

31/05 - **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2006/2007 TO 2008/2009 AND STRATEGIC PLAN:**

PART 1 - MINUTE

The Strategic Policy Officer submitted a written report which invited the Commission to consider its response to the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and Strategic Plan.

Attached as appendices to the written report were a series of questions in relation to the two documents. These questions had already been considered by the Community Services and Environment Commissions and their views on the Strategic Plan etc were circulated at the meeting and would be reported to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 21 September 2005.

The Strategic Policy Officer then circulated details of the stakeholder consultation results (carried out in August 2005) regarding Harrogate Borough Council's Corporate Priorities and Budget for 2006/2007. The consultation included the District Panel, Voluntary Sector, business sector, Parish Councils, employees and Members. This information was provided to the Commission to help it formulate its response to Cabinet.

It was **AGREED** that the Commission's views be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration. In summary these were:

- (1) The Commission considered the comments from the other Commissions and agreed that the vision as presented was still appropriate without reference to partnerships.
- (2) The Commission agreed with the Council's ambition to improve as an organisation.
- (3) The Commission identified and ranked the top six Corporate Priorities, these were:

Rank 1 =	Caring for the Environment
Rank 1 =	Delivering First Class Public Services
Rank 3	Local Economy
Rank 4	Affordable Housing
Rank 5	Traffic and Transport
Rank 6	Keeping our District Safe
- (4) The Commission do not comment on the 12 Strategic Priority Actions.
- (5) The Commission agreed that if there was additional expenditure available in 2006 / 2007 the most important area for additional expenditure would be Recycling and Waste.

- (6) The Commission agreed that it would be prepared to use a variety of methods to maintain a balanced budget, including no additional expenditure on services and increasing fees and charges and finally but to be avoided if at all possible, reduction in services.

PART 2 – REVIEW

The Strategic Policy Officer submitted a written report which invited the Commission to consider its response to the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and Strategic Plan.

Attached as appendices to the written report were a series of questions in relation to the two documents, which the Commission was directed to and invited to consider in terms of a response to the Cabinet. These questions had already been considered by the Community Services and Environment Commissions and their views on the Strategic Plan, etc, were circulated to the meeting and would be reported to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 21 September 2005.

The Strategic Policy Officer then circulated details of the stakeholder consultation results carried out in August 2005 regarding Harrogate Borough Council's Corporate Priorities and Budget for 2006/2007. The consultation included the District Panel, Voluntary sector, business sector, Parish Council, employees and Members. This information was provided to the Commission to help it formulate its response to Cabinet.

In relation to Appendix 1, the Commission considered the comments from the other Commissions and concluded that the vision agreed by Council in September 2004 was still appropriate to the issues across the Harrogate District without reference to partnerships.

There was some discussion regarding the phrase "encouraging everyone to share in success". It was queried whether "encouraging" meant putting funding into getting people to actively participate or did it mean people participating with the services it provided at no additional cost to the Council. It was suggested that "enabling everyone to share in its success" could be an alternative form of wording. A view was expressed that "encouraging" could mean marketing and promotion and that the long term vision could be interpreted differently by different people. There was a general view that it would be difficult to achieve the vision and that goals must be realistically set before they could be achieved.

There was a specific comment that the vision encouraged people to live in the Harrogate District and it was remarked upon that the Council was actually sending homeless people to Leeds.

It was noted that the Commission agreed with the Council's ambition to improve as an organisation in terms of the delivery of the six Corporate Priorities.

There was a view that funding should be available to deliver the Council's ambition to improve.

There was a view that distinctions between rural and urban should be avoided and that the vision, goal and priorities applied to the whole District.

The Commission was then asked to rank the six Corporate Priorities and, following a discussion, the Commission's views on ranking the priorities were:-

1st = Caring for the Environment.

The Commission considered this a priority as it included recycling.

1st = Delivering First Class Public Services.

3rd Local Economy.

4th Affordable Housing.

There was a comment that affordable housing was difficult to achieve with a lower Paid economy and the Council not being able to build near Council owned housing.

5th Traffic and Transport.

6th Keeping our District Safe.

The Commission considered generally that the views expressed by some Councillors were based on what they would like the Council to do and not on what it could do.

The Commission made no comments on the 12 Strategic Priority Actions in Appendix 2.

In relation to Appendix 3, on balancing the budget, Members were asked to consider how any additional expenditure available in the 2006/2007 budget should be spent. The Commission unanimously agreed that Recycling and Waste was its top priority on the basis that not only was it desirable but that there could be Government sanctions if the authority could not demonstrate good progress in this area. The possibility of recycling plastics was also supported and other comments included finding ways of utilising waste and working with the other organisations that already do it.

Finally, in relation to balancing the budget, the Commission was asked to consider how it would wish to achieve a balanced budget given the following choices: -

- a reduction in services,
- no additional expenditure,
- an increase in fees or charges or
- other methods.

The Commission considered its response and it was agreed that Members would want to see a balanced budget. The Commission agreed that it would be prepared to use a variety of methods to balance the budget including no additional expenditure on services and increasing fees and charges. It was recognised that fees and charges would be subject to individual market forces for each service and the use of price to shape demand was a complex issue that would have to be carefully considered. Finally, but to be avoided if at all possible, reducing services could be included.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That the Commission's views be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration. In summary these were:

- (1) The Commission considered the comments from the other Commissions and agreed that the vision as presented was still appropriate without reference to partnerships.
- (2) The Commission agreed with the Council's ambition to improve as an organisation.
- (3) The Commission identified and ranked the top six Corporate Priorities, these were:

Rank 1 =	Caring for the Environment
Rank 1 =	Delivering First Class Public Services
Rank 3	Local Economy
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Rank 5	Traffic and Transport
Rank 6	Keeping our District Safe
- (4) The Commission did not comment on the 12 Strategic Priority Actions.
- (5) The Commission agreed that if there was additional expenditure available in 2006/07 the most important are for additional expenditure would be Recycling and Waste.
- (6) The Commission agreed that it would be prepared to use a variety of methods to maintain a balanced budget, including no additional expenditure on services and increasing fees and charges and finally but to be avoided if at all possible, reduction in services.

(6.20 pm – 7.00 pm)

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