance** – We have received a report on the progress on the application of Corporate Governance within the Authority. Members might be interested to note that all the information in relation to the main documents and functions that support Corporate Governance are now available on the Intranet.
 - (d) **Development of a Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington** – We have had the opportunity to comment on this Council’s draft Social Inclusion strategy which is aimed at improving the life chances of those who are suffering or are at risk of suffering discrimination or disadvantage and we look forward to further details on the Action Plan in due course.

- (e) **Sickness Absence Review Group and Consultation Methods** – It is pleasing to report that Cabinet have, following consideration of our final reports in relation to sickness absence and consultation methods agreed to support our recommendations. Further work in relation to sickness absence will be undertaken by the Task and Finish Review Group and the findings will be reported back to us.
 - (f) **Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan** – Following consideration, at a special meeting of the Committee held on 9th September, 2004, of the draft Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan we have advised Cabinet that we support both documents. As both of the documents were assessed as ‘good’ in 2002 by the Government Office for the North East, there is no requirement on this Council to submit the plans this year.
 - (g) **Draft Procurement Strategy** – Members of the Resources Scrutiny Committee were asked to comment on the Council’s draft Procurement Strategy and we have also supported this and recommended its adoption by Cabinet.
 - (h) **Allotments** – Members will recall the work undertaken by this Scrutiny Committee in relation to allotments during 2001/02 and we have received a progress report on the action taken since that work was completed. It is pleasing to be able to report that, as a result of the work undertaken, this Council entered into an agreement with Groundwork West Durham, and that this partnership has been successful in establishing three predominantly self-managed Allotment Associations at Hummersknott, Barmpton Lane and Glebe Road and is helping them to fund and implement a number of improvements. Members and Officers from Middlesbrough Borough Council visited Darlington on 23rd September to compare our allotment service provision and operational requirements with their own and I, and other Members of the Resources Scrutiny Committee, attended this visit.
 - (i) **Revenue Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme 2003/04 Outturn and Monitoring Reports** – We have, as a standard item on future agendas, requested information on the Revenue Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme Outturn. In addition we will also receive the monthly monitoring reports to enable us to review the position on a regular basis.
 - (j) **Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Self Appraisal** - As part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process, the Scrutiny Committee have considered this Council’s Self-Assessment document. Members did have the opportunity to scrutinise the document in detail at an informal session which was held prior to our scheduled meeting and this proved to be a very useful exercise.
2. In addition to the above, I have also had various meetings with the Assistant Director, Financial Services, the Head of Human Resource Management and the Head of Policy on a number of matters relevant to the working of the Scrutiny Committee.

**Councillor Haszeldine
Chair Resources Scrutiny Committee**