
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.

Register Office - Fees

2. As requested by Members as part of the Medium-term Financial Plan (MTFP) considerations in 2017/18, we have considered the fees charged by the Council in relation to Ceremonies and functions undertaken at the Darlington Register Office.
3. Some of the fees for the ceremonies and functions are discretionary and can be varied by the Council and some are statutory, set by the Government through the General Register Office.
4. The Register Office in Darlington does provide a small surplus income for the Council and regional benchmarking information for 2015/16 shows that Darlington's income of £250,884, compares favourably with some authorities in the region.
5. We did question the difference in fees between mid-week and weekend and Bank Holiday wedding ceremonies and we were advised that some harmonisation of these fees was being looked at as part of the MTFP 2018/19 proposals. We were also advised of the current service offered in relation to the European Passport Application checking process at a cost of £30 and other possible income streams which could be looked at such as the National Citizenship Checking Service.

Revenue Outturn 2017/18 – Quarter 2

6. We have considered the Quarter 2 forecast of the 2017/18 revenue budget outturn.
7. The latest projections are showing an overall improvement against the MTFP of £3.792 million, an improvement of £3.452 million from the quarter 1 reported position, which is mainly due to Corporate resources showing an improvement of £2.321 million following the scrutiny and release of a number of Contingency budgets and Earmarked Reserves balances that are no longer deemed to be required.
8. Further savings of £0.416 million have also been achieved in financing costs due primarily to the investments in property funds as noted in the Treasury Management Strategy at Council in February 2017, and that the Council-wide budget was forecast to be underspend by £0.264 million, with the Departmental position improving by £0.451 million.

9. There is a projected overspend in relation to Adoption and Placements since the quarter 1 position and we were advised of the work being undertaken through the Children's Services Transformation Programme and the use of corporate reserves to offset this overspend.
10. In relation to departmental budgets, we felt that Scrutiny should perhaps look in further detail at those individual lines which were showing a significant overspend to understand the reasons for that.

Work Programme

11. We will continue to monitor the MTFP and we will be looking at the proposals contained within the 2018/19 MTFP once it is available for consultation and we will also be continuing our work into corporate governance within the Authority.

Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee