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**DRAFT MEDIUM TERM CORPORATE PLAN  
(INCORPORATING THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2008-12)**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor John Williams, Leader**

**Responsible Director - Corporate Management Team**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To enable Cabinet to consider the draft Corporate Plan and MTFP in light of consultation and responses received and changes since the original draft.

**Information and Analysis**

2. Cabinet at its meeting on 16th January, 2008 approved the draft Corporate Plan and MTFP for consultation. The report presented at the meeting is attached at **Appendix 1** (updated for changes as highlighted in para 18 below). Since the meeting, consultation events have taken place and publicity given to encourage the public to respond to the consultation process via the Town Crier and the Council's website.

**General Consultation**

3. A leaflet (copy **Appendix 2**) has been used as the core method for the public to return their views to the Council. The leaflet has been made available at all consultation events, in main Council buildings, on the Council's website and replicated in the Town Crier therefore every household in Darlington has been given the opportunity to respond to the consultation. Set out below are details of consultation events undertaken :-
  - (a) Citizens Budget Panel
  - (b) Voluntary Sector meeting
  - (c) Six Talking Together events
  - (d) Staff and Trades Union meetings
  - (e) Local Strategic Partnership Assembly meeting
  - (f) Roadshow in the Cornmill Shopping Centre
  - (g) Resources Scrutiny Committee
  - (h) Various consultation events with Adult Social Care service users and Carers
  - (i) Consultation with Sadberge Parish Council
4. At some of these events officers gave detailed presentations and answered questions whilst at the Talking Together events officers were available to answer specific questions and in the Talktime sessions members of the public had the opportunity to raise issues with Cabinet Members and officers. At all events the public were encouraged to give their feedback via the leaflet or by letter.

5. The level of engagement at the consultation events and via the responses received is encouraging. Consultation continues after the production of this report and an update will be provided at your meeting. Attached at **Appendix 3** for Members information is a summary of responses, general comments and issues raised at events and feedback from the Citizens' Budget Panel.
6. The Council's Resources Scrutiny Committee as in previous years were consulted on the draft proposals and the minutes of their meeting are attached at **Appendix 4**.

### **Consultation – Non Residential Care Service Users**

7. During January and early February, Adult Social Services has undertaken extensive consultation with service users, carers and representative groups on proposals to create a more equitable charging structure for non-residential services. This consultation process has included presentation of the proposals at a large number of meetings; direct mail information to a significant number of service users and carers; media publicity; telephone and postal contacts; and a direct email comment facility on the Council's website. Whilst the formal consultation period ended on 8th February, some groups were unable to offer a forum for a consultation meeting until the week following. Officers have attended these meetings, and any additional comments which vary from those already received will be reported verbally to Cabinet at the meeting.
8. The consultation has also directly asked people to comment upon the impact of these changes as a whole, and thus contributes to the Disability Equality Impact Assessment for these proposals. The broad outcomes of consultation show that there is general consensus for the principle of having a charging scheme that applies equally to all people receiving care through Adult Social Services. Reassurances about the application of the national Fairer Charging Guidance and the relationship of charging to ability to pay have been welcomed by all groups who have been consulted with. However, it is also clear that the most people do not understand the information we currently provide on charging and financial assessment. The Implementation Plan will therefore, include the redesign of information leaflets on this topic.
9. It had originally been proposed that application of the proposed charges should be linked to each client's annual review of needs, services and financial assessment. This approach would work well for most of our clients. Concerns have however, been raised about the implementation of the proposals, particularly from carers of people with a learning disability who have never been subject to financial assessment or charging in the past as this approach would be unfair on those people with reviews early in the year compared with those with later reviews. An alternative approach of setting a date for all users of a particular day centre to be financially assessed, and commencing charging as a group has been raised several times. This could be achieved by making the changes all effective from 1st April 2008, subject to financial assessment, with advice provided to clients and carers on the likely amounts they will need to pay and provide for having regard to benefits and other income in the form of a general advice leaflet to service users and carers.
10. Concerns have also been raised that the application of these proposed changes to people who have never been financially assessed and charged in the past may act as a disincentive to continue receiving services. This is seen as a negative impact upon the individual that could potentially cost the Local Authority and NHS more in services to 'pick up the pieces'. However, officers have explained that financial assessments are also likely to have a very

positive effect on the take up of direct payments by individuals which enhance personal choice and control. Service users and carers will also be signposted to the Council's Welfare Rights Service to make sure benefit take up is maximised.

11. Having regard to the significant amount of consultation undertaken, it is considered that overall the general views have been positive.

### **Consultation – Petition on Residential Car Parking**

12. At the meeting on 16th January, 2008, a petition was presented regarding Residents' Parking Zones. The response was considered as part of a comprehensive report on Residents' Parking Zones at the 12 February Cabinet meeting.

### **Consultation – Employees and Trades Unions**

13. Briefing sessions were held for employees to inform them of the draft proposals and again they were encouraged to complete consultation leaflets. Meetings have been held with trades unions on the overall proposals and detailed proposals. Attached at **Appendix 5** is a written response to the proposals for UNISON together with papers prepared by individual staff groups. Detailed presentations were made at Cabinet and Resources Scrutiny Committees by members of the Public Protection Division who put forward cases for retaining services in Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Pest Control.
14. Appendix 5 raises a number of issues around budget reductions that Cabinet will consider alongside the other consultation response, for example the cases put forward in respect of Public Protection services. In terms of specific points raised responses/comments are listed below :-
  - (a) Legal Services restructure – officers agree it is appropriate to extend the consultation period beyond the budget consultation period and amend the budget at a later date if appropriate after the completion of consultation.
  - (b) Efficiency savings in Community Services – full consultation will continue on these reductions and the issues raised will be reviewed.
  - (c) Car Allowance – It is noted that the Trades Unions have suggested a compromise of removing one band of allowance rather than two. In terms of the other suggestions/issues, they will be picked up in the next stage of negotiations on the Single Status agreement.

### **Consultation Summary**

15. The report summarises the results of an extensive consultation exercise that gave every household in the Borough the opportunity to respond. The responses received do not give a firm overall view on the proposals however the views will assist Cabinet in reviewing their plans. The majority of respondents did not support the budget proposal overall singling out issues relating to specific services as their reason for non support. Issues raised at the events were wide ranging, as are the responses, but opposition was particularly strongly expressed regarding the proposals to cease payment of Parish Council Grants and the removal of bus subsidy for routes 17 and 97. Also, the desire for greater efficiency savings

to be made was expressed by a significant number of respondents.

16. Trades Unions have entered into meaningful dialogue with Management and put forward alternative proposals particularly in the areas of Environmental Health, Trading Standards and car allowances for Cabinet to consider.

### **Corporate Plan**

17. Attached at **Appendix 6** is a further refined Corporate Plan which takes account of changes during the planning process. The timetable for final production of the Corporate Plan as previously explained is much tighter this year and therefore the document attached does require some further minor refinements therefore delegation will be required to finalise the report. The main changes since the meeting on 16th January, 2008 are that the corporate plan now fully links to the emerging draft Sustainable Community Strategy themes and departmental plans. Performance indicators have been selected from the new National Indicator List to ensure effective performance reporting. The corporate plan will be presented again to Cabinet in March 2008 to sign off targets, along with the departmental plans for 2008/09.

### **MTFP**

18. A small number of changes/amendments were required to the original MTFP submitted to Cabinet on 16th January, 2008 and these have been incorporated in the document at Appendix 1, details are explained below
  - (a) Car Parking charges – corrections to Appendix 9 relating to the proposed charges for Chesnut Street short-stay car park and lorry park, Feethams Compound monthly contract parking and Park Lane Long-stay car park.
  - (b) Allotment charges-amendments have been made.
  - (c) Local Authorities Business Growth Incentive grant (LABGI) – the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have received a number of legal challenges to the bases of distribution of LABGI. Consequently, there is a risk that we may not receive the entire £1.4M projected grant in 2007/08. Officers have assessed the likelihood and potential impact of this risk as being manageable within the overall plan, but Members should be aware of its existence.
  - (d) The final grant settlement was announced on 24th January 2008 and largely confirms the provisional settlement figures used in the original draft MTFP. The grant for the next three years is £35,000 (0.1%) per annum less than in the provisional settlement.
  - (e) Railway Museum charges.  
The proposed charges are now included within Appendix 7 of the report, they were omitted from the original report and members are asked to consider the proposals.
  - (f) Charges for non-residential care services.  
The detailed charges based on the approved approach to charging are now included within Appendix 7 of the report.

- (g) Amendments to Appendix 9 Departmental Report – Corporate Services.  
The report has been amended in respect of Environmental health to reflect the inaccuracy of financial information used in the Audit Commission VFM data.
  - (h) The Local Government Pension Scheme, Durham Fund –  
The triennial revaluation results have now been received. Based on information received from the Fund administrators, the original draft MTFP included provision for annual stepped increases in employers’ contribution costs of £0.250M. The revaluation results are significantly better than we had been told to expect. There is a single increase in annual costs in 2008/09 of £0.050M. Consequently, the provision in the draft MTFP can be reduced by £0.200M in 2008/09; £0.450M in 2009/10; £0.700M in 2010/11 and £0.750 in 2011/12.
19. The amendments described above have been built into an amended report, which is attached at Appendix 1.

### **Disability Impact Assessment**

20. Disability Impact Assessments have been undertaken on each budget proposal, identifying issues and looking at mitigating factors where appropriate.

### **Conclusion**

21. Cabinet have received details of the extensive consultation exercise and minor amendments required to the plan. Cabinet are invited to consider the revised MTFP at Appendix 1 in light of the consultation results and the amendments detailed in paragraph 18.

### **Legal Implications**

22. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

### **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

23. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. Due to the overarching nature of this report, clearly the Council’s plans to continue its current levels of service in the majority of service areas will continue to have a positive impact in the area of Crime and Disorder.

## **Council Policy Framework**

24. The issues contained within this report require Council approval and will be presented to Council on 28th February, 2008.

## **Decision Deadline**

25. The substantive content of this report at Appendix 1 has been considered by Resources Scrutiny Committee and is scheduled for Council on 28th February, 2008 and for the purposes of call-in this is not an executive function.

## **Key Decisions**

26. This is a Council decision and has been advertised in the Forward Plan.

## **Recommendation**

27. It is recommended that :-

- (a) Cabinet note the revised Corporate Plan and MTFP at Appendix 1.
- (b) Consider the proposed charges for the Railway Museum.
- (c) Consider the MTFP in light of the results of the consultation.
- (d) Approve the Corporate Plan as attached at Appendix 6 and recommend to Council that the plan be approved with delegation given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to make any minor amendments.
- (e) Recommend a MTFP to Council.

## **Reasons**

28. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) To note changes to the Corporate Plan and the MTFP since 16th January, 2008.
- (b) To enable the production of the Corporate Plan.
- (c) To enable the Cabinet to recommend a budget to Council.

## **Corporate Management Team**

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