
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Efficiency and Resources Portfolio :-
 - (a) **Mid-Year Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Monitoring Report** – Cabinet have recommended the revised Prudential Indicators to Council for approval and have received a half-yearly review of the Council’s borrowing and investment activities. The mandatory Prudential Code, which governs Council borrowing, requires Council approval of controls, called Prudential Indicators, which relate to capital spending and borrowing. The indicators are set in three statutory annual reports and this mid-year update follows Council’s approval in March 2011 of the 2011/12 Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy.
 - (b) **Woodburn Nursery** – Cabinet have agreed to declare the Woodburn Nursery site surplus to operational requirements and have granted authority for it to be disposed of. The site is currently operational but its function is not location specific and could be re-provided elsewhere if the Council wishes to continue with the growing of plants. The sale of this land will allow the release of significant capital funding and will contribute to the Council’s Medium term Financial Plan requirements in relation to good strategic asset management practice.
 - (c) **Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 3 2011/12** - Cabinet considered 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 76 live projects currently being managed by the Council with an overall project outturn value of £67.7 million, with the majority of the projects running to time, cost and quality expectations with no foreseeable issues.
 - (d) **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2011-12 – Quarter 3** – Cabinet considered the Quarter 3 forecast of the 2011-12 revenue budget outturn. The report indicated projections showing an overall improvement of £3.499 million, compared with the approved Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2011-15. This is an improvement of £1.406 million compared with those previously reported to Cabinet on 22nd November, 2011.
 - (e) **Transformation** - I have continued to attend regular meetings with the Chief Executive and the Director of Resources where we discussed the overall progress against the Darlington 2015 Transformation Programme. Work is progressing well to explore the strategic options for Place based services and a report will be presented to Cabinet in April summarising the findings of this initial options appraisal. Work to develop a

business case for a tri-borough collaboration for the delivery of People services is now underway, and a programme board has been established. Meetings have also been held between Chief Executives and Leaders/Mayors from the three authorities and between Directors of People Services and Lead Members for Children's and Adult Services across all three authorities. A Partnership Programme Manager has been appointed jointly by the three authorities to lead delivery of the business case by autumn 2012.

- (f) **Social Fund** - A project is now underway to determine how elements of the Social Fund can be implemented and managed by Darlington Borough Council from April 2013 as part of the Governments' wider welfare reforms which transfers responsibility for the administration of crisis loans and Community Care Grants to local authorities.
- (g) **Corporate Landlord** - Following the Corporate Landlord Rapid Improvement Event held in December 2011, work has progressed well to develop and implement revised and streamlined procedures for the reporting of, and response to, reactive repairs and maintenance requirements, across the corporate building portfolio (excluding schools and children's centres). The new procedures will 'go live' from 1st April, 2012, (with the exclusion of Leisure and Arts buildings pending a decision on the future delivery model for Leisure and Arts within the strategic options for Place project), and budgets centralised to ensure the delivery of an improved repairs service and improved cost control. Improved planning for statutory/cyclical maintenance will also be implemented to reduce the Councils exposure to risk. Future work will determine whether Children's Centres could be included within the building portfolio managed by the Corporate Landlord.
- (h) **Sales Ledger** - Further to the 'Sales Ledger' Rapid Improvement Event work has been on-going around disputed debt in order to improve resolution/recovery. Categorisation of debts has been improved to ensure that resources are focussed on recoverable debt. Improvements have been identified in the 'pre-legal' process, including proof of debt, which will ensure more appropriate use of legal resources. All actions identified at the Rapid Improvement Event were completed by 90 day report out. Work is now underway to improve officer training to ensure revised processes are implemented from 1st April, 2012.

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio