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## OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

- (a) **Allotments Service** – Following the work we did in some time ago, we have continued to receive progress reports on the work undertaken and the delivery of the Council's allotment service during the period 2009/10.

In addition to the daily management of the allotments sites and the service, a draft Allotment Strategy has also been produced and I, and two other Members of the Resources Scrutiny Committee, met with representatives of the Allotment Associations and holders to seek their views on the draft Strategy. Following a lively debate, it was clear that the allotment representatives felt the Strategy did not meet current requirements and it was agreed to ask the Officers to re-look at the draft Strategy with them.

I intend as Chair to continue to be involved in these discussions.

- (b) **Darlington Food Festival** – At the request of a Member of the Resources Scrutiny Committee, we have been provided with information relating to the Darlington Food Festival 2009. Our main discussions at the meeting were around the decision to charge an admission fee for the event in 2009 and the feedback from traders and visitors about this; the actual breakdown of costs for the event and suggestions for its format if it was to continue in future years. The Officers advised us that, following the feedback received from the 2009 event, a wholesale review of the event was needed and would be undertaken.
- (c) **Mayor's Ball** – Again, at the request of a Member, we have received information on the Mayor's Ball Account for October 2009. There was an increase in attendances at the 2009 Ball and we had a discussion around the pricing for the event and the level of donation made to the Mayor's Charity Fund.
- (d) **Contract for Architectural and Highways Consultancy** – Following Cabinet's approval to appoint a number of external companies to the Architectural and Highways Framework Partnership, we have looked at the need to use the framework agreement to accommodate both peaks in design work and for projects where specialist technical support is required. We asked for this report to be submitted to us in view of the work we have previously undertaken in relation to the cost to the Authority of employing consultants and we will continue to ensure value for money is achieved.

- (e) **Workforce Information** – In conjunction with the work we have been doing in relation to Budget Monitoring, we have looked at the best way in which we can receive information on the Council’s workforce profile. We will continue to monitor management information on a six-monthly basis, but in addition to that we will also be considering departmental management of staffing budgets in the regular revenue budget management updates.
  - (f) **Resources Scrutiny Committee – Performance Report 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 32 per cent of the indicators. We were concerned that a lot of the performance information was not available, however, the reasons for this were explained.
  - (g) **Budget Monitoring and Efficiency Review Group** – As previously reported to Council, the Budget Monitoring and Efficiency Review Group have continued to meet over the last financial year and, at a Special meeting of our Scrutiny Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2010, we summarised our findings and advised Cabinet that we supported its recommendations. In supporting the recommendations, we recognised the financial pressures on the Council and understood the objectives of the Plan. The Budget Monitoring and Efficiency Review Group will continue to meet and we will be setting a work programme for that Group at a meeting to be held the 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2010. We will, at both our ordinary meetings and at meetings of the Review Group, continue to monitor the revenue account on a monthly basis and we will be monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Business Model for the Future. One of the areas we have already identified to look at is monitoring any staffing changes outside of departmental budgets.
  - (h) **Revenue Budget Monitoring Update** - We have considered the projected revenue outturn for 2009/10. The projections reported on 4th March show revenue reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 to be £11.428 million. The Resources Scrutiny Committee and the Budget Monitoring and Efficiency Review Group will continue its work in monitoring this.
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**