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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Bill Dixon, Leader of the Council**

**Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith,  
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To endorse the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group in respect of the Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal.

**Summary**

2. This report outlines the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that the following recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group be endorsed by the Council:-
  - (a) That in respect of the Chief Executive's Appraisal, it is recommended that Council note that the Chief Executive's Appraisal for 2013/14 has been satisfactorily undertaken by this Sub-Group.

**Reason**

4. The recommendation is supported to enable the appraisal to be confirmed.

**Paul Wildsmith  
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

**Background Papers**

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Linda Todd : Extension 2354

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	There are no issues in relation to Health and Wellbeing.
Sustainability	There are no issues in relation to Sustainability
Diversity	There are no issues relating to Diversity which this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	None.
Groups Affected	None.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not affect the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report does not adversely impact on the Strategy.
Efficiency	This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

5. The Appraisal Sub-Group (a subsidiary body of the Human Resources Committee) undertakes an annual appraisal with the Chief Executive and reports its recommendations to the Council.
6. In accordance with the process (approved by Council at its meeting in November 2010) the Leader and Deputy Leader met with the Chief Executive to review the Chief Executive's personal assessment and identify objectives for the coming year.
7. The Sub-Group then met on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2014 to undertake the appraisal. It reviewed the Chief Executive's self-assessment and agreed the Chief Executive's objectives for 2014/15. A copy of the Chief Executive's self-assessment is attached as an **Appendix**.
8. The Sub-Group made the following recommendation to Council:-

That in respect of the Chief Executive's Appraisal, it is recommended that Council note that the Chief Executive's Appraisal for 2013/14 has been satisfactorily undertaken by this Sub-Group in accordance with the agreed process.

## **Conclusion**

9. The Chief Executive's appraisal has been undertaken by the Appraisal Sub-Group of the Human Resources Committee. As this is a Committee constituted by Council, Council is required to endorse the recommendation of the Sub-Group.

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## CHIEF EXECUTIVE APPRAISAL – SELF ASSESSMENT 2014

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### Introduction

1. This paper reflects my personal assessment of the year since my last appraisal (November 2013). My intention is to draw out, for discussion with members of the Appraisal Sub Group, the key strands of the work I have been doing. In that respect it covers the three main elements of my role:
  - (a) Leading the organisation within the parameters set by Members, with line management of the Chief Officers Executive, and overall responsibility for our performance, and governance.
  - (b) Representing the Council and borough, and working in a variety of external settings to secure resources and influence that help deliver the Councils' goals.
  - (c) Building and maintaining relationships and partnerships within Darlington that help deliver the Council's goals.

### Overview

2. As a consequence of the hard work done over the last four years to drive down our costs to accommodate the reduced income, this has been the year where the balance has shifted to place a greater focus on forward transformational change programmes than cuts (although there are some cuts as well). The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which runs to 2015/16 remains nevertheless hugely challenging to deliver, and Government projections for the period beyond 2015/16 indicate further huge cuts in public service spending.
3. It is worth reflecting on what we have wrestled with since 2010; annual spending reduced by £22.9m between 2010 and 2014/15 with plans to deliver a further £10.6m by the end of 2016/17. In real terms this equates to £33.3m, a reduction of 41%. The budget reductions have meant the loss of 564 posts, 198 compulsory redundancies, 224 voluntary redundancies and 142 deleted posts. There has been a net reduction of 11 Directors/Assistant Director posts, from 24 to 14. Over the five years since 2010 an estimated £2.7m has been reduced from the cost of management.
4. We are now in a position where over 60% of the net budget is spent on social care, placing very significant pressures on the raft of other services that the public expects, and that create the conditions for Darlington to thrive.
5. Against this difficult background the last year has been one of real progress for Darlington, of continued adjustment to new realities, getting the architecture right to

ensure that the ambitions that the Council has are being progressed, and to take the temperature of our fantastic workforce.

6. 2014 also saw the twelve month anniversary from the Corporate Peer Challenge and I reflected with senior management on the progress we have made, against their suggested actions, together with progress on key elements of the MTFP and the Corporate Plan.
7. The Community Strategy, **One Darlington, Perfectly Placed**, was refreshed and revised, with three areas of focus (the conditions) to enable the Council and wider Partnership to build confidence about our capacity to deliver against our ambitions. This was aligned with our MTFP, and the current MTFP and Corporate Plan is built around the three conditions:
  - (a) **Programmes to Build Strong Communities** - reduce demand, build community-led models of delivery, target vulnerable communities, invest in prevention, etc.
  - (b) **Programmes to Grow the Economy** – more ambitious housing targets, getting pace on key regeneration sites, attracting inward investment.
  - (c) **Programmes to Make Every Public Pound Well Spent** – driving the collaboration with the DCCG but also a raft of internal efficiency and transformation projects.
8. The Council agreed to re-shape senior management structures to target capacity on delivering against the conditions, and in response to the collaboration with the Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group (DCCG). These changes were cost neutral.
9. While it remains vital that the public and our staff understand the full realities of our financial position, I have nevertheless worked to shift the narrative about Darlington to balance the challenges with the developments that give cause for celebration and optimism. Feedback demonstrates that the message is getting out there that Darlington, despite its challenges, is confident and upbeat, and we are supporting a group of key business people to develop a fresh marketing approach to inward investors.
10. The narrative is not an empty one – the year has seen enormous progress in regeneration, securing external funding and influence, and building the conditions for the borough to thrive.
11. My review of the year is organised underneath the condition headings.

## **Growing the Economy**

12. Overall it has been a very positive year for regeneration and the creation and protection of assets that will underpin economic growth. A strong economy brings jobs, creates wealth, and within the new Government finance regime for Councils, brings income to sustain local services. The Town Centre has had a significant boost this year, with multi-million pound investments; the DfE collaboration, improvements to the Ring Road, and the start on site of the Feethams leisure development. Work is progressing well on both the Central Growth Hub to grow new business (the outcome of successful European funding bids) and on the National Biologics Manufacturing Innovation Centre on Central Park.

13. Darlington did well from the Local Growth Fund bids, co-ordinated by Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU), with new Government funding earmarked for future expansion to commercial investments in Central Park (with the University and CPI), accelerated road infrastructure to unlock commercial opportunities at Central Park, feasibility work for major reconfiguration at Bank Top station and investment to infrastructure at the Airport. I worked closely with the Leader to make sure that the TVU Board understood the potential and significance of innovation bids from Darlington and we received the Board's backing for what was a significant share of the priority schemes.
14. The first homes were built on Central Park and starts on new housing across the borough are increasing, with private sector investment and successful bids to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for Council and RSL development. Work on the development of the Local Plan has been not surprisingly a challenge, as we seek to ensure we can comply with the Governments much more permissive planning regulations, whilst retaining the scope to make new development happen in the right places, to the right density to meet local housing needs.
15. Within the framework of "A Strong Economy" we have built a more deliberate and a pro-active approach to place making and protection of our key cultural assets. The second Festival of Thrift saw attendances nearly double, with increasing national profile of Darlington as a place with a vibrant cultural offer.
16. The year saw successful bids to both the Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund for Theatre Hullabaloo, and the Civic theatre, with an estimated £11m to be invested in the arts in an area of the town ready for further regeneration. I am playing a role, with the relevant Officers, in leading the associated private fundraising drive required to maximise the impact the refurbishment can make.
17. I am leading within the Tees Valley on developing a stronger place for culture within economic growth, with the goal of ensuring that Darlington and its neighbours receive a better share of national funding for the arts, and ensuring that Darlington is a place where the arts thrive. The Council continues to work on options that can sustain and develop its rail heritage, and markets, and we continue to seek productive relationships with town centre retailers and the Business Improvement District. With the Leader I am undertaking regular visits to town centre retailers alongside the range of engagement work that I and colleagues undertake.
18. A significant personal focus for me this year has been my leadership role for the whole North East region on strategic rail matters. This investment of time is driven by the need to protect Darlington's place as a key transport hub, but also to further enhance the economic opportunities that come with good rail connectivity. With the advent of the North East Combined Authority (covering the seven local authorities to the north of us) I share the Chair of the Regional Strategic Rail Advisory Group with the CE of Newcastle, and have been advising the ANEC Leaders Board as it developed and advocated around a NE Rail Statement. In the Tees Valley we have very clear and agreed rail priorities, focussed around major investment at Bank Top, the electrification of the Northallerton to Middlesbrough (and Darlington) lines, and the removal of Pacer trains. I have, with the Leader and colleagues, met with senior civil servants, and representatives from Network Rail, and HS2 to progress our interests.

19. While this is in many respects long term work, there have been some important successes; Tees Valley has secured a seat on the Leaders Committee of Rail North (the body set up to manage the Northern and Transpennine Rail Franchise), Government (LGF) funding was secured to enable the feasibility work on the East Coast Mainline at Bank Top to progress. The scheme at Bank Top is accepted in the Region and along the East Coast Main Line, as a significant early priority and is featured as such in the key Rail Strategy documents. We have had positive reception from Network Rail, and DfT civil servants to our ambitions and are now working to build a private sector advocacy plan.
20. Again with the Leader I have taken a lead role in positioning the Tees Valley well in the various debates on devolution. We represent the TV on the Key Cities Group, in meetings of Combined Authorities, and in the Rail North governance. As a relatively small (660,000 population) but an economically distinctive and significant region, it is vital that we are not left behind in devolution of powers for housing, transport, skills and regeneration.

### **Every Public Pound Well Spent**

21. Within developments around the condition of “Every public Pound Well Spent”, the most significant and a major focus for me and the management team has been work on the collaboration with the Clinical Commissioning Group (DCCG). As the DCCG has been an organisation in development, and with a diverse membership base, time has been needed to build the relationships that will allow both sides to explore how far we might take our partnership. We are however now sharing a Director for Commissioning whose role is to support the development of opportunities to jointly commission, jointly transform services to meet demand, improve outcomes and secure efficiencies. We meet with the DCCG as a joint management team, and early work on integrated commissioning and a direction of travel shows significant potential for the future.
22. We brought our work on the Three Borough social care collaboration to a conclusion. The work brought benefits to all three boroughs, particularly in terms of benchmarking costs, and sharing data on good practice. However, all three Councils agreed that in the current very uncertain financial climate, and with the changes in the NHS, it would be better to put a formal coming together off.
23. I have agreed with colleagues in surrounding boroughs and across the Tees Valley that we will progress tactical opportunities where these do not preclude possible future bigger solutions. So, for example, we have gained significantly from being a part of a North East Highways Alliance, and are currently progressing opportunities with Richmondshire District Council. Xentrall continues to progress opportunities to expand, and is running services for a growing number of Academy schools for example.
24. The end of year financial out-turn was positive and work is progressing on other elements of MTFP implementation not referenced above. In particular good progress is being made in reducing spend in Adult Social Care, through a combination of demand reduction measures and effective procurement. In Children’s Services the early intervention and targeted work is helping to stabilise the numbers of looked after

children, but as a small borough we remain particularly vulnerable to the very high costs of provision, particularly where the Courts require secure accommodation.

25. We are in the implementation phase of alternate weekly collections, a change which necessitated a staffing restructure which has had negative consequences for a number of staff. Inevitably the change process and staffing issues are proving challenging and I have had a number of face to face sessions with Streetscene staff and their representatives. To support the savings target we have negotiated a saving of £275k during the year on the waste contract.
26. The integration of public health into the Council has been a success, with fresh opportunities to better align Council services with improved health outcomes, and to use the funding strategically to support services that might otherwise disappear/have reduced impacts. The newly opened Health Hub within the Dolphin centre is a prime example of the sort of innovative collaboration now being achieved, the alignment of public health and community safety has given a good platform for other innovative work, such as the approach to restorative justice.
27. With the demise of the Audit Commission and the onset of what was badged as “localism” there was an important opportunity to re-shape our approach to performance management arrangements. I have wanted to make sure that it remains rigorous (particularly given our declining resources) but geared towards our agreed objectives and as efficient as possible. The new arrangements based around our Performance Clinics are now in place and being adjusted with experience. It has to be said however that despite the stated intentions of Ministers around light touch regulation, the body of data required by different parts of Government has not diminished. This is proving challenging given that we have made very significant reductions in our capacity for data and performance management.
28. The Customer Contact Centre, neighbourhood multi-agency Help Hubs and refreshed Council website are all geared towards helping our customers help themselves, and access the right support at the right time. Reducing the amount of face to face contacts they need with the Council is a good use of our customers’ time, and enables our staff to focus on those with the greatest needs. These and other services related to the devolution of crisis support, and the roll out of the welfare reforms have placed particular pressures on our local community, and on our staff.

### **Building Strong Communities**

29. I am particularly pleased with the work done to strengthen the Darlington Partnership, with a stronger focus on action and contributions from partners. This was a clear response to a discussion within the Board of private, community, public and voluntary organisations, about how Darlington could thrive as public services shrink. There are now a number of examples of very practical actions.
30. For example, Darlington Cares (I am a Board Member) is a rapidly growing vehicle to increase and target corporate social responsibility, achievements over the last year have included 60 volunteers listening to children reading in primary schools, gifts and food hampers for disadvantaged families at Christmas, and getting business into our schools and colleges to help prepare young people for work.



31. The Foundation for Jobs is recognised across the Tees Valley as a model that others should emulate to give young people more experience of employment sectors that are growing and to increase the number of apprenticeships available. Good Friends is providing strong up-stream support for our demand reduction initiatives in adult services with now several hundred isolated older people receiving support.
32. I continue to chair the Partnership Executive that has been a valuable engine-room for getting good engagement and cross-sectoral input to the work of the Partnership.
33. With reference to the voluntary sector, we have built within the Better Care Fund a fresh approach to co-production with the sector on social care, and an ambitious approach to demand reduction and shift in services from hospital. This is sitting alongside a review, in collaboration with the voluntary sector, of the needs of the sector for infrastructure, and this is being used now to shape the SLA with Evolution and potential future commissioning plans. It remains a concern for me that our sector in Darlington could be stronger.
34. Our work continues to understand how best to encourage and support the public to take on responsibility for things previously done by the Council but now under threat as our funding has fallen. Not surprisingly perhaps people have high expectations of what they should receive for their Council tax but with a growing share of spend going on statutory social services a fresh partnership with the public is needed.
35. We have many examples of people giving of their time – Street Champions, Friends of Parks, Good Friends – but given the challenges still ahead we are now seeking to draw on research and proven techniques and to work through how these might apply to our big areas of spend reduction. One of our partners, Groundwork, has secured funding to examine new models to sustain parks, and we are supporting an increasing number of volunteering programmes. There remain big cultural challenges in this arena, for our staff who see threats to their own jobs, for Members who are on the receiving end of complaints of diminishing standards of service, and for the public who may face many barriers to becoming more involved.

### **The Council Business**

36. This year saw a Boundary Review, now agreed and leading into preparation for the 2015 elections. I felt that staff worked hard to support Members in drawing up proposals and responding to the consultation. The Boundary Commission commended our work to support the numbers of Councillors the Council should retain, with the development of an amended “job description” focusing on support to local communities.
37. We undertook a staff survey this year, the first since 2009. Given the changes, job losses, re-structures, and changed working practices that have been a constant feature for every team over the last four years, I wanted to take the temperature, and assess whether the work we have done to support and encourage good management and help staff through change needs further improvement.
38. I was pleased with the results: some of the key headlines are as follows:

- (a) **82%** agree that managers make time for staff, **83%** that they let staff know what is expected, **75%** believe that Managers offer support in stressful situations and **78%** believe that they listen and respond to views and suggestions.
  - (b) **87%** of staff understand why the Council needs to change and **78%** how these changes may impact jobs. **71%** believe the Council is committed to providing effective services to residents.
  - (c) **80%** believe that they get enough support from colleagues. **86%** feel trusted to get on with our jobs and **83%** are treated with respect by colleagues. **79%** feel their team(s) work well with others and **74%** feel able to suggest new ways of doing things.
41. There are not surprisingly things we need to understand better and to tackle and I have asked for some mixed staff focus groups to be established to dig behind these results and support us in identifying how we can improve on the following issues:
- (a) 15% do not agree that managers regularly tell them how they are doing and 8% disagree that senior managers make time for them.
  - (b) 13% do not feel well informed about Council issues and 22% about proposed changes. 18% don't feel well supported through change, and 25% feel the Council doesn't listens to their views.
42. In addition each service is examining the results in their area. There will be variation and of course inevitably the survey took place during restructuring in a number of service areas.
43. I continue to hold my regular Talk Time sessions with mixed groups of staff from across the Council and find these a valuable way to hear what staff in operational and management roles have to say about their jobs, and the ideas they have for how I can further support them.
44. A further internal priority for this year has been around workforce health and safety. We have worked to develop a stronger culture of personal and collective responsibility for health and safety with specific goals to increase the reporting of "near misses" so that corrective action can be taken. I have met with the Council health and safety "Champions" and will do so periodically and it remains a regular focus for COE and COB.
45. Council officers and members continue to work well together, and the general corporate health of the organisation I would describe as good, as did the Corporate Peer Inspection team. There remain very significant challenges ahead for the Council and there are now significant pressures on our diminished officer capacity that I have to manage.

## **The Year Ahead**

46. As indicated above we have a MTFP and Corporate Plan for the year 2015/16, which is currently being revised. We have made very significant progress in dealing with unprecedented reduction in resources. Our Plan at present is based upon achieving a borough where the three conditions described above prevail.
47. There are a range of unknowns likely to influence the delivery of current plans going forward. Some of these we can anticipate in broad terms – the likelihood of a further Government cut to funding previously received to support crisis support to residents, and the Care Act implementation which includes a cap on the care costs anyone should pay over their lifetime.
48. Nevertheless, my confidence in being able to support the Council through these difficult years is also dependent upon a shift to the national resource position for local government, and local government in the north in particular. With colleagues in the Local Government Association and the Association of North East Councils, we have gathered and submitted evidence that clearly shows the re-distributional effects of the new regime for funding local government. I chaired a study undertaken by researchers from Durham University and Paul Wildsmith has also been active in the Society of Municipal Treasurers. If there is no shift and the level of funding, or to the re-distribution of funding, then the Council, like in many others, faces further huge cuts in income over the remainder of the decade.
49. At this stage it is difficult to predict and plan for what we do not yet fully understand so my priorities for the year will be to continue to focus on delivering against our current MTFP and Corporate Plan. That will include ongoing work to ensure that Darlington is well positioned to lever in private or Government funding to grow the economy; continued work with DCCG to explore the optimum collaboration for health, social care and wellbeing; maintaining good partnerships within the borough; and managing the performance of the Council. My focus will be to work with Officers on producing options for the new Council administration ready to respond to the early indications on finance from a new Government.

**Ada Burns**  
**Chief Executive**