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**OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Resources Portfolio:
  - (a) **Data Quality Strategy** – The Council was assessed (PwC) as ‘Performing Well’ in management arrangement for data quality. In line with good practice (Audit Commission’s Data Management Arrangements) we have approved a Data Quality Strategy, which will improve further the level of data quality which the Council produces. The Strategy includes a description of the governance arrangements, and an action plan. One of the key pieces of work will be to consider the arrangements for ensuring data quality with external partners. The Strategy will be monitored by the Resources Scrutiny Committee.
  - (b) **Grass Street Play Area** – In consultation with local residents, we have agreed to transfer a small parcel of land at Grass Street from general Council-owned land to school playing field land. This decision will enable the provision of a suitable playing field area for the new North Road Primary School and will re-provide new playing facilities for the Grass Street Play area.
  - (c) **Contracts Undertaken for External Clients in 2007/08** – Cabinet have received information on the level of external trading undertaken by the Community Services Department during 2007/08. Community Services successful undertook work to the value of £1.6m. As well providing some revenue, the work will help to promote the Council.
  - (d) **Air Conditioning Installation – Customer Services/Housing Benefits** – Funding has been released from the Medium-Term Financial Plan to install an air conditioning system within the Customer Services Centre and Housing Benefits Section on the ground floor of the Town Hall. This system will alleviate the extreme high temperatures experienced during the summer months by both members of the public and employees in these areas.
  - (e) **Write-off of Irrecoverable Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax** – During 2007/08, the Council has maintained its high level of success in collecting local taxes. 96.6 per cent of the Council Tax due during 2007/08 has been collected and, in addition, £0.469 million of Council Tax arrears from previous years has also been collected, giving a total collection rate of 98.8 per cent. In-year collection of non-domestic rates is 99.0 per cent. Cabinet have given approval to write off debts that, despite a number of steps being undertaken, are deemed irrecoverable.

- (f) **Insurance Tender** - The joint procurement exercise with Stockton Borough Council for insurance services has just been concluded. The Council has renewed its insurance contract with Zurich Municipal for a further five years with a reduction in annual insurance recharges for this Authority of some £900,000. The reduction results from recognition of pro-active risk management work within the Council, a very good claims history, the innovative joint procurement initiative and current market conditions.

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

- (a) Briefing meetings with various Directors and Assistant Directors
- (b) Community Grants – 23<sup>rd</sup> April
- (c) Cabinet – 3<sup>rd</sup> June
- (d) Darlington and Stockton Partnership Training – 12<sup>th</sup> June
- (e) Parish Councils AGM – 17<sup>th</sup> June
- (f) Human Resources Appeal Hearing – 2<sup>nd</sup> July
- (g) Resources Scrutiny Committee – 3<sup>rd</sup> July
- (h) Joint Consultative Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> July

**Councillor Stephen Harker**  
**Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio**