
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) **Increases to Taxi Licensing Fees and Charges** – We approved an increase in fees relating to hackney carriage licences, private hire licences and private hire operator licences. The Council is not permitted to profit from these fees, and thus the fees are set so that the Council recovers the cost of running the service. To prepare for the Cabinet report Officers took the opportunity to review the costs associated with providing the service.

It should be noted that only the vehicle and operator licence fees are to be increased, with the driver licence fees, and additional charges being held at their current level.

- (b) **Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – Fixed Penalty Notices** – We give approval to extend the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), made possible by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. FPNs have already been successful in addressing some types of low level crime, specifically relating to environmental offences. Cabinet also set the level of fine and any discounted charges for Fixed Penalty Notices.

There is a later item on the Council agenda that recommends approval to extend the Director of Community Service's delegated powers effectively to enable the Director to appoint Officers who can issue additional FPNs.

Whilst FPNs are useful in tackling low level crime, it is proposed that Council will continue to pursue major offences via the Courts.

- (c) **Recycling** – New trees are being planted in Africa and around Darlington as part of a scheme run by Alupro, a national company that recycles aluminium, offering a tree to local Councils for every tonne of aluminium that is recycled in a year. As part of the scheme ten per cent of the trees are sent to Africa and as such, seven native saplings have been delivered courtesy of Darlington residents.
- (d) **Waste Management** – The project to procure new waste management has progressed and in January we formally advertised for expressions of interest to tender for a contract to include recycling, treatment and disposal of waste.
- (e) **Trading Standards** – In January we signed a joint protocol with the Police to manage under-age test purchases of alcohol. A test purchase initiative is now being developed. There is strong evidence that some anti-social behaviour arises from the sale of alcohol to under age people. The test purchase initiative will enable us to find and take action against those outlets that allow under age alcohol sales.

(f) **Fairtrade** – Members will recall that in December last year Darlington was awarded Fairtrade status by the Fairtrade Foundation. To celebrate this achievement and to recognise the hard work of many people over the last 2 years in reaching Fairtrade Town status, a launch event has been organised for Friday 9th March in St Cuthbert's Church Hall.

Samuel Magona from the Gumutindo Coffee Co-operative in Uganda will attend the launch. I hope Members will be able to attend to listen to Samuel giving a first hand account of how Fairtrade has benefitted his life and his family.

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

- (a) Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny, 23rd January
- (b) Chaired meeting of Smoke Free Darlington, 25th January
- (c) Public Protection Forum Meeting, 25th January
- (d) Regional Management Board of North East Fire and Rescue Authorities, 26th January
- (e) Chaired Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority, Performance sub-committee, 29th January
- (f) Community Partnerships Steering Group, 6th February
- (g) Transport Forum, 19th February
- (h) Citizenship Ceremony, 22nd February
- (i) Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority, 23rd February
- (j) Briefing meetings with various Directors and Assistant Directors.

Councillor Steve Harker
Consumer and Environmental Services Portfolio