
OVERVIEW OF CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under my Consumer and Environmental Services Portfolio :-
 - (a) **Best Value Review of Regulatory Services – Stage 3 Report** – Following a presentation of the outcomes from the Best Value Review of Regulatory Services, we approved the Improvement Action Plan which is expected to bring about a step improvement in services over a five year period.
 - (b) **Site Protection for Land Occupied By, or Anticipated Might be Occupied Illegally, by Travellers** – Cabinet gave approval to engineering works, at an estimated cost of £27,850, being undertaken to prevent travellers illegally occupying land and other sensitive sites within Darlington. Additional annual maintenance costs of £10,500 and a comprehensive strategy for dealing with illegal traveller encampments to be completed by the end of February 2005 was also approved. I can also report that these works have now been completed and workmen have now erected earth mounds stretching to more than half-a-mile to act as barriers to protect the sites. Gates and limestone blocks have also been put in place to prevent access to the five sites.
 - (c) **Promoting Fairtrade** – Following a recommendation from the Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to promote Fairtrade within Darlington, I can advise that Cabinet have supported this recommendation and in order to do so, also agree to the five goals to be met to achieve this status. The five goals include the Council passing a resolution to support Fairtrade and agree to serve Fairtrade tea and coffee at meetings and in offices, canteens where refreshments are offered; a range of Fairtrade products to be made available in the area's shops and served in local cafes/catering establishments; Fairtrade products must be used by a number of local workplaces and community organisations; attract media and popular support for the campaign; and the setting up of a local Fairtrade Steering Group to ensure continued commitment to the Fairtrade Town status.
 - (d) **Recycling** – Recent figures show that this Council is on course to achieve its 2005/06 recycling target **one** year ahead of schedule. Figures for the first six months of this year indicate the Council is already on target to achieve a figure of nineteen per cent, above the eighteen per cent figure set by the Government. It is also envisaged that with the £750,000 improvements to the Civic Amenity site at Whessoe Road and the success of the kerbside recycling scheme, the final figure for next year is likely to exceed 25 per cent. The Waste SMART Team who were recently working in Darlington canvassing, visiting schools and hosting events will also help towards getting the recycling message across. The Council's Recycling officers have also hit the streets of Darlington last

month during 'The Big Recycle' as part of a national drive to increase the amount of household rubbish we recycle. Aerosol cans are now collected and arrangements are in hand for Christmas Tree and Christmas Card recycling.

- (e) **The French Market** – Was held on High Row, 22nd – 25th October, 2004 and was a great success. Arrangements are in hand for a "Winter Wonderland" Christmas Extravaganza in the run up to Christmas.
- (f) **Trading Standards** – Free electric blanket testing was held 18th – 20th October, 2004. Fireworks – an officer working group delivered a comprehensive action plan on fireworks.
- (g) **Memorial Safety** – Inspection and making safety memorials has now been complete in North Cemetery and closed churchyards.
- (h) **CCTV** – Cameras are now operational in South Park and North Cemetery.
- (i) **Community Partnership** – The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy has been produced and work will start on developing action plans in community partnerships.
- (j) **Street Cleaning and Refuse Collection** – The Zonal Cleaning Pilot at Bank Top has been extended into adjacent areas. Christmas collection arrangements have been finalised and will be advertised with the service returning to normal working on 5th January, 2005

Councillor Steve Harker
Consumer and Environmental Services Portfolio