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**DEFRA AWARD FOR DRINKFIELD CIVIC AMENITY SITE IMPROVEMENTS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) -Councillor Chris McEwan,  
Community Protection Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To inform Cabinet of a successful bid made to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to enlarge and improve the Drinkfield Civic Amenity Site, and to advise on the revenue consequences as a result of the bid being successful.

**Information and Analysis**

2. A bid was submitted to DEFRA in November 2003 to improve the Drinkfield Civic Amenity Site, the details of which are attached as Appendix One. Briefly the bid was to fund enlarging the existing site, providing containers for separating materials out for recycling, and improving services at the site. The DEFRA fund provides for all capital costs and additional revenue costs in the first year only within a capped total sum.
3. DEFRA provisionally awarded Darlington a grant covering the bid in full on 23rd February 2004. This provisional offer was confirmed on 16th April, the value of the grant being £730,314.
4. If the works funded through the DEFRA grant are carried out they will bring the following benefits.
5. Customer Demand – the recycling containers will include new facilities for recycling cardboard and other materials and additional facilities for green waste, for which great demand have been expressed by residents over recent months.
6. Improved Service – the existing site suffers from traffic congestion on summer weekends and bank holidays in particular. The road layout of the proposed enlarged site will accommodate more vehicles within the site, and the access to containers will facilitate quicker throughput. This should contribute to easing the existing congestion. (Durham County have already improved ten sites in this way and have confirmed that the improvements do not lead to increased use, which could otherwise exacerbate congestion). In addition a CCTV system would be installed to deter illegal disposal of trade waste.
7. Improved Performance – in a full year of operation the site can increase recycling (including composting) by 10 percentage points, pushing Darlington in to the top quartile for BVPIs

82a (recycling), 82b (composting) and 82d (landfill). Performance against BVPI 90c also has the potential to be raised (satisfaction with the Civic Amenity Site).

8. The increased recycling and composting rate will also raise the overall CPA PI score for the waste element of the environment block from 49% (scoring 2 out of 4) to around 60% (scoring 3 out of 4). The effect of a 3 out of 4 score for waste would be to consolidate the overall environment block score at 3 (it should be noted that this is based on the existing CPA methodology which is expected to be reviewed in 2005/06).
9. The increased recycling of biodegradable waste (green waste, cardboard, paper and textiles) will contribute substantially to assisting the Council to meet its targets under the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS). Under the LATS scheme the Council will be permitted to landfill only a fixed tonnage of biodegradable waste, which will be reduced annually. Failure to meet targets will necessitate either buying or borrowing (from future years stock) permits to landfill waste, or paying a penalty for non-compliance. The additional recycling at the improved Civic Amenity Site will provide a buffer against these challenging targets.
10. However, the works will also bring a number of challenges, the greatest of which is additional revenue costs, discussed below under Financial Implications. Others are:
  - (a) Temporary Closure – the site cannot be enlarged and improved without being closed for an estimated six to eight week period. This will have to be managed in terms of publicity and will no doubt create increased pressure on other waste collection services (weekly refuse collection and bulky waste collection). Officers are examining opportunities to set up temporary facilities to cover the period of closure.
  - (b) Timeliness of works – DEFRA have stated categorically that there will be no slippage of payments beyond 2005/06. Therefore it is essential that works progress as programmed and that any revisions required to the programme are identified and reported to DEFRA at the earliest possible moment. It is anticipated that the works will be carried out over a 6 to 8 week period in March/April 2005, but ensuring that the site is open during the busy Easter period.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

11. In October 2003 the Public Protection and Community Partnership Scrutiny Committee considered the need to develop the Civic Amenity Site through a Task and Finish Review and concluded that 'this Committee gives its full support to the submission of a bid to DEFRA for recycling schemes'.

### **Financial Implications**

12. All of the capital costs identified (£606,184) will be met through the DEFRA grant, but if the project overspends the Council will be liable for additional costs. The works will therefore have to be closely managed to ensure that the project is delivered within budget. Additional revenue requirements to be funded by Darlington Borough Council will commence from April 2006. (DEFRA will pay revenue costs from the opening of the site until 31 March of the year of opening, which is planned for 2005). The additional revenue

costs are expected to be £120,000 per annum (resulting from increased haulage, recycling costs and incentive scheme for site operators). However, if the development does not go ahead, additional costs may still be incurred through the LATS targets referred to in paragraph 10 and these could be higher than the cost of operating the upgraded Civic Amenity Site. These additional revenue costs have not been built in to the Medium Term Financial Plan and therefore represent an additional burden.

### **Legal Implications**

13. 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**

14. 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. The proposal to develop the Civic Amenity Site includes a CCTV system designed and intended to deter the illegal tipping of trade waste at the site. Traders arriving at the site will be refused access and directed to appropriate disposal sites.

### **Council Policy Framework**

15. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

### **Decision Deadline**

16. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does represent an urgent matter as a decision on the DEFRA bid must be made soon to enable compliance with the timetable set by DEFRA.

### **Key Decisions**

17. This report has been advertised in the Forward Plan as a key decision because the development of the Civic Amenity Site will provide an enhanced service that will effect the Borough's population.

### **Recommendation**

18. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) The project to improve the civic amenity site with the aid of DEFRA grant be approved;

- (b) Additional revenue resources of £120,000 be provided in the Council's Medium Term financial Plan from 2006 – 07;
- (c) That the release of Capital Grant from DEFRA of £606,184 to finance the capital work outlined in the report be approved;
- (d) Options to mitigate the effects of the site closure be examined and implemented if the cost is contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

### **Reasons**

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

- (a) The service offered to residents for the recycling and disposal of household waste will be enhanced.
- (b) The Council will be better placed to meet its landfill diversion targets under the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme.

**John Buxton**  
**Director of Development and Environment**

### **Background Papers**

Darlington Borough Council: Bid to DEFRA Waste Minimisation Fund : Enlarged and Improved Civic Amenity Site. November 2003.

Bill Westland : Extension 2557