
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Efficiency and Resources Portfolio.

Allotments

2. In line with the principles contained within the Allotments Strategy for Darlington 2009-2019, Cabinet has agreed to allow Cockerton Allotments Association's request to become self-managed. It granted a new 20 year lease to that Association, which will allow it to seek external sources of funding. In addition, it has also accepted the surrender of a number of existing leases from self-managed allotments, which expire in 2020, and has granted them new 20-year leases. Again, this will allow these sites to have better access to external funding opportunities.

ICT Update

3. Since the last update, the Sigma/Agresso interface was completed which allows the payment of utility bill invoices.

Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2014/15

4. Cabinet has been provided with details of complaints, compliments and comments which have been received by the Council during 2014/15 under the Council's Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure and those representations made under the Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures.
5. Cabinet has also agreed to extend the response timescales in the Procedures to better manage customers' expectations in relation to complaint handling. It felt that, in view of the reduced resources now available to consider complaints, both within service Departments and in the Complaints and Information Governance Team, the existing timescales, which were set in 2009, are now unrealistic

Procurement Board Update

6. In accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet has received information on the decisions taken by the Procurement Board to waive Contract Procedure Rules in respect of a number on contracts.

Treasury Management Annual Report and Outturn Prudential Indicators 2014/15

7. In accordance with the Council's reporting procedures, we have received information regarding the regulation and management of the Council's borrowing, investment and cash flow and seeking approval of outturn Prudential Indicators for 2014/15 in accordance with the Prudential Code. The financial year 2014/15, has presented similar circumstances to 2013/14 with regard to treasury management and activity during 2014/15 has been carried out in accordance with Council policy and within legal limits. Financing costs have been reduced during the year and a saving of £1.436 million achieved from the original Medium Term Financial Plan as a result of reducing the statutory Minimum Revenue Provision and a mixture of reduced debt costs both principal and interest arising from the continued reliance on internal borrowing, the timing of capital expenditure and increased income from investments.

Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Outturn 2014/15 and Quarter 1 – 2015/16

8. Cabinet has received information on the delivery of the Council's Capital Programme, together with the financial outturn position as at 31st March, 2015, and the proposed financing of the 2014/15 capital expenditure.
9. In addition, Cabinet has also received information on the current position, at quarter 1, of the Council's capital commitments and resource together with all the live construction projects currently being managed by the Council.
10. The Council has a substantial annual construction programme of work, with the current project position statement showing that there are 64 live projects currently being managed with an overall project outturn value of £101.035 million. The majority of the projects are running to time, cost and quality expectations with no foreseeable issues.

Revenue Outturn 2014/15

11. The Council's draft revenue reserve position at 31st March, 2015 is £23.840 million, which is £2.533 million better than the initial 2015-16 Medium-Term Financial Plan position. The £2.533 million consists of an improvement of £2.425 million in departmental resources and an overall improvement in corporately managed resources of £0.108 million.
12. Cabinet has agreed to carry forward £0.958 million into 2015/16 to meet future commitments, which are mainly due to slippage. Whilst this improved position is welcome and helpful, it does not change the financial context in which the Council is currently planning.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16 – Quarter 1

13. Cabinet has been provided with an early forecast of the 2015/16 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management processes. Early

indications are that the Council's projected revenue reserves at the end of 2015/16 are £18.059 million, which is £4.573 million better than the initial 2015-20 Medium-Term Financial Plan position and includes a brought forward amount of £2.533 million from 2014/15. Departmental reserves are projected to be underspent by £0.506 million with corporate reserves projected to be in surplus by £1.534 million compared to the 2015-20 Medium Term Financial Plan.

14. Of the £18.059 million projected reserves, £6.593 million is planned for usage in 2016/17 and we have a risk reserve balance of £4.330 million, leaving £7.136 million one-off funding to further support the general fund moving forward.

Write-off of Former Housing Tenant Arrears, Housing Benefit Overpayments, Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax

15. Cabinet has written-off debts, subject to steps for recovery being taken, wherever possible, if and when contact is made in relation to former tenant arrears, Housing and Council Tax Benefit overpayments, Non-Domestic rates and Council Tax.

Disposal of Land at Faverdale North

16. Subject to planning permission being granted, Cabinet has agreed to dispose of approximately 0.5 hectares of land at Faverdale North. The sale of this land will achieve a capital receipt for the Council.

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio