
OVERVIEW OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Resource Management Portfolio :-
 - (a) **Voluntary and Community Sector Funding** – Following a review of the current arrangements for providing funding to the voluntary and community sector, a number of changes have been implemented. One of the changes is that I, as Cabinet Member with the Resource Management Portfolio, will have authority to make decisions on applications for community grants.
 - (b) **Corporate Governance** – A number of amendments to this Council’s Local Code of corporate Governance have been approved. It is pleasing to report that the Code has been recognised by the Council’s Auditors, PriceWaterhouseCoopers as a key management tool for strengthening and improving the Council’s corporate governance arrangements and awarded the Council the maximum score of 4 for Corporate Governance arrangements under the Auditor Scored Judgements through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
 - (c) **Changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme and Three-Year Revenue and Capital Settlements – Consultation Papers** – We have forwarded responses to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme and the three-year revenue and capital settlements.
 - (d) **Corporate Health and Safety Policy** – In order to reflect changes within the Council and within the approach taken to the management of health and safety within all Councils departments, services and schools, and to set out a modern framework for successful health and safety management, which takes account of best practice in the field of health and safety, we have approved and implemented a revised Corporate Health and Safety Policy.
 - (e) **Management of Change Policy** –A new policy to assist in the management of organisational change in relation to its impact on employees has been developed and adopted. The document has been written in line with up-to-date employment legislation and best practice guidance from the Department of Trade and Industry, ACAS and the Employers Organisation and aims to document the principles the Council will use when managing organisational change and any resulting redundancy situations that may ensue so that the process is seen to be fair and manageable.

- (f) **Sprinklers in new School Buildings** – Sprinkler systems will be included within the designs of new Local Authority school buildings and will be encouraged in the design of other new Council buildings. The annual savings achieved from lower insurance premiums, will be used to contribute towards the financing of prudential borrowing for the sprinklers.
- (g) **Capital Programme 2005/06 – 2006/07** – We have agreed to release capital monies of corporately funded capital schemes approved in the 2005/06 Capital Programme.
- (h) **Audit Services Annual Plan – 2005/06** – As part of the Councils’ corporate governance arrangements, we have approved the Audit Services’ Audit Plan for 2005/06.
- (i) **Education Village – Change in Funding Mechanism** – Following a change in the method of Government support for Private Finance Initiative schemes, we have agreed to the annuity grant distribution for the Education Village as the most cost-effective option.

2. Other areas which might be of interest are :-

- (a) **Revenue Budget Management – Monthly Monitoring Report** – Each Director presented to Cabinet projected expenditure for the year compared with approved budgets. The projected General Fund balance as at 31st March, 2005 is now £5.5 million and this is consistent with the Council’s Policy on balances and is an improvement of £1.6 million compared with the approved Medium-Term Financial Plan, taking account of the Equal Pay Settlement. Departmental balances are projected to be in surplus by £561,000 as at 31st March, 2005, which is £656,000 better than the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- (b) **Capital Programme – Monthly Monitoring Report** – We have considered the current position of the spending and resource levels of the Capital Programme. The Capital Programme is on target.
- (c) **Darlington Gateway – Faverdale East Business Park Phase I** – To achieve the development of the site and to achieve a capital receipt and a return to One Northeast on its joint venture investment, we have approved terms negotiated with the preferred developer for the developments of sites A and B on phase 1 and granted authority to negotiate to facilitate the development of the remaining plots.
- (d) **Premises and Land at Denmark Street** – We have agreed to dispose of land and premises at Denmark Street.
- (e) **Premises at Brook Terrace** – We have agreed to dispose of premises at Brook Terrace which were surplus to the Council’s requirements.
- (f) **Financial Assistance 2004/05** – A number of charitable and non-profit making organisations and individuals have been successful in receiving financial assistance.

- (g) **Discretionary Rate Relief** – A charitable and non profit making organisation has been successful in securing discretionary rate relief for its premises.
- (h) **Schedule of Transactions** - A number of transactions, provisionally made by the Director of Development and Environment, have been approved.
- (i) **Victoria Road Pumping Station** – We have agreed to sell 110 square metres of Council-owned land at St Cuthbert’s Way/rear of Victoria Road to Northumbria Water.

Councillor Don Bristow
Cabinet Member with Resource Management Portfolio