

**ITEM NO. 3
PARAGRAPH 84**

ITEM NO.

EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29th January, 2015

PRESENT - Councillor I Haszeldine (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Coultas, Crichlow, Johnson, H Scott, C Taylor and J Vasey. (8)

APOLOGIES – Councillor Crumbie, Curry and Landers. (3)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Harker, Lister, Long and Newall. (4)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Elizabeth Davison, Assistant Director – Finance and Human Resources

ER29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

ER30. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 TO 2019/20 – Scrutiny Committee's Response - Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of all of this Council's Scrutiny Committees which had been held to consider the specific proposals within the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2015/16 to 2019/20 which were within their individual remits.

Each of the Chairs in attendance at the meeting, gave a brief overview of the work undertaken by their Scrutiny Committee and outlined the reasons for the recommendations.

In relation to the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee, a minority view that the proposals contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2015/16, including the proposal to increase Council Tax by 1.99 per cent, could not be supported, was put forward.

In relation to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, the Chair reported that that Scrutiny Committee had particularly looked at the cost of placements for looked after children and assured Members that, following the work undertaken, it was satisfied that the Officers were taking all available action to ensure that value for money was being obtained and that they would continue to monitor this area of the budget.

In relation to the Place Scrutiny Committee, the Chair made reference to the work undertaken in relation to Economic Growth, particularly in relation to the increase in the number of houses being built and the subsequent improvement in Council Tax and New Homes Bonus targets; the receipt of £3 million of European funding; and the current

position in relation to Cockerton Library and the Head of Steam. Particular reference was made to recommendation of that Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Head of Steam and the possibility of Officers exploring free entry initiatives to increase 'secondary spend' on an 'invest to save' basis and the reasons for that recommendation; the progress being made with a number of organisations and groups to provide a community library; and the view of that Scrutiny Committee that support to the Creative Darlington Manager was required in relation to the management of the Bridge and Crown Street Gallery.

In relation to the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, the Chair made reference to the review of strategic grants; Cabinet's proposal, which was supported by that Scrutiny Committee, to allocate additional resources within the budget to cover the withdrawal of the Local Welfare Provision Grant and the reasons for that support; and the work being undertaken in relation to Public Health.

It was reported that a minority view had been put to the meeting of the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on the 16th January, 2015, that the proposal to increase the Council Tax by 1.99 per cent, could not be supported.

RESOLVED – That, in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2015/15 to 2019/20, Cabinet be advised of the following views/comments of each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees :-

(a) in relation to the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee :-

- (i) having considered the information provided at meetings held on 5th and 19th December, 2013, and 30th January, 2014, the majority view is that Cabinet's proposals as contained in its report dated 2nd December, 2014, be supported and the minority view is that the proposals, including the proposal to increase Council Tax by 1.99 per cent, be not supported

(b) in relation to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee :-

- (i) having considered the information provided at meetings held on 10th December, 2014 and 5th January, 2015, the position in relation to the cost of placements for Looked After Children be noted and that Commissioners continue to work across authorities to ensure value for money.

(c) in relation to the Place Scrutiny Committee :-

- (i) having considered the information provided at a meeting held on 18th December, 2014 :-
 - (A) it notes the report submitted to Cabinet on 2 December 2014 in relation the Medium-Term Financial Plan;
 - (B) it welcomes the reinstatement of the £256k budget for the Head of Steam;
 - (C) in relation to the Head of Steam, the results of recent consultation

include the exploration of the possibility of free entry with initiatives to increase 'secondary spend' on an 'invest to save' basis;

(D) it welcomes the progress on Cockerton Library and the intervention of eVolution and voluntary groups be noted;

(E) is pleased to note that the opening hours of Cockerton Library are to remain unaltered, expects there to be professional supervision, continued digital inclusion and assurances that the Libraries budget takes account of this;

(F) supports the Council Tax increase for the reasons outlined in the submitted report;

(G) welcomes the European Grant funding of £3 million; and

(H) in relation the Creative Darlington, solutions be found to the need for support for the Creative Darlington Manager with regard to the management of the Bridge and the Crown Street Gallery.

(d) in relation to the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee :-

- (i) having considered the information provided at the meeting held on 16th January, 2015, is satisfied with the progress of those items included within the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2015/16 to 2019/20, within its remit and specifically supports Cabinet's proposal to allocate additional resources of £486,000 for the continuation of the services currently covered by the Local Welfare Provision Grant.

(NOTE – There was a minority view put to the meeting of the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on the 16th January, 2015, that the proposal to increase the Council Tax by 1.99 per cent, could not be supported).

(e) in relation to the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee :-

- (i) having considered the information provided at the meetings held on 16th December, 2014 and 15th January, 2015, is satisfied with the overall direction of travel, as contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2015/16 to 2019/20, and will continue to monitor the progress of delivery in relation to those areas within its remit.

ER31. CAPITAL PROGRAMME - Scrutiny Committee's Response - Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of all of this Council's Scrutiny Committees which had been held to consider the specific proposals within the Capital Programme which were within their individual remits.

RESOLVED – That, in relation to the Capital Programme, Cabinet be advised that each of the Scrutiny Committee’s received the report.