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**OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Efficiency and Resources Portfolio :-
  - (a) **Sharing of Head of HR** – both Darlington and Hartlepool have now formerly agreed a shared Head of HR and Joanne Machers the current Head of HR for Hartlepool will take up this role on the 1 November 2011. Joanne will remain an employee of Hartlepool Borough Council but will work on a half-time basis for Darlington. The detail around the arrangements for this are being finalised and Lesley Blundell the current Assistant Director for Human Resources in Darlington will work on a part-time basis until she retires at the end of March 2012 to support the transition. Moving to a shared Head of HR will save both Darlington and Hartlepool £50k per annum.
  - (b) **Procurement Plan** – In accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, we have considered the Procurement Plan and determined, again, in accordance with criteria, which contracts for the forthcoming year shall be delegated to the Officers and which are deemed to be strategic. Subsequent contracts will necessitate a revised Plan being brought to Cabinet.
  - (c) **Work of the Complaints and Information Governance Team** – We have received an update on the work of the Complaints and Information Governance Team and considered a number of annual reports relating to Corporate complaints and comments, Adult Social Care complaints and comments, Children’s Social Care complaints and comments and Freedom of Information, Environmental Information and Subject Access requests. There have been a significant reduction in the overall number of complaints received by the Council during 2010/11, and the Council did not receive any maladministration reports from the Local Government Ombudsman. In relation to requests for information, we received 674 requests, 590 Freedom of Information requests, 63 Environmental Information requests and 21 subject access requests.
  - (d) **Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 1 2011/12** – We have received information on the current position of the Council’s capital commitments and resources together with all the live construction projects currently being managed by the Council. The Council has a substantial annual construction programme of work, with the current project position statement showing that there are 72 live projects currently being managed by the Council with an overall project outturn value of £75.2 million, with the majority of the projects running to time, cost and quality expectations with no foreseeable issues.

- (e) **Regulation of Investigatory Powers** – We have received an update on developments in relation to the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the outcome of the Council’s inspection by an Inspector from the Interception of Communication Commissions Office (IOCCO) to ensure that the Council was acquiring data lawfully and for the correct statutory purpose. No problems were identified during the inspection and the Inspector was satisfied that the Council were acting lawfully, did not use the powers for trivial offences and that there was a good audit trail of the authorisation process.
- (f) **Register Office** - Despite a very challenging year for public sector organisations, the Register Office has had both a busy and successful year in terms of performance. The year began with the implementation of New Governance and culminated with a positive outcome following a full inspection by General Register Office. In relation to outcomes for the Register Officer there has been :-
- 26% increase in Civil Marriage Ceremonies, predominantly at the Register Office.
  - 19% increase in Citizenship Applications.
  - 5% increase in Certificate Applications overall and a 6% increase in personal applications at the Register Office.
  - 3% reduction in postal applications improving utilisation of resources.
  - 3% increase in appointments
  - 100% overall customer satisfaction with service
  - Reduction in the cost of the Registration Service to the Council/Citizen with 96% of costs being met by income.
  - Licensed Four additional Approved Venues for ceremonies.

The success of the last year is down to the excellent team of staff at the Register Office. The Inspection from General Register Offices summarises:-

‘Darlington is a progressive and customer-focused registration service, which is delivered by a team of multi-skilled and technically proficient staff. Customer access to the service is good and there is a good level of engagement with them and other stakeholders. The service is performing well against Good Practice Guide national standards generally and exceeds all but one Key Performance Indicator.’

2. I have attended various meetings since the last meeting of Council :-
- a. Briefings with various Directors and Assistant Directors
  - b. HR appeals panels, 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 6<sup>th</sup> September
  - c. Meeting with senior civil servant regarding proposed changes to Business Rates and Valuation, 5<sup>th</sup> September

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