
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Performance Management

2. We have received a presentation on the revised performance management framework which will be used to demonstrate and measure how the key performance indicators are performing and contributing towards the eight key objectives and overall vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).
3. The Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee has been assigned to monitor performance against the strategic outcome – A Safe and Caring Community as well as taking the lead on monitoring the three conditions of Building Strong Communities, Spending Every Pound Wisely and Growing the Economy and we will do this on a regular basis as part of our work programme.
4. We did discuss ownership and reliance on other external partners, organisations and communities to the achievement of the Vision and the role of the Darlington Partnership; monitoring undertaken by Officers through the quarterly performance clinics to look at performance and highlight any areas which might need addressing at an early stage; and the role of all of the Council's Scrutiny Committees in measuring performance of the strategic indicators on a regular basis and in questioning those areas where it felt it needed further scrutiny.

Allotments

5. Following a request by a Member of our Scrutiny Committee, we have looked at the current costs of the allotments service which is delivered by the Council. There are currently 11 Council-managed sites across the Borough and the overall net running to the Council of these sites is £27,640 per annum and six self-managed sites to which the Council provides pastoral support at a cost of £4,110 per annum.
6. We have asked Officer to look into whether there is any potential income for the Council in relation to the leasing of self-managed sites to Allotment Associations and we discussed the financial benefits of self-management in terms of grant and funding opportunities and the work being undertaken by Officers to actively encourage those Council-managed sites to become self-managed sites.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2014/15 – Quarter 2

7. You will see in the Efficiency and Resources Portfolio holder's report, that Cabinet has considered the Quarter 2 forecast of the 2014/15 revenue budget outturn. We have also looked at this report and discussed the main variances in the departmental resource projections at quarter 2, which particularly related to an increase in spend in Looked after Children and the reasons for that; additional savings expected in relation to the ICT Infrastructure budget due to re-profiling of the programme of ICT updates and enhancements; reduced legal costs associated with equal pay claims; and the extension of the waste contract which was due to deliver savings of £0.280 million per annum.
8. In discussing the increased spend in Looked After Children and the implications for this as a small authority, we agreed to ask for some further information on the breakdown of placement costs for those very high cost children under the Authority's responsibility so we could better understand how the money was spent, and to ask Officers to write to the Government outlining the significant financial implications of placements on the Authority, particularly at this time of cuts and continued efficiencies without funding from Central Government. We were assured that Senior Officers within Children's Services were effectively managing budgets within that service area to try to offset the increased costs.
9. We also queried the budget and expenditure against the Cemeteries and Crematorium heading and the Civic Theatre and discussed the Council's Treasury Management activity and the positive work undertaken by the Team responsible for that and formally recorded our thanks to them.

Work Programme

10. There will be a number of special meetings held during December 2014 and January 2015, to consider and formulate our response to Cabinet on the Medium Term Financial Plan proposals for 2015/16.
11. We have also had a request from a Member to look at the funding arrangements around the Darlington Partnership and this will be added to our work programme.

Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee