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**OVERVIEW OF CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under my Consumer and Environmental Services Portfolio:
  - (a) **Proposed Rent Free Period for Markets** – As a result of changes to the programme for the Pedestrian Heart works along West Row, and as a gesture of goodwill, we approved a period of four weeks free of rent to the Market businesses that trade within the Indoor market building and the Outdoor Market on the normal market days of Monday and Saturday.
  - (b) **Fair Trade** – The Council has achieved the Fair Trade Town status demonstrating the commitment of the Council and businesses towards fair trade. Acknowledgement should be given to the work of the Fair Trade Steering Group, without whom this status would not have been achieved.
  - (c) **Relocation of Register Office** – I am pleased to be able to report that the Register Office relocated on schedule to its new premises, Backhouse Hall, Bull Wynd on 4th December, as part of the £5 million refurbishment of the Dolphin Centre. The new premises have been developed with the customer in mind. The large reception area provides separate facilities for customers to wait for registration functions, a family research area and play facilities for children. There are also baby changing facilities. Staff have a large administration area to work in when they are not in the process of registering Births and Deaths, or taking notices of marriage or civil partnership. The strong room has plenty of provision for expansion and is temperature controlled for the protection of the historic records.

Upstairs the new facilities provides two ceremony rooms and a bride's changing facility. The entrance to the Ceremony Rooms is separate from the day to day working of the office and is located in Bull Wynd. The Registration Service will be working in partnership with the Dolphin Centre, who can provide catering facilities for Ceremonies and other events.

The forthcoming Citizenship Ceremony will be held in the new facilities on 22nd February, 2007. All Members have been invited to the Ceremony.

- (d) **Trading Standards – Darlington Counterfeiter Sentenced** – Darlington Borough Council's Trading Standards Section successfully prosecuted a Darlington resident (John Thomas Liddle) for offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994 and the Copyright Designs & Patents Act 1988 following his arrest and the seizure of a large quantity of CDs, DVDs, computer games and copying equipment in August 2004. The case was referred to Teesside Crown Court for sentencing. In conjunction with the Regional Asset Recovery Team, an Application under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 was made for the confiscation of assets. On 5 September 2006, John Liddle was given a 12-month custodial sentence after pleading guilty to 27 offences. A Confiscation Order for

his realisable assets of £2,799.87 was granted, along with a forfeiture order for all his equipment. The certified benefit was determined as £94,227.15. An order for costs was not given.

- (e) **Trading Standards – Superpound** – Superpound were prosecuted on 2 November 2006 for supplying toys which did not comply with the Toy (Safety) Regulations 1995. The three painted wooden toys did not comply with the regulations due to the paint containing an excess of lead and chromium. They were fined a total of £8,000 with £1,276.53 costs.

2. I have attended the following meetings in respect of my Consumer and Environmental Services Portfolio:

- (a) Fire Authority Regional Management Board, 1st December
- (b) Chaired the Environmental Forum, 11th December
- (c) Chaired Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority Performance sub-Committee, 14th December
- (d) Audit Committee, 20th December
- (e) Groundwork Trust Steering Group, 17th January
- (f) Briefing meetings with various Directors and Assistant Directors

**Councillor Steve Harker**  
**Consumer and Environmental Services Portfolio**