

**ORGANISATION IMPROVEMENT & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW  
AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
HELD ON 5 MARCH 2007  
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 7.40 PM)**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Atkinson in the Chair. Councillors Robin Adderley, Galloway, Grange, Hawke, Newby, Parnaby, Peter Phillips and Willoughby.

**In attendance:** Councillor Cooper for Minute 59/06.

**Late Arrivals:** Councillor Trotter at 5.35 pm.

**Early Departures:** Councillor Hawke at 6.30 pm.  
Councillor Parnaby at 6.30 pm.  
Councillor Willoughby at 7.00 pm.

**53/06 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF**

**SUBSTITUTES:** An apology had been received from Councillor R Marsh.

(5.30 pm)

**54/06 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were no declarations of interest.

(5.30 pm)

**55/06 - MINUTES:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 15 January 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Seven Members voted for the motion and there were two abstentions)

The Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 18 January 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Seven Members voted for the motion and there were two abstentions)

**56/06 – EXEMPT INFORMATION:** There were no exempt information items.

(5.32 pm)

**57/06 – PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS – QUESTIONS:** There were no questions to consider pursuant to Standing Order No 27.

(5.33 pm)

**SCRUTINY MATTERS AND REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN BY THE  
COMMISSION**

**58/06 - HEALTHCARE COMMISSION'S ANNUAL HEALTH CHECK:** In relation to the Healthcare Commission's Annual Health Check process, the Chair welcomed Jane Barnes, Chief Executive of Yorkshire Ambulance Service, Vince Larvin, Assistant Director Yorkshire Ambulance Service and John Mills to address the

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Commission. Jane Barnes advised that there had been a reconfiguration of the Ambulance Service in July 2006 and the organisation was currently undergoing a restructure. Since the reconfiguration the service employed approximately 5,000 staff, it covered 7,500 square miles and served a population of approximately 5 million. Current issues related to performance which continued to grow with a 12% increase in category A calls, which were 999 calls that were classed as critically or very ill, and that there was a target of attending these calls within 8 minutes. Regarding response times to 999 calls, it was noted that there was a target of 75% and that in North Yorkshire 71% were met within the 8 minutes. She also referred to the current concerns relating to the service and, in particular, the uncertainty over competitive tendering for the patient transport service.

John Mills then commented upon the regulatory processes and policies which governed the way in which the Ambulance Service operated and emphasised that although the financial position of the Ambulance Service was classed as 'weak', key work was being undertaken to improve this.

Questions were then invited. Members raised concerns over the change in the eligibility criteria for patient transport and the affect it had had on Community Transport. It was **agreed** that Vince Larvin would liase with Community Transport in this regard. It was emphasised that this should be undertaken as a partnership. Referring to a query regarding hoax calls, it was acknowledged that the number of 'regular' callers needed to be reduced and that there were approximately 508,000 callers per year to Yorkshire Ambulance Service. Concerns were also raised over the current financial situation of the Ambulance Service and Jane Barnes acknowledged this and stated that it was a serious issue and one which had been inherited as a result of the reconfiguration. However, a three year plan had been adopted to reduce this debt and there would be some redundancies at senior management level. One Member enquired as to whether there were plans to close any of the ambulance depots/control rooms. Jane Barnes reported that they were not looking at closing any of the existing depots and added that they were looking at enhancing the standby points which currently served the District, which were fully equipped cars. They were looking at introducing five star standby points in the form of porta kabins with toilets and other facilities. Regarding the control rooms, she advised that these were currently located in Rotherham, Wakefield and York, however, it was intended that the Rotherham control room would be closed down. It was also acknowledged that the current accident and emergency fleet was very good but the patient transport fleet needed improving.

The Chair thanked the Ambulance Service representatives for attending the meeting and providing the Commission with the opportunity of considering local ambulance service issues.

(5.33 pm - 6.09 pm)

59/06 – **DRAFT DIVERSITY STRATEGY 2007-2010:** The Corporate Partnership Development Officer submitted a written report and delivered a presentation which updated the Commission on the Council's current position in relation to agreeing and delivering an overall Diversity Strategy and sought input from Members. A copy of the Draft Strategy was attached to the report. She advised that a Diversity Framework Group was re-established in September 2006 and was Chaired by

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Councillor Cooper, Cabinet Member (Environment), and was also served by Councillors Fox and Parnaby. There was also officer representation from a range of Council departments. She commented that the main objectives of the group were to:

- develop a Diversity Strategy and monitor implementation;
- ensure legislative compliance;
- monitor and review performance against relevant indicators; and
- ensure the integration of all aspects of diversity both within services and as an employer.

The Draft Strategy developed by the Group detailed the background and context of the Harrogate District in relation to equality and diversity; the Harrogate Borough Council employee profile; the Legal Framework; the corporate vision and values; the Harrogate Borough Council's Diversity Policy Statement and the strategic approach to equality and the way forward. She stated that, in relation to the Equality Standard for Local Government, the main objective was to instil equality corporately and to ensure that equality was considered within all work and service provision. There were five levels to be achieved (level five being the highest) each level with criteria to be met. Harrogate Borough Council were currently at level one, committed to a comprehensive equality policy, but aimed to be at level two, assessment and consultation, by May 2007 and at level three, setting equality objectives and targets, by March 2008. In order to achieve level two status an impact assessment was needed to be carried out with the Departments and training had been given by the Audit Commission to Service Heads and nominated officers in December 2006 and the assessments were to be completed by February 2007. Following on from this there would be the development of an action plan that would support the delivery of the strategy.

Questions were then invited. One Member commented on the ageing population throughout the District, particularly in rural areas and the difficulties faced in accessing services such as shops, doctors surgeries, banks etc, as many were closing down. The Cabinet Member (Environment) acknowledged this and commented that this has been taken into account in the Draft Strategy. Referring to the index of multiple deprivation at Ward level, one Member sought clarification over the areas of Knaresborough East which fell within this category. The Corporate Partnership Development Officer **agreed** to look into this and respond to Councillor Willoughby. In relation to Ward information, it was noted that the Council's website now featured a 'my property' function which, after entering a post code, detailed all relevant local information to that area ([www.harrogate.gov.uk](http://www.harrogate.gov.uk) - icon on home page). The Cabinet Member (Environment) also informed the Commission of the web tool used in planning that published annual district data. This was available at [www.harrogate.gov.uk/immediacy-4075](http://www.harrogate.gov.uk/immediacy-4075) The issue of increases in Eastern European workers in the District was also discussed and it was noted the figures in relation to ethnic origins in the draft were based upon the 2001 Census and, as a result were out of date. The Executive Director, Corporate Policy and Improvement, commented that he was confident that the Council would achieve level two status. It was also **agreed** that the Commission would continue to be involved in the development of the strategy.

(6.09 pm - 6.45 pm)

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60/06 – **EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS 2006:** The Scrutiny Officer submitted a written report and delivered a presentation in relation to the Employee Survey 2006. The presentation focused upon the results of the survey, with comparisons to the previous results in 2003 and he reported that these would be reported to Cabinet on 14 March 2007. The responses to the results from Departments, Unions, all Corporate Groups and the Member Improvement and Involvement Group were attached to the report as Appendix B. A discussion on the results ensued and the Scrutiny Officer responded to questions regarding managing change, stress and previous problems experienced when recruiting. It was noted that, although there had not been as many responses as in the previous survey, the results were statistically reliable and the response rate was comparable with other local authorities, particularly when they had undertaken a major restructure. He reported that the results were extremely good with improvements in most areas, out of 163 indicators the Council had improved employee perception in 138 (85%). In relation to stress, the Executive Director Corporate Policy and Improvement commented that the Council was working with the Health and Safety Executive on this issue.

The survey results were to be reported to Cabinet on 14 March 2007.

(7.15 pm - 7.36 pm)

### **61/06 – REQUESTS FOR INCLUSION OF ITEMS IN FUTURE WORK**

**PROGRAMME:** Additional information and a copy of the Commission's draft Work Programme for 2006/07 was submitted, along with a list of major issues which had been identified by Departments which fell within the Commission's remit. The Scrutiny Officer tabled a Planning Services Best Value Briefing note which outlined details of a review of Planning Services. It was noted that a detailed report would be brought to the September meeting of the Commission.

It was also agreed that the Chief Executive of the Primary Care Trust would be invited to attend a future meeting of the Commission.

(6.45 pm - 6.56 pm)

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

62/06 - **PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER THREE, 2006/07:** The Performance Manager submitted a written report and gave a presentation on the Council's performance in relation to the Corporate Basket of Performance Indicators, the Strategic Plan and the Corporate Improvement Plan in quarter three of 2006/2007. In relation to the Corporate basket of Performance Indicators it was noted that only six had been assigned a red traffic light in the third quarter of 2006/07 and that 19 of the Commission's performance indicators had met their target with only two decreasing in performance since quarter two. In relation to the Strategic Plan, six areas of work had been completed, nine were on target and three had been delayed.

That report was noted.

(6.56 pm - 7.15 pm)

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63/06 - **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS:** The Chair invited the Commission to consider those issues in the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions that affected the Commission. In relation to the Key Decisions regarding the Local Development Framework, it was noted that the expected dates of these decisions would need amending in light of the re-programming of the work. The Scrutiny Officer **agreed** to progress this issue.

(7.36 pm - 7.38 pm)