

The Chief Executive
Darlington Borough Council
Feethams
Darlington

Reference: Medium term Financial Plan
Conservative group consultation response
Appendices: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17 and Parish Grants.

Dear Ada

This written response refers to only some parts of the MTFP document. Other matters will be addressed in the appropriate Scrutiny Committee or in Council

Appendix 6-----Adult Social Care

We support this report

Document was dense and difficult assuming a detailed knowledge of social care and using excessive jargon. Greater clarity would have ensured a wider debate and readership.

There are clearly people in Darlington with substantial, complex needs which will often have to be met at public expense. However better off families must realise that public subsidy will be concentrated on the most vulnerable and the application of benefits will come under strict scrutiny...

Appendix 8----The Provision of Arts venues

We support this report

Darlington is high on the UK list of the provision of Arts and consolidation in the Arts Centre has contributed to this achievement.

We consider any loss of Arts provision in Darlington would be an unacceptable loss to the town's future economic development.

The Arts Centre

In respect of the Arts Centre this has widespread use and support and contains all the elements of good arts provision.

We acknowledge that the costs of maintaining a large, elderly building poses a real financial risk , but fear that dispersal of its current activities risks decline and atrophy of valued artistic endeavour.

Should the majority group choose to close the Arts Centre, all proceeds from its disposal should be ring-fenced to provide a replacement central facility delivered as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.

As previously this does not have to be a purpose built building.

We also consider Darlington for Culture and other interests in taking over the running of the facility has commercial merit providing TUPE obligations are set aside.

Appendix 9-----Civic Theatre

We support this report and congratulate the officers for this outcome.

We are pleased a commercial opportunity has arisen to save the Civic Theatre. The theatre is a jewel in our Arts provision and we will support the proposals wholeheartedly.

Appendix 10-----Third sector strategy grants

We support this report

We believe this is a sensible approach to funding and we can fully support the philosophy of “Musts” and “Wants”. In the present economic climate we see no point considering “Nice to haves” from which support should be withdrawn.

If such organisations are to be supported then they should be available to all the residents of the Town.

Appendix 16-----Darlington Library service

We do not support this report

The “Library service “is a provision for people of all ages and should serve the whole town.

We believe that imaginative changes could secure the future of Cockerton library and the greater use of volunteers must be considered which would address the principal costs of both libraries.

Experience from other parts of the country confirms that such an approach can be effective.

Appendix 17----Car Parking

We do not support the report

The report is well presented but we disagree with its conclusions.

We feel car parking charges make a sizable contribution to the flight of shoppers from Darlington to other local towns.

The effect on Darlington's economy is profound and we should not exacerbate the situation, particularly at this time of great difficulty for the retail sector of our economy.

Parish Council Grants

We do not support the withdrawal of Parish grants

Unlike others who receive grants, residents in rural wards provide a large income to the Borough Council via Council tax. In the current financial year that figure will be almost £7 million. The parish grant is £35000 only, that is 0, 51% of that income.

The grant is used to provide facilities in the villages that are not provided by the Borough Council and the removal of the grant will result in inequality between rural and urban residents.

Yours Sincerely



On behalf of the Conservative Group
Cllr H I Scott OBE

Enclosed: Residents correspondence