
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) **Hundens Depot Relocation** – Cabinet have delegated authority to the Director of Resources, in consultation with myself, to either lease or purchase a suitable site or sites for the relocation of the Depot and have released £400,000 of the Housing Growth Point Fund as a contingency to go towards its relocation.

It is envisaged that it will take up to twelve months to relocate the operational aspects of the Depot, and, as funding is now available, there is a need to secure a site and relocate the depot at the earliest opportunity to enable work on the Central Park Development to move forward.

- (b) **Annual Review of Significant Partnerships 2011/12** - Officers have undertaken the 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.

As Members will be aware, a major review of partnership working in Darlington is being undertaken and new partnership arrangements are being established for the Council. Where appropriate, any new partnerships will be assessed against the toolkit.

- (c) **Regulation of Investigatory Powers** - Cabinet have received an update on developments in relation to the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Members will be aware that the provisions contained within this Act enable Council's to carry out certain types of surveillance activity, as long as specified procedures are followed, and that any information obtained as a result of surveillance activity can be relied upon in Court proceedings provided that the provisions of the Act are complied with.
- (d) **Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report** – It has been four years since the establishment of Xentrall Shared Services, the partnership between Darlington and Stockton Councils to provide ICT, transactional finance and HR and design and print, and Cabinet has received the fourth annual report which shows that the service has now delivered all the efficiencies and main benefits as outlined in the original business case and, with additional savings identified, it is on target to make £9.2 million savings over the ten year period of the partnership.

The original business case identified £7.4 million savings over ten years with the efficiencies to be delivered by April 2015. The Partnership is on track to exceed this saving by £2 million and has delivered all of the efficiencies two years early.

- (e) **Proposed Write-off of Irrecoverable Debts** – Cabinet 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.
- (f) **Write-off of Former Tenant Arrears, Housing Benefit Overpayment, Non-domestic Rates and Council Tax** – Cabinet have written-off debts, subject to steps for recovery being taken, wherever possible, if and when contact is made in relation to former tenant arrears, Housing and Council Tax Benefit overpayments, Non-Domestic rates and Council Tax.
- (g) **Feethams – Town Centre Development proposals** – Following the tender process, Cabinet have approved the appointment of the preferred developer/purchaser to be granted a long lease of the land for future development.
- (h) **Police and Crime Panel** – Discussions with County Durham at Member and Officer level have been on-going with regards to the creation of the police and Crime Panel in preparation for the Police Commissioner to be elected later in the year.

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio