
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) **Consequences to the Council of Schools Seeking Academy Status** – At the request of Members we received a report on the possible financial effect to the Council of Schools within Darlington converting to Academy status. It is anticipated that all of the secondary schools within Darlington, the special school and 17 of the Primary Schools will convert to Academy status during 2011/12 and this will mean that the Council may lose up to £2.073 million of its Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) which it currently receives to cover the provision of central services. The Council will try to encourage Academies to ‘buy back’ into the services from the Council, however, if they do not, there will need to be a reduction in costs to match the reduction in income. The Council will still retain funding to provide statutory services such as schools admissions, Special Educational Needs placements and transport costs. A transformation project has been initiated to mitigate against the possible financial consequences to the Council.
- (b) **Review of the VIBE Awards** – Again, at the request of Members, we received a report on the costs to the Council of hosting the VIBE Awards. As Members will be aware, the VIBE Awards are the Council’s Annual celebration of young people and the event has been running in Darlington for 16 years, with local sponsorship. The net cost to the Council of hosting the event is £3,898.19, and, although we understand the current financial constraints on this Council, we, as a Scrutiny Committee, feel that the benefits of celebrating the achievements of young people outweighs the cost of this.
- (c) **Performance Report 3rd Quarter 2010/11** - We received information in relation to the two service plans for which our Scrutiny is responsible for monitoring and challenging. The Support Services plan is showing below target performance and details of the specific indicators contributing to this below-target performance with reasons and actions are included in the report. We are slightly concerned at the continual downward trend of the service plans over the last three quarters and this needs monitoring.
- (d) **Contractual Arrangements with Groundwork North East** – We have reviewed the Council’s position in relation to its contractual arrangements with Groundwork North East. A Framework Agreement through the official Journal of the European Union tender process has now been established for Environmental Consultancy work and will be used in the future. Groundwork North East is one of the six companies on the framework.

- (e) **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 March, 2011 were showing an overall improvement of £592,000, compared with the 2011-15 Medium-Term Financial Plan.
 - (f) **Officer Attendance at Seminars, Conferences and Courses** – We received detailed financial information in relation to the Authority’s spend on Officers’ attendance at Seminars, Conferences and Courses. There are a number of benefits in Officers attending events and we were assured that the overall principle in attendance is that the benefits must outweigh the costs.
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