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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) **Draft Medium Financial Plan** – We held a special meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2011, to consider all the Scrutiny Committee responses and recommendations to Cabinet on its draft Medium-Term Financial Plan. As Members will be aware, the Medium-Term Financial Plan has now been agreed by Council.
- (b) **Review of Allotment Service 2009/10** – We have received an update on the delivery of the Council’s allotment service during 2009/10. An Allotments Strategy has now been developed and will be submitted to Cabinet for approval. It is pleasing to report that the six self-managed sites are still being successfully run by the committees which have been set up over the last seven years. The Council-run sites have been streamlined further with a decrease in the number of vacant or semi-vacant plots, a decrease in the time taking to re-let plots and, as a result, a higher percentage in the overall occupancy rate.
- (c) **Housing and Council Tax Benefits Service Task and Finish Review Group** – When we undertook the review as part of the joint Scrutiny work following the publication of the Director of Public Health’s report entitled ‘Healthier Lives for Children and Young People in County Durham and Darlington’, we requested that the Officers undertake further promotional work to increase awareness of the available benefits and to try to increase the level of take-up if possible to assist families in difficult financial circumstances. Six months on, we have had this update, and Officers have confirmed that the promotion of the availability of benefits does remain a priority for the service, however, there has been limited opportunities to target this due to a number of factors. It is, however, pleasing to report that the time taken to process new claims for benefits and changes of circumstances has reduced from 14 days to eight days. Over the same period, the number of employees in the team has been reduced and the number of people claiming Housing and Council Tax Benefits has increased.
- (d) **Federated Schools** – At the request of Members, we have received information on the funding of Federated Schools. Federated Schools are funded in accordance with the Council’s funding formula for schools and, as the funding for all schools comes from the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant, any savings within that area is re-invested amongst other schools.
- (e) **Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter Three 2010/11** - We have received information on the current position of the Council’s capital commitments and resources together with all the live construction projects

currently being managed by the Council. The Council has a substantial annual construction programme of work, with the current project position statement showing that there are 103 live projects currently being managed by the Council with an overall project outturn value of £76.3 million, with the majority of the projects running to time, cost and quality expectations with no foreseeable issues. More detailed scrutiny of the construction projects currently being managed will be undertaken at our Budget Monitoring and Efficiency Review Group meeting.

- (f) **Revenue Budget Management 2010/11** - We have considered the current position of the revenue budget as part of the Council's continuous financial management processes. We were advised that the projected revenue reserves at the end of 2010/11 were showing an overall improvement of £2,280,000, compared with the 2010-14 Medium-Term Financial Plan, with departmental reserves projected to be in deficit by £891,000 and corporate reserves in surplus by £3.171 million. At the time of our meeting, latest projections were showing an improvement of £460,000, compared with the projected outturn that was used in the draft MTFP for 2011-15, as reported to Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2011, and this has been used in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2011-15, which was considered by Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> February and approved by Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2011.

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**