
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.

Procurement Plan and Procurement Board Update

2. In accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet has considered the Annual Procurement Plan and determined, again, in accordance with criteria, which contracts for the forthcoming year shall be delegated to the Officers and which are deemed to be strategic. Subsequent contracts will necessitate a revised Plan being brought to Cabinet.

Community Governance Review

3. Work has continued to support the changes occasioned by the Community Governance Review. This has included working with the former Chairs and Clerks of the parish councils that were discontinued after March 2016 and liaising with the external auditors to ensure that the final annual return and matters relating to assets and finance is properly completed.

Police and Crime Commissioner Election 2016 and Parish Council Elections

4. The Police and Crime Commissioner Election took place on Thursday 5 May 2016, together with Parish Elections (for Hurworth and Middleton St George) following last year's Community Governance Review. In advance of the elections work continued to encourage electoral registration and participation.
5. A press release was issued to support the delivery of poll cards, which took place over the weekend of 2 and 3 April. An 'empty property poll card' was also delivered to those properties where no-one was registered, in an attempt to capture any new occupants who had not yet registered.
6. Publicity was issued in relation to the deadlines for registering to vote, and for requesting an Absent Vote (Postal or Proxy Vote) prior to the election, and staff continued to use the Council's website and social media channels to promote electoral registration, and alternative methods of voting.

Referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union

7. Throughout this election period, work has also continued to prepare for the Referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. Information about the Referendum has once again been published on the Council's

website, via the Council's social media profiles, and an article has been published in May's issue of the 'One Darlington' magazine, which includes details on how to register, information on Absent Voting, and signposts residents as to where they can find further information. Poll cards for the Referendum will be issued on 18 May 2016.

Citizenship

8. In my role as Portfolio holder I attend all Citizenship Ceremonies held in the Council Chamber. Along with the Mayor, the Chief Executive, the High Sheriff and a representative from the Lord Lieutenant's Office we give a warm welcome to those attending.
9. The Superintendent Registrar from the Register Office conducts the Ceremony and we explain about what it means to be a British citizen and also give some information on the history of Darlington and the Council.
10. We have been hosting four ceremonies a year since 2004 when the Government introduced a requirement that everyone aged 18 or over, who is accepted for naturalization or registration as a British citizen must take a citizenship oath and pledge at a citizenship ceremony. Our citizenship ceremonies are memorable and enjoyable events which celebrate the important occasion of gaining citizenship.
11. The road to become a British Citizen takes approximately six months from application but for some it has been much longer.
12. The Ceremonies are well attended and we arrange for photographs to be taken with families and the dignitaries in attendance.
13. Once Citizens have been presented with their citizenship certificate they can apply for a British passport.

Feethams Land and Developer Day

14. A Developer Day, held at the Dolphin Centre on 17 March 2016 was well attended by prospective developers and agents. The event was used to showcase the launch of the Feethams site situated opposite the new Feethams Leisure Complex and next to the Feethams Multi Storey Car Park.
15. The 0.4 HA (1 acre) site is ripe for development which could include a range of office, leisure and retail uses to complement the town centre and existing developments in Feethams.
16. Developers were also given a presentation on the wide range of other exciting development opportunities across the Borough.
17. The feedback from those attending the event was very positive and marketing is expected early June.

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio