
OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Resources Portfolio:
 - (a) **Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2007** – We have recommended to Council that the Capital Strategy and the Asset Management Plan be approved. Both of these documents will provide the Council with guidance to follow when capital investment and asset management decisions are being made.
 - (b) **Scheme of Delegation** – A revised Scheme of Delegation to Officers to reflect the changes brought about by the recent Council restructure has been approved. Changes have also been made to generally improve the Scheme and to reflect delegations not formally recorded within the Scheme of Delegation.
 - (c) **Local land Charges – Adjustment of Fees** – Following a change in legislation, local authorities are now required to set the level of fees charged for its local land charges service, based on the cost of provision. In line with this requirement, we have revised our scale of fees and the cost of undertaking a local land charge search has been reduced to £129 to £82.
 - (d) **Renewal of Insurance** – Officers have looked into the potential for the joint procurement of its insurance services with Stockton. Risk Management and Insurance Brokers AON, were commissioned on behalf of both Councils, to undertake a feasibility study. Their results showed that they were confident that in developing a consortium or joint procurement approach potential insurance premium savings are likely to be achieved for both Councils. We have therefore agreed to endorse a consortium approach for the procurement of insurance with Stockton Borough Council and potentially other Councils. However, a final decision will not be made until tenders are received. In the meantime, we have extended our insurance contract with Zurich Municipal until 31st May, 2008, to bring it in line with Stockton's.
 - (e) **Darlington and Stockton Partnership** – Following consideration of the detailed business case, we have approved the formation of the Darlington and Stockton Partnership to provide shared support services. Additionally an independent review of the project and its supporting business case has been undertaken; this review too supported the proposal. The Partnership Manager post has been recruited to. The business case suggests that £7.4m can be saved over the life of the project. This will be split between the Councils on the basis of each Council's current costs of services involved.

- (f) **Management of Change Severance and Protection Payments** – As a result of changing regulations associated with age discrimination legislation it has been necessary to review severance payments for employees whose employment is terminated on redundancy or efficiency grounds. Additionally a salary protection scheme was agreed for employees who are downgraded as a result of restructuring.

The removal of discretionary ‘added years’ has been replaced with discretionary payments. These payments will be based upon a statutory matrix with a multiplier of 2.2, based on actual weeks salary. This option will be available to employees both over the age of 50 and below.

- (g) **Delegated Powers – Additional Revenue and Capital Expenditure** – Cabinet agreed to make a request to Council to increase the delegated amount of Capital and Revenue Funding that Cabinet is permitted to approve with referral to Council.
- (h) **Capital Programme – Release of Funding for Planned Maintenance** – Funding of £250,000 has been released from the 2007/08 Capital Medium-Term Financial Plan to undertake capitalised repairs and planned maintenance to the Council’s operational and non-operational portfolio in line with asset management good practice.
- (i) **Capital Programme Monitoring Report – September 2007** - We have considered the current position of the spending and resource levels of the Capital Programme.

2. I have attended the following meetings in respect of my Resource Management Portfolio:

- (a) Various briefings with Directors and Assistant Directors
- (b) Various Tender Panels and Tender Openings
- (c) The Darlington Partnership Assembly – 5th October
- (d) Community Grants – 12th October, 16th November
- (e) Resources Scrutiny – 18th October
- (f) Audit Commission (Direction of Travel interview) – 19th October
- (g) Visit by Cllr Laing, Stockton Council – 1st November
- (h) Joint Consultative Committee – 9th November

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio