
OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Since the last ordinary meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken by the Resources Scrutiny Committee :-

- (a) **The Darlington Compact** – Prior to its consideration by Cabinet, we have had the opportunity to consider the draft Darlington Compact, which, as Members will be aware, is an agreement between the public and third sectors about how to work together effectively to deliver the best possible services and outcomes for Darlington. The compilation of the draft Compact has been led by eVOLution and the Council, in consultation with representatives from other public and third sector partners and has been built around a set of shared principles and commitments made by each section which has been designed to ensure that relationships and partnerships between the sectors is conducted on the basis of understanding, equality and mutual respect.
- (b) **Sickness Absence 2009/10 – Half-year Update** – Following previous work we have done in relation to sickness absence levels within the Authority, we have considered the half-year position on sickness absence for the period April to September 2009. Performance on LI3005 which measures the number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence per full time equivalent for April to September 2009 was 3.91 days which represented a 17 per cent improvement when compared to the same period last year. In addition, we have been advised that the weighted projected outturn for the end of the 2009/10 financial year is 8.93 days and the linear projection is 7.82 days, both of which are below the Council’s year end target of 9.25 days.
- (c) **Workforce Information** - Information has been supplied on the Council’s workforce data as requested by our Scrutiny Committee. At the end of September 2009, the number of staff on the payroll was 4885, which included all school employees and those on casual and temporary contracts. This number represented a reduction of 117 employees and 14 full time equivalents since the end of the financial year 2008/09. Detailed information was also given on the gender, disability, ethnic minority and age profile, turnover of staff. We will continue to receive information on the Council’s workforce on a regular basis.
- (d) **Revenue Budget Monitoring Update** – Regular reporting on the updated position of the projected revenue outturn for 2009/10 is given to both our ordinary Scrutiny Committee meetings and to our Budget Monitoring and Efficiency Review Group meetings. The latest information which we have received shows an overall surplus of £930,000 compared with the approved Medium-Term Financial Plan and an improvement of £251,000 since our last report. This is mainly due to a further reduction in financing costs and to a saving in Adult Services residential care costs.

Management actions are continuing to deliver improvements in efficiency both in the current year and the longer term.

- (e) **Capital Programme Monitoring - April to August 2009** – We have considered the current position of the Capital Programme for the period April to August 2009. The current projected outturn of the 2009/10 capital programme is £154.9 million against an approved programme of £154.8 million.
- (f) **Project Management Task and Finish Review** - Our work in relation to project management within the Authority is continuing and we have looked at the current status of all construction projects being undertaken by the Council. A further meeting of this Group will be held on the 3rd February, 2010.
- (g) **Budget Monitoring and Efficiency Review Group** – This Review Group continues to meet and some of the issues which we have looked into are income from car parking; Chief Officers salary data and comparisons with similar authorities; the make up of the Council's 2009/10 revenue budget in terms of types of expenditure and analysis of employee costs between departments, corporate communications, the use of consultants and the anticipated net savings over the next ten years of the Darlington and Stockton Partnership. We have also interviewed the Directors of Children's and Community Services on the management of their departmental budgets and undertook a very interesting and useful session with Officers to consider the options available based on possible scenarios and the resources which might be available.
- (h) **Combined Financial and Service Performance Report – 2nd Quarter 2009/10** - We have received a report combining financial and service performance for the Council for the period April to September 2009 and showing progress against the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and the Council's Corporate Plan. Overall, performance is generally on target at this stage.
- (i) **Resources Scrutiny Committee – Performance Report 2nd Quarter 2009/10** - We received information in relation to the 7 service plans for which our Scrutiny is responsible for challenging. It is pleasing to report that the overall aggregated target for the seven service plans is being achieved, however, no data is available for reporting for 35 per cent of the indicators.
- (j) **Corporate Health and Safety Report** – We have reviewed performance on health and safety within the Authority and it is pleasing to report that we are continuing to operate satisfactory health and safety standards. Our thanks go to the Health and Safety Manager and his staff.
- (k) **Darlington Civic Theatre Audience Analysis and Budget 2009/10** – Following a request by a Member, we have received information on audience figures and the financial performance for the Civic Theatre for the year 2008/09, including the operating costs. The Theatre has had a particularly successful year both artistically and in terms of audience figures and the programme exceeded its contribution target by

£32,660.

- (l) **Admin Review (Postal Savings) Update** – There is a new contract in place for postal services within the Organisation. To date, savings of £49,000 have been achieved, £23,000 for bulk mail and ££26,000 for franked mail as a result of the new arrangements and the total predicted postage savings for the 2009/10 financial year are expected to be in the region of £85,000.
 - (m) **Connections Study – Cross Town Route** – Following a request by a Member, we have received information on the outcome of the ‘Connections Study’ in relation to the implications for safeguarding the remaining sections of the Cross Town Route through emerging planning policy. Consultants were employed to undertake the study and, although the Officers gave a detailed explanation as to the reasons for this, we have expressed our concern at the level of expenditure incurred in employing consultants to undertake this work.
 - (n) **Darlington’s Allotment Strategy** – We have had the opportunity to comment on Darlington’s draft Allotment Strategy. The aim of the Strategy is to ensure that the Council helps facilitate the adaption of the existing allotment provision to accommodate the renewed national and local interest in growing food locally. A number of allotment holders were at our meeting on the 14th January, 2010 and we have agreed to meet with allotment holders and representatives of Allotment Associations to discuss the Strategy with them.
2. I, as Chair, have continued to have various meetings with Officers and have pursued a number of issues raised with me, by Members of the Scrutiny Committee, and reported the responses back to them accordingly

Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair Resources Scrutiny Committee