
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Medium Term Financial Plan Budget Savings Proposals

2. We have considered a report which was submitted to Cabinet on 9 April 2013, in relation to a number of budget savings proposals. The savings will deliver £2.252 million in 2013/14 and £3.337 million, following full implementation and we are interested in scrutinising the potential impact/risks associated with each of the savings proposals. Cabinet, in approving the savings, did acknowledge that it would not, in normal circumstances approve the proposals, however, given the Council's financial challenge they were approved to protect front line services. At the time of writing this report it is unclear how we will undertake this work but it may form part of the work which we are also doing in relation to management costs within the Authority and further information on the work of that Group is contained elsewhere in this report.

Financial Sustainability of Local Authorities

3. We have considered the National Audit Office Report entitled 'Financial Sustainability of Local Authorities' and how we, as a Scrutiny Committee, can undertake some work to enable Darlington's financial position to be understood in the context of the National picture. Information on the overarching position of Darlington, has been requested and will be considered to enable an executive summary of Darlington's position to be prepared. I will update Members at Council on this work.

Medium Term Financial Plan Task and Finish Review Group – Departmental Budgets

4. Councillor Johnson and Landers are currently undertaking a piece of work in relation to departmental overspends which total over £100,000 and have met with the Assistant Director – Finance to discuss those budget headings which were overspent at quarter 3 and the reasons for that. As part of the discussions, the Members were interested in the process for approving the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the powers available to Cabinet and Officers to manage budgets in accordance with the Council's Constitution and, as such, have asked for further information to be provided which shows the authorisation and challenge process in place to enable Managers to vary the budget during the term of the Medium Term Financial Plan. In addition, they will also be looking at one of the areas which is

overspent and will be undertaking a challenge of that area and following the process involved in its approval.

Management Costs Task and Finish Review Group

5. We had the first meeting of the Management Task and Finish Review Group on 18 April 2013. The purpose of this piece of work is to ensure that we are fully aware of the proposed management structure going forward following the recent savings proposals and subsequent consultation, particularly in relation to those areas where significant changes are proposed i.e Organisational Planning. We have agreed to invite the Assistant Director – Resources and the Assistant Director – Development and Commissioning to a future meeting to talk to us about their individual areas. It is hoped that this work will also enhance the Budget Advisory Panel process through scrutiny of the existing costs.

**Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee**