

57/05 - **AUDIT COMMISSION PLANNING – 2006/07:**

PART 1 – MINUTE

The Audit Manager (Audit Commission) submitted a briefing note for discussion with Members which requested an opportunity for Members to provide an input into the Audit Commission's plan for 2006/07.

The Audit Manager (AC) outlined the Audit planning approach, the potential risks identified as part of the 2005/06 planning process and sought the Audit Committee's views regarding the current risks facing Harrogate Borough Council, any future or emerging issues, the current or future risks facing North Yorkshire as a whole and any other potential areas for discussion.

It was also noted that 2006/07 would see a number of new projects and initiatives, (single status and the Council's Customer Service Unit being just two) and it was thought that with so many projects operating at the same time, there was a project management issue above all else.

Members thanked the Audit Manager (AC) and it was agreed that the Audit Committee's various concerns would be considered by the Audit Commission when formulating the final plan for 2006/07.

PART 2 – REVIEW

The Audit Manager (Audit Commission) submitted a briefing note for discussion with Members which requested an opportunity for Members to provide an input into the Audit Commission's plan for 2006/07.

The Audit Manager (AC) outlined the Audit planning approach, the potential risks identified as part of the 2005/06 planning process and sought the Audit Committee's views regarding the current risks facing Harrogate Borough Council, any future or emerging issues, the current or future risks facing North Yorkshire as a whole and any other potential areas for discussion.

It was also noted that 2006/07 would see a number of new projects and initiatives, (single status and the Council's Customer Service Unit being just two) and it was thought that with so many projects operating at the same time, there was a project management issue above all else.

What are the future or emerging risks/issues facing Harrogate Borough Council

In relation to Section 4 of the briefing note regarding future or emerging risks or issues facing Harrogate Borough Council, Members expressed concern with regard to the

future of the Council's Planning Section. Harrogate Borough Council had been a Planning Standards authority for a number of years and Members expressed concern about how the provision of services, which had, in the past, been reliant upon funding from the Government, would continue once funding had come to an end. Recycling was considered to be a similar issue on the basis that the authority received assistance to increase its recycling rates. Continuing financial pressures were also considered to be a risk for the authority. In terms of future or emerging risks facing Harrogate Borough Council, Members expressed concerns with regard to the restructure of local Government, once again the funding of the Planning Department after the planning delivery grant had ceased, local area agreements and partnership working.

The current issues/risks facing Harrogate Borough Council

In relation to Section 3 of the briefing note, the current issues or risk facing Harrogate Borough Council, Councillor Clark expressed concern with regard to the HIC in that the Council could become too reliant on the Conference Centre and that this was a future potential big risk. What would be the impact to the Council of future trends in the conference business if this reduced significantly. This included the potential for the Leeds City Region and the possibility of the City Region establishing its own conference facilities. What other routes could be pursued as a means of mitigating against these risks. It was also noted that 2006/07 would see a number of new projects and initiatives such as: -

- Customer Services Unit
- Single Status
- Financial Management System

It was considered with so many projects operating at the same time, there was a risk to the Council that to a large extent related to project management issues. In relation to Section 5 of the briefing note covering the current risks facing North Yorkshire as a whole, Councillor Clark referred to the ageing population in North Yorkshire, and as such, the resources required to look after that population and referred to the work of "Supporting People" in particular. Councillor Broadbank also pointed out the threat to the Council from the abolition of Shire Councils under possible unitary authority initiatives.

In terms of Section 6 and other potential areas for discussion, Members expressed interest in relation to procurement and work by the authority in relation to electronic procurement which would see partnership working between the Council and other authorities to "buy in bulk" across the District and county as a means of achieving further savings and expanding individual buying power as a result.

Members thanked the Audit Manager (AC) and it was agreed that the Audit Committee's various concerns for 2006/07 would be considered by the Audit Commission when formulating the final plan for 2006/07.

(6.38 pm – 7.07 pm)