

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESOURCES

23 November 2011

Present:

Councillor Baldwin (Chair)

Councillors Hobden, Branston, Bull, D J Henson, Morris, Mottram, Ruffle, Spackman, Taghdissian, Tippins and Wardle

Chief Executive, Director Corporate Services, Assistant Chief Executive, Head of Contracts and Direct Services, Head of Treasury Services, Head of Corporate Customer Services, Head of Audit and Member Services Officer (SJS)

Also present:

Councillor Edwards – Leader, Portfolio Holder for Budget and Strategic Vision

Councillor Martin – Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Human Resources

Mr B Morris - Representative from Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditor

55 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2011 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

56 **Declarations of Interest**

A Member declared the following personal interest:-

COUNCILLOR	MINUTE
Councillor Ruffle	65 (in respect of the Industrial Action risk as a retired and active Member of National Union of Teachers)

57 **Annual Audit Letter**

Mr Morris from Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditor, presented the Annual Audit Letter.

Mr Morris outlined the key areas for Council Action, the Audit of Accounts, Financial Performance and Systems, Annual Governance Statement and Value for Money, including the review of project management arrangements.

Members were advised that a late objection had been received regarding income from parking charges notices. It would have no impact on the 2010/11 accounts but would have to be addressed in the 2011/12 accounts.

In response to Members' questions, Mr Morris clarified that the late objection had been from a resident in Teignbridge who had also sent in objections to East Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Council accounts on the same matter. The notification of the objection had been received a week after the accounts had been signed off at the Final Accounts Committee.

Mr Morris advised that although Exeter City Council was the collecting agent for Devon County Council for the off- street fines, the Council would have to take account of the objection in the 2011/12 accounts in respect of on-street fines. He clarified the position with regards to the demise of the Audit Commission and any possible affect the way the Government were intending to procure the audit process on fees levied to local authorities.

The Chair thanked Mr Morris for his presentation.

The Scrutiny Committee – Resources received the letter.

(Letter circulated)

58 Leader and Portfolio Holder to present their half yearly reports

The Leader presented the update on his priorities for the budget and providing value for money across the Council's services. He advised Members on the £2.4 million of savings, the cut to the Arts Organisations, the £0.5 million savings that would result from the Management Restructure, the Systems Review of the Council's services and the £4.7 million savings that the Council would need to find over the next four years. The report is attached to these minutes.

The following responses were given to Members' questions:-

- the management restructure could not have been undertaken earlier due to the Council's bid for Unitary status and the planning that had commenced for implementation.
- the position with regards to business rates being retained by local authorities was still unclear and the effect this would have on the Council was uncertain. The Government was expected to provide greater clarity through Technical papers to be issued.
- it was clarified that after 2012/13, the Council would no longer receive monies from Central Government to compensate for not increasing council tax.

Councillor Martin presented the update on his priorities within the Portfolio for Business Transformation and Human Resources. He advised Members on the position within Human Resources and anti-bullying week; Housing and Council Tax Benefit and concerns regarding proposed cuts; Information Technology and the importance of updating the way Members use technology; Health and Safety and protecting lone workers. The report is attached to these minutes.

In response to Members' questions, Councillor Martin stated that the I.T resources for Members were under review including the way laptops were used and investigating the possible use of smart phones. To save on postage Members were encouraged to collect their post from the Civic Centre.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

59 AIM Property Maintenance Progress Report 2011/12

The joint report of the Head of Contracts and Direct Services, Head of Housing Services, Head of Treasury Services and Acting Head of Estates was submitted.

A Member had submitted a question regarding the overspend of £100,000 in the Housing Reactive Repairs budget against the budget identified for empty properties and the reason for this overspend and whether this is unusual or avoidable.

The Head of Contracts and Direct Services advised that the amount of overspend was dependant on the amount of budget allocated on voids, the amount of works required to the voids for them to meet the agreed standards and the speed of invoices being submitted by contractors. The budget this year was set at £800,000, this compared to the previous year when the budget was £1m. Spend for the first six months of this year was £501,782, for the same period in 2010/11 £374,315 and in 2009/10 £565,254. This year there had been 27 voids with significant works associated with them (value of works in excess of £5000), last year over the same period this number was only seven. Average void costs this year were £3,000 compared to £2,000 last year.

Members were informed that recently £30,000 had to be spent on a property where a family had been evicted to bring it up to the decent homes standard.

The Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the financial position of the second quarter financial position of the £7.8m programme of reactive and planned property maintenance and refurbishment for 2011/12.

(Report circulated)

60 Half Year Report of Performance Monitoring 2011/12

The report of the Director of Corporate Services was submitted.

A Member had submitted a question with regards to the top 5% earners who are women being below target and if the figure was worse due to the restructure and what could be done to address this Performance Indicator.

The Director Corporate Services advised that it was not sue to the restructure as those charges would not take effect until April 2012. The Senior Management Restructure had been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and, in the longer term, the Council would look at developing appropriate programmes for women in the organisation to encourage a potential supply of future female senior managers.

The Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the report.

(Report circulated)

61 Resources Scrutiny Stewardship to 30 September 2011

The report of the Head of Treasury Services was submitted.

In response to a Member' s question, the Head of Corporate Customer Services advised that the Electoral Commission, as a result of problems experienced in the General Election, had issued a directive to increase staff at polling stations and required formal training of all election staff. It was not known if these measures would be on going although it was anticipated that the Electoral Commission would require additional procedures in future years.

The Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the report.

(Report circulated)

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE EXECUTIVE

62 Capital Monitoring Statement to 30 September 2011

The Head of Treasury Services presented the report setting out the current position in respect of the Council's revised annual Capital Programme.

Members were advised that the capital programme for the current financial year was £23,167,730 and it was projected that £7.3 million of the programme would need to be carried forward into future years. During the first six months of the current financial year the Council spent £5,515,868 of the 2011/12 Capital Programme. This equated to 23.8% of the revised Capital Programme being spent in the first six months of 2011/12, compared to £6.964 million (22.8%) being spent in the first six months of 2010/11.

In response to a Member's question, the Chief Executive advised the once the John Lewis store opened it was anticipated that the use of the King William Street car park would significantly increase, providing additional income for the Council.

The Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the current position in respect of the revised annual Capital Programme and recommended approval by Council of the revised annual Capital Programme.

(Report circulated)

63 Overview of General Fund Revenue Budget 2011/12

The Head of Treasury Services presented the report advising Members of the overall projected financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budget after six months, for the 2011/12 financial year.

He advised that the Service Committee budgets showed a forecast overspend of £384,220 and advised that the Scrutiny Committee - Community had an underspend of £188,620, Scrutiny Committee - Economy an overspend of £445,500 and Scrutiny Committee - Resources an overspend of £127,340.

Members were updated on the other financial variations including the New Home Bonus, the Housing Revenue Account, progress on savings, outstanding sundry debt and creditor payments performance.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Treasury Services stated that there had been some increase in the car park income in October and it was anticipated that there would be an increase in income in November and December; the introduction of charging for prime site public conveniences was for the Bus Station toilets; whilst the Legal Services £6,000 savings for the joint procurement of research and precedents had not been fully achieved it was anticipated that some savings would be achieved through joint procurement this financial year; the cost for the closure of the Archaeological Field Unit would not appear in future years; Councils do have the ability to take a charge over a property to secure repayment of council tax although it would be difficult to know when a property was being sold; Housing were working with landlords to bring empty properties back into use and owners of empty properties had to pay 90% of Council tax.

The Scrutiny Committee - Resources supported the report and recommended approval by Council of the:-

- (1) General Fund forecast financial position for the 2011/12 financial year;
- (2) HRA forecast financial position for 2011/12 financial year;
- (3) outstanding Sundry Debt position as at September 2011; and
- (4) the creditors' payments performance.

(Report circulated)

64 **Treasury Management- 2011/12 - Half Year Update**

The Head of Treasury Services presented a report on the current performance for the 2011/12 financial year and the position regarding investments and borrowings as at 30 September 2011.

He updated Members on the net interest position and advised that the reduction in investment interest earned against the estimate was in part due to the recent decision by credit agencies to downgrade the Royal Bank of Scotland and Lloyds Banking Groups which meant that the Council could no longer hold as much cash in its call accounts. The Council was therefore utilising the Government's Debt Management Office account in line with the treasury management strategy. However this paid a much lower interest rate of 0.25%.

Members were advised that the Government intended to introduce a self-financing regime for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Council would be required to pay the Government an amount of money (currently £57.3 million) to "buy" itself out of the subsidy system. The Council would have to undertake long term borrowing in order to be able to afford to pay this sum to the Government. To facilitate this it was proposed that the Operational Boundary and the Authorised Limit were increased to cover the amount to be paid to the Government.

The Scrutiny Committee - Resources noted the Treasury management report for the first six months of 2011/12 and of the Council's Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit to allow the Council to borrow the funds required for the HRA self-financing regulations and recommended approval by Council.

(Report circulated)

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESOURCES

65 **Risk Management**

Councillor Ruffle declared a personal interest in respect of the Industrial Action risk as a retired and active Member of National Union of Teachers.

The Head of Audit presented the report advising the Committee of the Council's updated corporate risk register.

The Scrutiny Committee – Resources approved the updated Corporate Risk Register and noted the ongoing monitoring of the risk register and proposed mitigating actions.

(Report circulated)

66 **Internal Audit Work - 1st Half Year 2011/12**

The Head of Audit presented the report advising Members of the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Unit. Internal Audit's objective was to examine the Council's financial and non-financial systems to check that adequate internal controls were in place to prevent loss due to frauds, errors and inefficiency, and that due attention was paid to Corporate Governance and risk management.

Members were advised of the visit of the Shanghai Municipal Audit Bureau to the Council to learn more about auditing in the UK and the Committee congratulated the audit team on achieving this recognition.

The Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the report.

(Report circulated)

67 **Customer Service Centre- Saturday Opening Trial**

The Head of Corporate Customer Services presented the report updating Members on the trial opening of the Customer Service Centre on Saturday mornings. He stated that a report would go to Executive next February to advise Members of the outcomes of the six-month trial together with details of the costs to enable a decision to be taken on the future of Saturday morning opening.

Members thanked Customer Service Centre staff that had volunteered to work on Saturday mornings and welcomed that the majority of staff had taken time off in lieu which enforced the Council's commitment to work-life balance.

The Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the report.

(Report circulated)

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.20 pm

Chair

Minute Item 58

Leader's Half-Year report to Resources Scrutiny

22 June 2011

Exeter City Council faces unprecedented cuts in its financial support from this Conservative-led government. Our experience since September is the front-loading of cuts has meant that some services to the public have been reduced, though we took a political decision to protect grants to community organisations, where services are coming under increasing pressure from the most vulnerable residents in Exeter. Local government has been under sustained political attack from Conservative ministers, assisted by the tabloid press. What I set out below is the impact of Tory cuts on our budgets and an outline of the restructure of the council.

The Council's Current Financial Standing

The Local Government Finance Settlement for Exeter has meant a cut in formula grant of almost 23% between 2010/11 and 2012/13 with expectations of further cuts in grant beyond that. In cash terms formula grant has reduced from £10.7 million in 2010/11 to £8.3 million in 2012/13.

The Council's budget proposals for 2011/12 included a package of measures to save some £2.4 million which has resulted in an overall reduction of the revenue budget requirement from £16.8 million in 2010/11 to £14.1 million for the current year. The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan also indicated that in addition to these savings the Council will need to reduce its revenue budget by a further £711,000 in 2012/13, £537,000 in 2013/14 and by a further £1,041,000 in 2014/15.

This amounts to a cumulative reduction of £4,710,000 over the next four years.

In the last year, although the shortfall in funding of the Concessionary Fares Scheme had been substantially mitigated by additional grant, additional pressures from a poor grant settlement and the continuing downturn of the economy meant that a substantial reduction in the General Fund balance was forecast in the budget. However, a successful vacancy management policy, the re-letting of the Leisure Contract and the ability to capitalise redundancy payments combined with other savings has enabled the Council to add back money to its General Fund balance during the year.

We do, of course, have other sources of income, of which council tax (at about £4.7 million per year) is the most significant, but this has been frozen for the current year and thereafter will prove difficult to significantly increase. Additionally, in comparison with most other district councils Exeter has a very low council tax; it currently has the 5th lowest district band D council tax. This means therefore that the council is also less able to generate additional revenue from council tax payers in comparison with most other councils. Whilst other sources of revenue, such as car parking income and property income, are relatively substantial in Exeter, they are both largely dependent on the health of the economy and cannot be expected to significantly increase from current levels in the short term.

With regard to the Council's revenue reserves significant use has already been made of them in recent years as part of the overall budget strategy. The Council's revenue reserves at the end of 2007/08 were some £10.1 million, comprised of £7.5 million of unallocated General Fund balances and £2.6 million of earmarked reserves. By contrast, the Council's reserves position as at 31 March 2011 shows total revenue reserves of only £5.4 million, of which £4.3 million are in respect of the unallocated General Fund balance. The Council has already planned to use its reserves so that the General Fund Balance reduces to the prudential minimum level of £2 million by the end of 2014/15.

All of this leads to the inescapable conclusion that Exeter City Council will have to continue to reduce its cost base in the medium term if it is to meet its legal duty to have a balanced budget whilst providing a wide range of mandatory services to the public. In recent years the Council has been able to save very significant sums from budgets through greater efficiency, service reductions and reduced staffing. This is why the Council has already been adopting a policy of tightly restricting recruitment for the last two years in order to minimise potential impacts on existing staff and the costs of terminating contracts. However, the current financial situation is a step up in gear and we therefore need to take a closer look at the fabric of the council itself.

Update on the Council's Financial Standing

- The Council is on course to deliver most of the £2.4 million of savings that were identified in this year's budget. The budget overview report being presented on this agenda shows that after the first 6 months of this year we are on track to deliver £2.2 million of those savings.
- We have received a good report from our external auditors indicating sound financial performance and an unqualified opinion on the Council's annual accounts.
- The Council has been successful in its application to capitalise redundancy costs in respect of the management restructure helping to spread the costs over more than one year.
- On 28 October 2011, Iceland's Supreme Court ruled on the status of a number of local authorities who had brought a test case to confirm their preferred creditor status. The ruling confirmed preferred creditor status for the individual Councils in the test case, meaning that they should receive a full pay out before any other creditor. On the basis of this judgement, and subject to the court ruling applying to non-test cases it is anticipated that Exeter City Council will make a full recovery of £2 million invested with Glitnir, and a recovery of some 95% of the initial investment of £3 million with Landsbanki, plus interest.
- The Council has started preparing for next year's budget. At this stage it is anticipated that we can deliver the required savings through the current management restructure which will save the Council more than £0.5 million each year together with other already identified savings of about another £0.5 million.

Management Restructure and Review of Services

The council is undertaking a wide-ranging programme of structural change and service rationalisation.

This has started with a restructure of senior management. The aim is to ensure that by April next year, we have a cost effective and efficient structure to address the council's priorities. Affected staff will of course be engaged in this process as will their trade unions. There will of course be concern among the staff and there will be measures in place to support those who are directly affected by the restructure. Whilst it is still too early to accurately predict the eventual number of actual job losses and any consequential redundancy costs; the costs of the review are likely to be significant. The council is therefore currently seeking to capitalise these costs so that they can be spread over a longer period.

We know that we have a sound record as a successful council providing the public with good value for money. However, our structure is more than a decade old and cuts in budgets have left some areas unbalanced in delivering the best service to the public.

I have already had agreement from the other group leaders to undertake a systemic review of the council's services. We will start with two to three services so that we understand how the process

works and what it can deliver for us. The success of this work will rely on all input from the managers and staff of the services as well as councillors being involved and so I hope I can count on your support for this.

The work over this year will allow us to be clear about our priorities and what type of council we need to be to continue to deliver high quality and cost effective services for our residents and continued growth for Exeter as a whole.

It will be challenging time, but we have a history of success as Exeter City Council under Labour control and I am confident that this will continue into the future.

Update on Progress in the Systemic Review of the Council's Services

Our systems review work has started positively. All members were given the opportunity to attend an overview session and hopefully members of this committee were able to attend and are as confident as I am about the benefits to the Council of this approach. Over the past few months, senior officers have been looking at our services to understand what residents are asking us for and how we respond to this. I am sure that this has already provided information about improvements that can be made. The result of this work has been shared with the representatives to the two opposition groups. The next stage is to look at three areas in more depth so that we can test new ways of working, sometimes across existing service areas.

The three areas that we will begin to look at in December are:

- Customer Services/Housing Advice/Revenues & Benefits
- Housing and Commercial Repairs
- Planning

We will also be looking at work to establish what the overall purposes of the Council are. I look forward to updating the Committee on progress in this important area of work for the Council.

Update on Senior Management Restructure

I am pleased that the changes to our senior management structure have received all-party support and are progressing extremely well, and according to the timetable we had set out. In fact we are currently in the process of interviewing candidates for the new posts. I am confident that we will be in a position to fully implement the new arrangements by 1 April next year, as we had always intended.

These changes will save around £1½million a year, as well as providing a fit for purpose structure appropriate for the new challenges which face us.

New Priority: Localism Bill

We expect this Bill to gain Royal Assent shortly. We will need to be prepared as a Council to respond to the implications of this Bill to be clear about possible challenges and opportunities for the Council and our residents. I will be asking officers to ensure that all members are kept up to date.

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SCRUTINY RESOURCES COMMITTEE
23 NOVEMBER 2011

Key Elements of the Programme for the Resources Portfolio for 2011/12

- **Business Transformation**

Local government is under attack by Tory Ministers, who for ideological reasons want to dismantle local government. I believe city council services for Exeter should normally be provided by Exeter city council officers, not by the private sector or workers from other councils. However, our present structure is more than a decade old and is not fit for delivering those services in the 21st Century.

Following the restructuring of the senior management of the council and the development of a new organisational structure it is essential that we ensure that the new organisation adopts and operates efficient, cost effective and customer-led processes. This means a transformation of the way we currently operate. Proposals will be brought forward for a fundamental review of the way services operate. As Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation I will take the lead in this process. It is important that all my councillor colleagues are involved in this process, though I hope members of this committee will take a particular interest.

***UPDATE:** A significant amount of work was undertaken during the summer months by senior and front-line staff to gather data on the processes, procedures and outcomes for service delivery across a range of service areas. This has helped identify where the Council should start its review of all services so work can begin in earnest on the detailed review of processes once the recruitment to the senior management structure has been undertaken.*

- **Human Resources**

Although the Leader takes responsibility for HR in the time of enormous budget reductions and staff restructure, he does so in consultation with this Portfolio Holder. I have chaired one meeting of the Employee Liaison Forum (ELF) when the Leader was on other business. I attend the South West Employers' Forum on behalf of Exeter City Council. I will be interviewing, with other Senior Councillors, for the new management posts.

- **Customer Access**

To provide convenient, easy access to services there is a programme of providing 24 hour access via our website and our automated telephone payments service. However, there still remains a demand for customers to visit our Customer Service Centre outside of normal office hours. I have asked officers to look at options for opening the Centre on Saturday mornings. Already there have been early discussions with staff and a review is underway of current opening arrangements and costs to explore this further.

***UPDATE:** An important milestone in making our services more accessible was reached in September when we began the trial opening of the Customer Service Centre on Saturday mornings. This gives people who don't have ready access to on-line services or who work Monday to Friday the chance to visit or telephone our Customer Service staff.*

- **Housing/Council Tax Benefit**

There continues to be a growing demand for this vital service and our first priority is to continue to ensure that we provide a timely and effective service to current and future claimants. Caseload continues to grow at about 5% a year and staffing resources have not been increased yet our processing times have continued to fall.

Already there have been cuts to Housing Benefit. However, major changes have been indicated. The government's proposals for Universal Credit mean that from the autumn of 2013, only claimants already receiving housing benefit will continue to receive this service from the Council. All new claimants will have the housing element of their benefits paid for in Universal Credit, with housing benefit being phased out over a number of years. Council Tax benefit will cease on 1 April 2013 and every council has to design its own scheme for delivering this element of the benefit system while achieving a 10% reduction in the gross cost of the current scheme.

These are huge changes to come to terms with in a very short period of time and the proposals for council tax benefits raises significant issues of having to design a local scheme and avoid a potential huge financial risk for the council. At the present time, government has not provided the information needed to plan for these massive challenges. I will be working with officers to prepare for these changes and to bring proposals back to Members so we can start to understand the issues and challenges we face.

UPDATE: *Despite there continuing to be an increasing demand for these services, the processing of new claims and changes continues to be ahead of target with new claims being assessed on average during the last month within 10 days and changes within 6 days. Many housing benefit claimants who have not changed their circumstances since April will feel the full effect of this year's benefit reductions in January when their protection ends. Work continues with landlords and individual claimants to try and ensure that everyone is aware of the effect this will have and to provide help where possible.*

It is hoped that the government will shortly respond to the consultation responses it received in respect of its proposal to localise council tax benefit from 1 April 2013. This will mean that hundreds of local authorities like Exeter will have to design their own scheme for providing this national benefit and take the financial consequences if expenditure throughout the year exceeds the annual government grant. Nationally, the budget for this benefit is being cut by 10% but as the government has stated that all claimants over 60 will be fully protected, this means that working age claimants in the City will be facing something like an 18% cut to balance the budget. If we are told to protect further groups of people, the cut to those of working age will need to be even more severe.

- **Information Technology**

No modern organisation can operate effectively without an efficient use of IT to provide service support and delivery and we have been fortunate that in previous years we have had the resources to invest in the robust systems we currently have. Things will be much more difficult in the future, yet the need for systems development will be even greater as we look to modernise and automate processes. I want to make sure that the review of the council's processes considers fully the opportunities modern communications technology offer, but that investment requires a sound business case to ensure that payback is achieved. One example of this is electronic forms which automatically process data into our back office systems.

UPDATE:

RAMM – the new museum will rely heavily on new technologies including:

- new telephone and call management system;
- new data networks, to enable the interactive displays, environmental controls systems, back office systems and public access via wireless network;
- high speed data links to the Ark.

eForms - all Council eForms have now been reviewed and being put into a standard format to aid accessibility, more interactive forms are being developed to improve customer service. Currently working with Housing to look at access via Smart phones and assess customers' preference for contact – particularly around repairs.

Servers – demand for capacity continues to grow; now holding over 3 million documents, this year's upgrade programme will keep pace with this increasing demand. The migration from some of the remaining older or 'legacy' systems and hardware is underway; this will move all systems onto the most current operating systems and platforms.

Virtualised Desktops – alternative ways of delivering the traditional 5 year PC replacement programme will be trialled next year, based on lower cost 'thin client' desktops. This could provide a more flexible and higher performing desktop platform with the 'computing power' being provided direct from our servers rather than the pc itself. If the trials prove successful then the deployment will be extended and used as a part of future replacement programmes.

- **Civic Centre Accommodation**

In the past two years the Council has seen its staffing reduce by some 20% and this is clear from the utilisation of office space within the Civic Centre. This provides an opportunity to review the allocation of accommodation in light of the forthcoming organisational review and I will be looking to release space which can be let to generate much needed income. Clearly, it will be helpful to have in mind where it would be most beneficial to let any surplus capacity, so I will be considering the options in the near future so that we are ready when the opportunity presents itself and nothing is done in the intervening period which might prejudice our options.

UPDATE: Work continues to adjust accommodation requirements in response to the overall reduction in staffing levels. Once the senior management appointments are made, work will commence to align services into their new configurations. Another important objective of this project will be to declare an element of accommodation at the Civic Centre as surplus so that the Council can let it on a commercial basis to help mitigate budget cuts.

- **Procurement / Health and Safety / Equalities**

I will be spending some time in the coming months familiarising myself with the Council's procurement and Health and Safety arrangements. Procurement is an area under great pressure as resources diminish and I'm keen to review the arrangements we have in place to ensure best value. I have asked for an update on the 'Green Accord' to come to this committee in September. I am attending groups that are consulted in the health and safety process and visiting council departments where there are the greatest risks to see how our policies protect our workers.

UPDATE:

Procurement

Progress with the Green Accord has been reported to this committee and will be return for a review early in 2012. Unfortunately, the significant engagement reported to the Committee by the Head of Contracts and Direct Services has not yet materialised. This does mean that careful scrutiny of the scheme's financial performance is undertaken as it is supposed to provide a significant revenue contribution to the Council. I have been updated on current procurement procedures across the authority in preparation for assisting in the establishment of a new regime for procurement in the new structure.

Equalities

I have attended a meeting of the Corporate Equality Group and am now on the circulation list of the committee agendas and minutes to keep updated on current issues. The largest contemporary issue was the Equality Impact Assessment of the restructure.

Health and Safety

I have attended the annual Regional Health and Safety Forum. I have a attended a corporate health and safety committee and will remain on the circulation list. I observed an inspection of the weighbridge at Exton Road. I have a Health and Safety tour of the MRF calendared. I appear in the forthcoming Citizen highlighting safety issues for all Council customer-facing staff. I participated in the first session of the latest Stepaway Personal safety training with CSC and cleansing staff. I will press for the Director/Assistant Director who takes responsibility for staff safety to similarly attend the next available course to re-emphasise our corporate commitment to staff safety.

Councillor Ian Martin
Portfolio Holder, Business Transformation and Human Resources
November 2011