

**COUNCIL RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
HELD ON 13 JUNE 2005  
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 6.55 PM)**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Andrew Jones in the Chair. Councillors Clark, Fox, Galloway, Harrison, Phillips, Powell, Simister and Simms.

**Late Arrivals:** Councillor Simister at 5.50 pm.

**Early Departures:** Councillor Powell at 6.45pm.

1/05 - **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES:**  
There were no apologies for absence. Notification had been received that Councillor Galloway was to act as substitute for Councillor Hinchcliffe and that Councillor Simister was to act for Councillor Theakston.

(5.30 pm)

2/05 - **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were no declarations of interest.

(5.31 pm)

3/05 - **MINUTES:**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council Resources Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 16 March 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Five Members voted for the motion and there were three abstentions).

(5.32 pm)

(D)

4/05 - **EXEMPT INFORMATION:**

There were no exempt information items.

(5.32 pm)

5/05 - **PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS – QUESTIONS:** There were no questions to consider.

(5.32 pm)

## COUNCIL RESOURCES COMMISSION

### SCRUTINY MATTERS AND REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN BY THE COMMISSION

#### 6/05 - **REQUESTS FOR INCLUSION OF ITEMS IN FUTURE WORK**

**PROGRAMME:** It was noted that no requests had been received in this regard. The Chair referred to an appendix to the work programme, which set out a number of issues highlighted by departmental Directors that might be of interest to the Resources Commission when considering items for inclusion in the future work programme.

Within the Department of Resources an issue had been highlighted in relation to Elections. The Commission **agreed** that information highlighting the issues in relation to Elections would be circulated to Members of the Commission.

The Chair referred to the Commission's draft work programme. It was noted that the Commission were undertaking a smaller number of scrutiny reviews than ever and were receiving a number of reports submitted for comment and consideration by the Commission. The focus of these reports was to enable the Commission to give its view prior to decisions being made; a significant change from the focus in previous years where reports were submitted for information purposes only. It was **agreed** that this issue would be discussed and considered by members at the next meeting.

(6.40 pm-6.55 pm)

### SCRUTINY CONSULTATION

#### 7/05 - **INTRODUCTION TO AUDIT COMMITTEE/STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL/DRAFT STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL:**

The Corporate Improvement Officer (Governance) submitted a written report in relation to the Statement on Internal Control for 2004/05. A copy of that Statement was attached as an appendix to the written report. The Corporate Improvement Officer (Governance) advised that further guidance in relation to such Statements had only been received in April 2005 and as a consequence, therefore, a more detailed report would be circulated to a future meeting of the Commission. The Corporate Improvement Officer then circulated a diagrammatical representation of the content of the forthcoming Statements. The Chair invited members' questions in relation to this report. Although there was no formal vote upon this matter it was **agreed** that the report be received and noted.

(5.50 pm-6.03 pm)

#### 8/05 - **INTERNAL AUDIT OUTTURN WORKPLAN 2004/05 AND WORKPLAN 2005/06:**

The Audit Manager submitted an annual report which set out key findings and conclusions arising from work undertaken by the Council's Internal Audit Section in 2004/05. It also described work to be undertaken during 2005/06.

The Audit Manager referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report, which described a positive and improving outcome for the Council in terms of the level, or assurance that could be placed on the system of internal control.

## COUNCIL RESOURCES COMMISSION

The Chair invited Members' questions in relation to the written report. The Audit Manager responded to questions in relation to the risk assessment process, allocation of time for those officers working for Internal Audit, and the monitoring of contract procedures in relation to the Turkish Baths and Nidderdale Pool. Although no formal vote was taken, the key findings and conclusions arising from the work of the Council's Internal Audit Section completed in 2004/05 were noted together with the comments contained in the report regarding Internal Audit's work plan for 2005/06.

(6.03 pm-6.11 pm)

9/05 - **AUDIT COMMISSION AUDIT AND INSPECTION PLAN 2005/06:** The Chair welcomed Mr Mark Kirkham and Mr Keith Illingworth from the Audit Commission who had attended the meeting having submitted a copy of the Audit Inspection Plan for Harrogate Borough Council for 2005/06. In addition to highlighting a number of key points, Mr Kirkham advised the Audit Commission would now be required to offer an 'Opinion' in relation to the services offered by Harrogate Borough Council. That opinion constituted the highest form of assurance that the Audit Commission could give. Mr Kirkham also referred to the Audit fee for 2005/06, which had decreased upon that levied for 2004/05. Mr Kirkham invited Resources Commission members to consider how frequently Audit Commission officers should attend meetings of the Resources Commission acting as an Audit Committee and, indeed, how frequently reports should be submitted by the Audit Commission to Scrutiny Members.

It was **agreed** that a copy of reports drafted by the Audit Commission in relation to Harrogate Borough Council would be submitted to Councillor Andrew Jones as Chair of the Commission in the first instance, who would discuss the content of those reports with the Scrutiny Officer and could, therefore, report to the Commission if necessary. The Audit Commission advised that it was desirable for Members to consider the scheduling of their meetings as Audit Committee to synchronise those meetings, with the Audit Commission's key inspection events. Many authorities found that three to four meetings a year were necessary in order to do this. It was **agreed** that the Chair of the Commission and Scrutiny Officer would consider this issue in advance of the next meeting.

(6.11 pm-6.33 pm)

10/05 - **CORPORATE ACTION PLAN (CAP) YEAR END REPORT:** The Executive Director, Corporate Policy and Improvement submitted a written report in relation to the 2004/05 Corporate Action Plan (CAP) which served as a summary to the Year End Monitoring report drafted by the Performance Officer also attached. The Executive Director referred to section 5 of the report regarding future performance monitoring conceived as part of the response to the Council's recent CPA assessment and referred to quarterly comprehensive performance reporting, the exact content of which had yet to be finalised but would certainly incorporate comments from Directors, the Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny prior to consideration by the Cabinet. The Chair invited Members' questions in relation to

## **COUNCIL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

the reports. The Executive Director responded to Members' questions in relation to Community Safety and the Council's indirect contribution to the crime figures, and the need to commit resources to the Council's highest priorities and the availability of the Council's new performance management system, which would, in due course be available online for Members to peruse.

The Chair thanked the Director for the reports and welcomed the significant change in reporting arrangements in relation to the Corporate Action Plan. Although no formal vote was taken on this report, the proposed changes to the corporate performance reporting arrangements were noted in addition to the comments of the Corporate Management Team on the 2004/05 Corporate Action Plan.

### **MATTERS HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT**

11/05 - **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS:** A copy of Forward Plan Ref No 04/05/CPI1 in relation to the procurement of Customer Relationship Management System was received by the Commission.

(6.36 pm)

12/05 - **CABINET AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS:** Members were referred to the list of executive decisions taken (or currently scheduled to be taken) since the last meeting of the Commission. Members referred to item 2 in relation to the overpayment of benefits and irrecoverable amounts written off by the Cabinet Member and discussed the need for further information in this regard.

It was **agreed** that the Scrutiny Officer would request further information from the Director of Resources in relation to the need to monitor this issue and keep the amounts written off each year to a minimum.

(6.36 pm-6.40 pm)