
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.

Annual Procurement Plan

2. In accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet has approved a number of additional contracts to be added to the Annual Procurement Plan.

Proposed Write-off of Irrecoverable Debts

3. Cabinet has written-off sundry debtor invoices with individual values greater than £500 which are considered irrecoverable; this equates to 0.33 per cent of collectable debt, in which, during 2016/17, it has become apparent that no further practical or economical steps can be taken to recover the sums due. The Council works continually on debt collection to minimise loss of income by speeding up collection times and reducing the need for invoicing debt by maximising up-front payment for services wherever possible, however, there are some services which we are obliged to provide which cannot be withheld prior to payment.

UK Parliamentary (General) Election 2017

4. The UK Parliamentary (General) Election took place on 8 June 2017, with Officers from the Elections Team co-ordinating the arrangements for the election in the Darlington Constituency, and for those parts of the Sedgefield Constituency that lie within the Borough boundary.
5. Given the short notice period in terms of calling the election, and the overlap with the Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayoral Election, the Elections Team had to work within incredibly tight timescales to ensure that appropriate arrangements were in place in terms of staffing, securing venues as Polling Stations and liaising with our printers to produce the required paperwork. A total of 159 staff were employed to work at 61 Polling Stations throughout the day, with a further 116 staff employed to work on the Count later that evening.
6. In addition, Darlington was selected as one of only eight constituencies to receive an Election Assessment Mission (EAM) from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK). The International Observer delegation comprised 32 parliamentarians and electoral officials from 23 jurisdictions, with representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Sierra Leone and Uganda visiting Darlington.

7. Delegates observed a Postal Vote opening session, visited Polling Stations throughout Polling Day, and attended the Count Centre after polls closed on 8 June 2017. The CPA UK EAM released a preliminary statement on the day following the election, which can be found at <https://www.uk-cpa.org/news/election-assessment-mission-preliminary-statement/>, and a more extensive report will be issued in due course.
8. Delegates from Democracy Volunteers, an international group of observers, also visited Darlington on Polling Day (the only Constituency in the North East), as part of their own wider Mission. Twenty teams made up of 73 observers made up in teams of two, three or four, made 642 separate observations in 507 polling stations across the United Kingdom. Observers came from around the world, including ten member states of the European Union, member states of the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, and from Canada, the United States of America and Moldova.
9. Their observers generally spent between fifteen and thirty minutes per Polling Station, as the observers were asked to ensure that they attempted to see the entire process. Democracy Volunteers have published a final report as to their findings, which can be located at <https://democracyvolunteers.org/2017/06/20/final-report-uk-general-election-080617/>.

Register Office

10. Darlington Register Office has submitted its Annual Performance Report and Customer Engagement Strategy to the General Register Office for compliance.
11. Feedback has been positive with good levels of service achieved by the Council during the past year. In particular the attainment of key performance targets for the timeliness of birth, death and still birth registrations, have exceeded the national targets. In addition, the Register Office is also exceeding all of its performance targets for appointment availability, attributed to good management oversight and the daily monitoring of the diary system. Customer satisfaction levels also remain at a high standard.
12. It is also pleasing to note that the relocation of the Register Office to the Town Hall midway through the performance year has not impacted on service delivery. The following is a summary :-

	2015/16	2016/17
Certificate Sales	2481	2615
New Citizens	54	73
Notices of Marriage	748	806
Appointments	3709	3621 *
Ceremonies	421	440

*= fewer appointments offered due to reduction of 0.5 fte

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio