
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) **Annual Review of Significant Partnerships 2010/11** – Officers have undertaken the fifth annual review of its significant partnerships using the partnership toolkit previously approved by Cabinet. The toolkit was adopted to demonstrate fulfilment of the Council’s responsibilities in relation to its partnership arrangements and provides a means to record the performance and ensure that adequate governance arrangements are in place. Through this toolkit, the Council has an award winning approach to monitoring the significant partnerships it is involved with and, as a result, there are good governance arrangements in place and the partnerships are delivering well against their objectives. The toolkit has also been effective in identifying high level concerns of the significant partnerships, the most of common of which is resourcing, uncertainty as a result of emerging policy and fundamental changes in operating landscape. Over the coming year there will be many changes to the context for partnerships, not least the review of the Darlington Partnership, which will propose a more streamlined set of arrangements for partnership working, reflecting the reduction in resource faced by public agencies into the future.
 - (b) **Regulation of Investigatory Powers** – The Council has recently been inspected by an Inspector from the Interception of Communication Commissioners 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. The Inspector did however, suggest that the Council could make use of services offered by the National Ant-Fraud Network to help with the processing of communication data applications and this is something which we intend to make use of to assist in the efficient processing of applications. We have also received updated information on the passage through parliament of the Protection of Freedoms Bill which relates to proposals to limit the use of RIPA by local authorities.
 - (c) **Proposed Write-off of Irrecoverable Debts** – We have written-off sundry debtor invoices with individual values greater than £500 which are considered irrecoverable. The Council is continually working of debt collection to minimise loss of income by speeding up collection times and reducing the need for invoicing debt by maximising up-front payment for services wherever possible, however, there are some services which we are obliged to provide which cannot be withheld prior to payment.

- (d) **Treasury Management Annual Report and Outturn Prudential Indicators 2010/11** – In accordance with the Council’s reporting procedures, we have received information regarding the regulation and management of the Council’s borrowing, investment and cash flow and seeking approval of outturn Prudential Indicators for 2010/11. The financial year 2010/11, has again presented exceptional circumstances with regard to treasury management and activity during 2010/11 has been carried out in accordance with Council policy and within legal limits. An additional voluntary repayment (VPR) of £1.0 million was made at the end of 2010/11 using capital receipts which has resulted in a reduction in the financial costs for 2010/11 to 2014/15. Financing costs have been reduced during the year and a saving of £0.906 million has been achieved against the original Medium-Term Financial Plan primarily as a result of VPR and other reductions in debt repayment due to the timing of capital expenditure.
- (e) **Capital Programme Outturn 2010/11** – Cabinet have been advised on the wide variety capital improvements undertaken throughout the Borough during 2010/11, with a total capital spend of £29.4 million.
- (f) **Revenue Outturn 2010/11** – The Council’s 2010/11 Revenue Accounts are close to being finalised, subject to audit. Overall results are satisfactory. The General Fund reserves balance at the end of March was £10.8 million, which is £1.478 million better than the current Medium-term Financial Plan.
- (g) **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2011/12 – Quarter 1** – We have considered the current position of the revenue budget as part of the Council’s continuous financial management processes. The Council’s financial results, as previously reported, are satisfactory, with an increase in resources being carried forward, however, there are some pressures on the 2011/12 budget in the People Group around Children’s Services.
- (h) **Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report** – Following the establishment of Xentrall Shared Services, the partnership between Darlington and Stockton Councils to provide ICT, transactional finance and HR and design and print, we have received the third annual report which shows that the service is continuing to deliver the objectives as set out in its original business case and that the services are standardising and automating their processes to enable them to meet the savings in the business case. The year has been very challenging for the service, not only has it implemented major improvements across all services, it has also completed a fundamental review which identified further changes and additional budget savings.
- (i) **Former Eastbourne School – Proposed Demolition** – We have agreed to release additional funding for the demolition of the former Eastbourne School, following its vacation by Teesside University at the end of August, 2011, and to include the former Youth Centre, which is surplus to operational requirements, in that demolition contract. The contract will be included in the Council’s Procurement Plan as a non-strategic contract.
- (j) **Sale of Sites at Kellaw Road** – We have agreed to dispose of two sites adjacent to Kellaw Road to the existing leaseholders.

2. I have attended various meetings since the last meeting of Council :-
- (a) briefing meetings with Directors and Assistant Directors
 - (b) AGM and ordinary meeting of NEPO – 16th June

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio