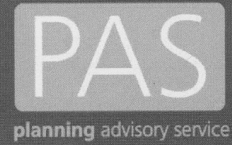
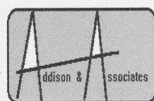


July 2006



# planning peer review guidance for authorities

version 1.5



## 7. the review process

The core of the review takes place during the three days on-site at the council. The PAS/IDeA benchmark of the 'ideal local planning authority' provides the framework for the review (see appendix 2 and list of abbreviations at appendix 4). The team will be seeking evidence that allows it to make a reasoned comparison against each of the elements, exploring current strengths or progress and areas that need to be improved.

Prior to the visit each team member will have reviewed the self-assessment and the documentation provided by the authority and identified areas to probe further, be those good practice areas or areas for possible improvement. The team may work individually or in pairs in the different sessions.

Information gleaned on-site is reviewed on a daily basis and compared with the benchmark, enabling gaps in information to be identified and covered during the remainder of the week. This may require additional meetings not foreseen in the original timetable to be arranged at short notice. On the third day, the team reviews the information it has collected on the flipcharts then reports back its key messages and recommendations on the way forward.

The council should note that all information gleaned by the review team during the process is absolutely non-attributable to individuals. This will be explained at the beginning of every session the team undertakes.

### first day morning

The council co-ordinator should meet the team upon arrival to show them to their base room, inform them about the facilities that have been provided and address any immediate queries that they may have. The team will then go into private session for a short period to prepare for the review.

### remainder of first and second days

The team will spend time gathering evidence to enable it to compare the authority against all elements of the benchmark. The review needs to include as wide a range of activities as possible including a range of one to ones, workshops, focus groups and optional meetings for team members to attend.

Normally an interview will be scheduled 1 hour on timetable, interview for 45 minutes leaving 15 minutes to get to next meeting)

### interviewees/ workshop participants for peer review

The list below represents the range of stakeholders who could be interviewed. As with the list of relevant documents, the circumstances of the particular authority being reviewed will lead the review team to select from the list as appropriate to the focus of the review.

The list includes all of those who would in the ideal situation have a direct relationship with the service at a political, managerial or technical level. It also includes those who may be regarded as representative of the customer base of local planning services. A number of the parties can in practice be seen together rather than 1:1. This will be discussed with your review manager.

**council member and officers**

- 1 Leader of the Council/Elected Mayor
- 2 Chair of Planning Committee
- 3 Portfolio holder/ Cabinet member
- 4 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair
- 5 Focus group of Members (including from service improvement groups)
- 6 Chief Executive
- 7 Executive Director (separately from Chief Executive)
- 8 Focus group of Corporate Management Team
- 9 Head of Planning Service
- 10 Service Management Team as a group and Head of Policy and Head of Development Control separately
- 11 Focus groups of planning staff taken as diagonal slice across the strategic and operational functions
- 12 Service Union Representative
- 13 Performance Manager
- 14 Officer /members of service improvement groups/ quality circles
- 15 Heads of partner services

**external stakeholders**

- 16 Government Office contact
- 17 Regional Development Agency Chair/ Director
- 18 Regional Assembly Chair
- 19 Sub-regional partnership members
- 20 Chair of Local Strategic Partnership
- 21 Director of Urban Regeneration Company
- 22 Director of Chamber of Commerce
- 23 Major Developers in partnership with the Council or URC
- 24 University or other academic body in co-operation with local economic or environmental research
- 25 Members of Local community or neighbourhood organisations
- 26 Citizens panel
- 27 Local developers/ developers forum/agents forum
- 28 Sample of applicants for, and objectors to planning consents (determined in last 6 months)
- 29 Representatives of local community groups e.g. local amenity groups or residents associations
- 30 Parish Councils

Workshops (max 15 people in each – 1 ½ hours)

Some of the people listed above could be seen in groups or in workshops. These workshops need to be run by at least 2 members of the team. Members of the review team will facilitate these sessions.

Some examples of the groups that could be used:

**Staff** This is for frontline staff working directly with the public, including staff in manual and technical posts, and from a range of services

<b>Managers</b>	This is for frontline middle managers, all of who should be below third tier level. There should be a representative spread of employees from across the planning service
<b>Members</b>	This is for members sitting on overview and scrutiny committees
<b>Local Agents</b>	This for a group of agents that regularly put planning applications in to the authority
<b>The Citizens Panel</b>	This for representatives from the community

#### attending meetings

Whilst on-site the team should have the option to observe any additional meetings already scheduled to take place e.g. cabinet/executive, planning committee meetings, overview and scrutiny, corporate management board, meetings with partners or internal improvement planning meetings. These should be noted on the timetable. The team may only stay for part of these meetings.

#### third day

The team will go into private session to assimilate the evidence gathered during the process and use this to compare the authority to the benchmark. The conclusions will then be summarised into a presentation for delivery to the authority that afternoon.

The review team presents its findings to an audience of the authority's choosing. There will be opportunity for people to raise questions and discuss the findings.

#### practical timetable pointers

If it's not possible for an interviewee to be on-site, the authority can arrange a phone interview. The review team meet together each evening for an hour to discuss the day's findings. Make sure this, and lunch breaks, are in the timetable. In order to cover as much ground as possible, the timetable may include breakfast and evening sessions, but be careful people aren't too overloaded. Workshop venues need to be big enough to divide into smaller groups. It's helpful to provide a list of restaurants for the team so they have some choice of where to eat in the evening. Any advice on transport to the authority from the hotel would also be welcome.

#### the report

The feedback provided in the final presentation will be supplemented with a written report providing more detail to support the findings. A draft of this will be provided to the head of planning at the authority four weeks after the review for comment and discussion where required before the report is finalised.

### **post-review and the improvement community**

Following the delivery and agreement of the report the authority, review manager, PAS and possibly the IDeA Regional Associate will discuss options to support the authority in delivering improvements with the authority.

PAS will be delivering improvement programmes and workshops on issues that have been raised through the planning peer review process. The programmes will be open to all authorities that have had or will be having a review and also the authorities that have allowed officers and members to work as peers in the review process. Authorities will be invited to send individuals by PAS.

**HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING SERVICE PEER REVIEW 24-26 APRIL 2007  
PLANNING SERVICE SELF ASSESSMENT**

**1.0 MOTIVATION AND AIMS FOR THE REVIEW**

- Coming out of “Standards” – want to celebrate success and demonstrate improvement
- External challenge to quality and relevance of service
- External opinion on Improvement Plan
- Internal VFM review in 2007 because service has above average spending areas compared to our nearest neighbour Councils
- The PAS peer review will demonstrate the Council’s commitment to the 4C’s process and gives a greater challenge to the VFM review

The self assessment is an opportunity to set the focus for the review. There are a number of key issues facing the authority and for the review to focus on:

- Sustainability of the current level of service post PDG
- Is the service value for money
- Is the service providing what the customer wants in the way they want it
- The added value of the AONB team/Heritage and Design team/DC team
- Governance and in particular the constitution/scheme of delegation/probity/officer-member relations
- How decisions are made within the Council and with its partners on policy and planning applications
- Capacity to deal with the national agenda and handle “the day job”
- An uncertain future now the County bid for a North Yorkshire unitary Council is proceeding to consultation
- Impact of single status pay and grading review.

**2.0 SETTING THE SCENE**

**2.1 PROFILE OF HARROGATE DISTRICT**

**Introduction**

2.1.1 Harrogate District covers a large and geographically diverse area.

- it is 1,305 sq. kilometres (505 sq miles) in area
- its current population is 155,349 (ONS)
- in the west, nearly half the District comprises the relatively sparsely populated Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with its upland farming, moorland and internationally important wildlife.

- in the east, about one third of the District comprises low lying flat arable farmland in the Vale of York with its many villages and the small town of Boroughbridge (3, 184 pop. In 2001). The A1(M) runs north-south through this part of the District.
- the District's three main settlements are centrally located and are the Victorian spa and conference town of Harrogate (72,989 pop. in 2001), its close neighbour, the medieval market town of Knaresborough (14,761 pop. in 2001) and the cathedral City of Ripon (15,922 pop. in 2001)
- well over 100 smaller settlements are scattered across the District, including the small market town of Masham in the north, and in the centre of the Nidderdale AONB, Pateley Bridge.

2.1.2 The District lies between the cities of Leeds/Bradford to the south, and the district of Richmondshire in the north; the city of York, and District's of Hambleton and Selby in the east, and the Yorkshire Dales National Park in the west. The District is part of the County of North Yorkshire and local government service delivery is split between the Borough and County Council.

### People

2.1.3 The age profile of the District's population is similar to the national picture, but with fewer young people and more older residents. However, during the period 1991 to 2001 when a 5.4% growth in the District's population occurred, there was a 12% increase in children under 15 years old, and the number of people aged 60 or over only increased by 1%. The ethnic population is very low: only 2% of the District's residents are non-white.

2.1.4 Harrogate attracts in-migrants due to the District's high quality of life. This, together with the environment, and the District's proximity to the economy of Leeds, has created a buoyant housing market based on very high land values. Many local people find it impossible to afford to buy or rent homes on the open market. This is a major problem for people throughout the District. Earnings of some residents in the District are high, with many of these incomes earned outside the District by people commuting to jobs in Leeds and York. In contrast, workplace earnings in the District are lower than both the regional and national average, reflecting the reliance in the economy on low wage sector jobs related to services, tourism and agriculture. The average house price in September 2006 was £255,679 and this was 10.4 times the average gross income for people resident in the District. The average terraced house price in the District was £197,450: 17.3 times the average income for an unskilled manual worker in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region.

2.1.5 More generally, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (DETR, 2000) indicates a picture of good health and standard of living across the District. Almost half the District's wards are in the top 20% wards in the country. However, there are parts of Harrogate and Ripon where deprivation levels are in the lower half of the national figures. Also, some rural areas of the District have poor geographic access to jobs, shops and services.

2.1.6 Incidence of serious crime in the District is low. However, nuisance, anti-social behaviour and petty crime are problems in some parts of the District.

2.1.7 There is a wide range of very active voluntary and community organisations across the District. These range from small self help groups, local residents associations to large branches of national charities and pressure groups.

2.1.8 Many households in the District have two or more cars, including those in urban areas, and car use is high. A significant amount of the resident workforce travel to work by car, often making only short trips in the town of Harrogate. Significant numbers of people travel to work by car to West Yorkshire, particularly on the A61 to Leeds. Over the ten year period 1991 to 2001 commuting journeys in the Leeds City Region have lengthened by 25%.



## **Environment**

- 2.1.9 The exceptional quality and diversity of the District's environment is reflected in the size and number of area and site designations which protect the natural and built environment.
- 2.1.10 Harrogate District has a rich diversity of wildlife habitats. Nidderdale AONB, its reservoirs, rocks and moorland are internationally and nationally recognised for their geological and ornithological interest. The moorlands in the AONB contain some of the best examples of heather moor on the Pennine hills. Amongst others, the rivers Nidd, Ure and Wharfe provide a range of habitats, with floodplains notable for their variety of wildlife. Woodlands are a key feature throughout many parts of the District.
- 2.1.11 Human settlement and endeavour have shaped the built environment of the District from before Roman occupation, leaving a rich heritage of buildings and earthworks. English settlement reached Ripon in about 500 AD, and about 670, St Wilfred established his church and monastery. Knaresborough developed predominantly around its castle (first mentioned in 1129 and receiving its charter in 1310). In 1132 the Cistercians established their great abbey at Fountains, the ruins of which 600 years later were to become the climax of the 18<sup>th</sup> century landscaped gardens at Studley Royal. Harrogate's development as a spa dates back to the discovery of the Tewit Well in 1571, but its growth was mainly attributable to the coming of the railways from the 1840's. The importance of the history and character of the District's built heritage has resulted in extensive areas of all the larger settlements and many villages being designated as conservation areas for special protection.
- 2.1.12 As well as the nationally important area of landscape (the Nidderdale AONB), much of the District's landscape has a strong character and high quality worthy of protection. In particular, around the settlements of Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon, much of the landscape is both of high quality and makes an important contribution to the special character and setting of these settlements. Statutory Green Belt also protects the special character of the towns of Harrogate and Knaresborough by preventing their coalescence and covers large parts of the south of the District. The parks, and open spaces of the District's settlements provide high quality and welcome breaks in the built form and their attraction is amplified with the natural and managed blooms of spring and summer.
- 2.1.13 The District's high environmental quality is threatened in a number of ways. Development pressures, particularly in and around the District's main settlements are ongoing and could significantly and adversely affect landscape character and the setting of these settlements. Agricultural practices have in the past resulted in the reduction in biodiversity and landscape character.
- 2.1.14 The Action for the Environment Plan for Harrogate identifies that residents and businesses in the District have relatively high levels of energy and water consumption, waste production and car use. These are all factors contributing to global climate change and damage to the local environment. The energy efficiency of private sector homes in the District is worse than the UK average.

## **Economy**

- 2.1.15 The 2001 Census reported 78,000 economically active individuals of working age in the District. This, as a proportion of the population, is significantly higher than the national average. The percentage of people in the District in full time employment and self employed is also higher than the national average. Claimant unemployment rates in the District are low and relatively stable. The picture is one of a very successful labour

market, but one in which local employers have been experiencing difficulties recruiting, especially for lower paid jobs. The recent influx of eastern Europeans to Yorkshire following the enlargement of the European Union has eased these problems to some extent. The District's economy forms an important part of the Leeds City Region economy.

- 2.1.16 The structure of employment is markedly different in Harrogate District to that of the country as a whole. Employment in manufacturing in the District is only half the national level. In contrast, employment in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector makes up one third of the District's workforce (compared to only a quarter in the region). It is expected that the dominance of the service sector will continue throughout the medium term period. The office market is concentrated in the town of Harrogate and this is also likely to grow during the medium term.
- 2.1.17 Employment in agriculture is higher than the national average and forms a key part of the local economy. Changes in agricultural production and practice could significantly affect employment levels in the District and the diversification of the traditional farming economy will continue to be needed.
- 2.1.18 Conference and exhibition tourism has been a prominent feature of the town of Harrogate since the end of World War II. Today this business attracts over 350,000 visitors per year, spending some £160 million and supporting about 5,000 jobs throughout the District. Holiday tourism is also an important component of the District's economy as is information technology and the food industry.
- 2.1.19 The resident workforce is predicted to grow due to higher female participation rates and an increasing number of people remain economically active beyond normal retirement age.
- 2.1.20 Service sector industries are predominantly based in the District's town centres, with the focus of the District's retailing and service provision contained within Harrogate town centre. There is strong competition from the nearby larger retail centres of Leeds and York. Ripon, Knaresborough, Boroughbridge, Pateley Bridge and Masham are important shopping and service centres for their surrounding rural areas. Knaresborough's retailing strength is inhibited by its close proximity to Harrogate and the shortage of suitable sites for new development within its historic centre.

## **Transport**

- 2.1.21 Within the District the main roads include the A61 linking Ripon in the north and Harrogate with Leeds in the south, and the A59 to Skipton in the west and York in the east. The A1/A1(M) runs north-south through the eastern part of the District and provides good road links with the national motorway network. The Leeds/Harrogate/York rail line provides rail services within the District at Harrogate and Knaresborough, and some of the villages in the south and east of the District. Good rail connections to the rest of the country are provided from Leeds and York. Leeds Bradford International Airport provides the nearest opportunity for air travel.
- 2.1.22 Road traffic congestion in Harrogate and Knaresborough exists on town centre and major radial roads throughout the day, with the highest peaks usually relating to journey to and from work. The A61 Harrogate to Leeds corridor has been identified as one of the two most congested routes in the Leeds City Region. The 'flagship' 36 bus service, using the A61, between Ripon/Harrogate and Leeds has been running with a new bus fleet and increased frequency for several years now. The Harrogate Leeds rail service has seen increased patronage and is now overcrowded for prolonged periods.

2.1.23 Outside Harrogate and Knaresborough, road congestion is less of a problem, but national road traffic forecasts predict an increase of 25% in traffic on rural roads by 2010. Parking provision is an important issue in the District's market towns. Public transport in the District's rural areas north of Harrogate is restricted to the bus and their extent and frequency of services is an issue in relation to accessibility to services. There are a number of Community Transport Initiatives and these extend the more limited opportunities of scheduled bus services in the rural areas.

## 2.2 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

2.2.1 The key planning issues derived from the above profile are:

- The acute need for affordable housing throughout the District
- The building of houses and a prosperous economy with minimum harm to the environment, including the delivery of the most sustainable pattern of development.
- The special needs of the young, the elderly, those with poor accessibility to services and those living in areas where deprivation levels and anti-social behaviour are at their highest.
- The protection and enhancement of the District's natural and built environment and people's quality of life, including access to a range of jobs, shops, public open space and community facilities.
- The retention of the special character and setting of the District's settlements.
- The reduction in the current high levels of energy and water consumption, waste production and car use.
- The role of the District in the regional and Leeds City Region economy.
- The vulnerability of the market town and rural economies
- The enhancement of Harrogate town's role as an International Conference Centre.
- Road traffic congestion and minimising the use of the car in Harrogate and Knaresborough.
- Maximising the use of buses and trains, and encouraging walking and cycling.

All these key planning issues are currently being addressed in the Council's emerging Local Development Framework.

### 3.0 THEMES

#### 3.1 LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT

What do we mean by leadership and corporate engagement?

The service provides clear leadership with respect to spatial planning within and outside the Council by working with and supporting partners in developing evidence-based policy and its implementation. The service is at the heart of the Council's strategic and corporate planning processes. The benchmark considers this theme under three elements: vision and direction; integration of policy and delivery; and decision-making and scrutiny.

- A) Vision and direction** – the council and the service are clear about what they want to achieve and how they will get there;
- B) Integration of policy and delivery** – the service's vision and actions reflect the Council's corporate vision and agreed priorities as well as its partners' policies, activities and agreed priorities;
- C) Decision-making and scrutiny** – the service has an effective and transparent decision-making process that ensures probity through appropriate checks and balances.

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
<p><b>A)</b></p> <p><b>Vision and direction</b></p>	<p>1. The Council and its partners have a clear vision for the area with planning policies integrated into the Council's wider strategy and priorities as well as other departmental strategies. These are based around a clear understanding of the area and the issues it faces.</p>	<p>The Harrogate and District Community Plan "Your Plan, Your Future" was published in 2004 by the Harrogate District's Strategic Partnership (HDSP). The Council as one of the key partners on the HDSP, supports the Community Plan's vision of:</p> <p>"Working together to enhance the many and varied communities, economies and environments of our towns and dales, we will make the district a place where people are valued and protected and where access, opportunities, prosperity and support are available to all". This vision has been adopted as the vision for the emerging LDF Core Strategy (see page 3 of Core Strategy Preferred Options).</p> <p>Through research and consultation, the partnership has agreed 6 priorities for action:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To maximise the stock of appropriate affordable housing.</li> <li>2. To improve access to jobs, services, transport and facilities for disadvantaged groups.</li> <li>3. To significantly improve the prospects of the rural and market town economy by introducing new economic drivers and replacing jobs lost in traditional industries.</li> <li>4. To increase opportunities for young people.</li> <li>5. To reduce the incidents of anti-social behaviour.</li> <li>6. To provide enhanced care for the environment by improving waste recycling and reducing energy consumption.</li> </ol>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>At the local level, the Community Plan is the top level plan that defines the community's long term priorities for the District and from which the Strategic Plan defines the Council's strategic objectives and priorities and its long term vision for Harrogate District.</p> <p>The Council's Strategic Plan, 'Realising the Potential', identifies a 10 year vision:-</p> <p>"To make the Harrogate District a better place to live, work and visit" by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) providing clear direction</li> <li>ii) improving performance</li> <li>iii) delivering customer services</li> <li>iv) building organisational capacity</li> </ul> <p>To deliver this vision 7 corporate priorities are identified (page 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable Housing - ensuring people have access to housing opportunities throughout the District.</li> <li>• Traffic and Transport – ensuring the provision of a transport network that will provide access to public transport in all areas and provide integrated facilities including car parks.</li> <li>• Keeping the District Safe – ensuring communities across the District are safe and secure and that they feel safer.</li> <li>• Caring for the Environment – ensuring the enhancement and protection of the natural and built environment District-wide.</li> <li>• Supporting our Local Economy – ensuring a robust and varied economy that benefits local people and creates employment opportunities in rural areas and the market towns across the District.</li> <li>• First Class Public Services - ensuring that the services delivered throughout the District meet the needs of customers, are accessible and of a high quality.</li> <li>• Organisational Improvement – a commitment to invest in improving the organisation by being a good employer and building its organisational capacity to deliver first-class services and increase its service performance.</li> </ul> <p>A number of Strategic Actions are identified to achieve the corporate priorities. Appendix C of the Strategic Plan acknowledges that the LDF will be key to delivering at least 4 of the 7 Strategic Actions.</p> <p>Preparation of the LDF is seen as one of the Strategic Actions under the term 'Community Planning'.</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service																				
		The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan and its aims and objectives influence and set the agenda for a great deal of improvement work. The Planning Improvement Plan includes 3 service objectives that directly link with the corporate priorities (page 3) – see below.																				
	2. The service management has a clear vision of the role of the planning service within the context of the corporate body. This is articulated in the service core objectives and priorities, which reflect the Council's and local strategic partnership's shared ambitions.	<p>In looking to deliver its vision the Council has identified 7 corporate priorities, these are the framework for everything the Council does and underpin the key objectives for the planning service as set out in its Planning Improvement Plan.</p> <p>The 7 corporate priorities and their links to the 3 planning service key objectives is illustrated in the table below:-</p>																				
		<table border="1" data-bbox="862 671 2123 1254"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="862 671 1339 703">Corporate Priority</th> <th data-bbox="1339 671 1498 703">Link</th> <th data-bbox="1498 671 2123 703">Key Service Objective</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="862 703 1339 799">Affordable Housing</td> <td data-bbox="1339 703 1498 799">1, 2</td> <td data-bbox="1498 703 2123 1034" rowspan="3"> <b>1.</b> To perform at or above Best Value targets for Development Control (BV109) and be removed from Planning Standards by March 2007 and thereafter to sustain this level of performance. To improve customer satisfaction levels with the Development Control service towards a target of 75% by March 2007 and annually thereafter sustain at least this level of performance. </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="862 799 1339 879">Traffic and Transport</td> <td data-bbox="1339 799 1498 879">1, 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="862 879 1339 959">Keeping the District Safe</td> <td data-bbox="1339 879 1498 959">1, 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="862 959 1339 1038">Caring for the Environment<sup>1</sup></td> <td data-bbox="1339 959 1498 1038">1, 2, 3</td> <td data-bbox="1498 1034 2123 1161" rowspan="2"> <b>2.</b> To complete a Local Development Framework by meeting the milestones the current Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="862 1038 1339 1118">Supporting our Local Economy</td> <td data-bbox="1339 1038 1498 1118">1, 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="862 1118 1339 1198">First Class Public Services</td> <td data-bbox="1339 1118 1498 1198">1, 2, 3</td> <td data-bbox="1498 1161 2123 1254" rowspan="2"> <b>3.</b> To deliver first class public services through investment and organisational improvement </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="862 1198 1339 1254">Organisational Improvement</td> <td data-bbox="1339 1198 1498 1254">1, 3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Corporate Priority	Link	Key Service Objective	Affordable Housing	1, 2	<b>1.</b> To perform at or above Best Value targets for Development Control (BV109) and be removed from Planning Standards by March 2007 and thereafter to sustain this level of performance. To improve customer satisfaction levels with the Development Control service towards a target of 75% by March 2007 and annually thereafter sustain at least this level of performance.	Traffic and Transport	1, 2	Keeping the District Safe	1, 2	Caring for the Environment <sup>1</sup>	1, 2, 3	<b>2.</b> To complete a Local Development Framework by meeting the milestones the current Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out	Supporting our Local Economy	1, 2	First Class Public Services	1, 2, 3	<b>3.</b> To deliver first class public services through investment and organisational improvement	Organisational Improvement	1, 3
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<sup>1</sup> Council at its meeting on 11 October 2006 made “Caring for the Environment” its top priority.

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>The Planning Improvement Plan has a number of important purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To drive improvement in the direction of Government and Council priorities in a coordinated way.</li> <li>• To prioritise and forward plan the allocation of resources, particularly PDG/HPDG and Business Unit Reserves.</li> <li>• To act as a high level project plan for managers responsible for delivering planning improvement.</li> <li>• To demonstrate to the DCLG that the Council takes its responsibility as a Local Planning Authority and the need to improve seriously.</li> </ul>
	<p>3. The planning service ensures the Council's objectives are pursued at regional and sub-regional level.</p>	<p>The planning service works closely with regional and sub-regional partners in two key areas to ensure that the Council's objectives are reflected in higher-level strategies. In terms of the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Chief Planner (Forward Planning) is a member of a 'Technical Advisory Group' established by the Regional Assembly to assist in the preparation, monitoring and review of the RSS. Through this process it has been possible to ensure that characteristics, needs and aspirations of the District are reflected in the emerging RSS. This is particularly important as circumstances and priorities in Harrogate District are very different from many other parts of the region. Officer liaison at this level supports more formal Member representation by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport on the Regional Planning Forum (which acts as a sounding board for decision making) and the Leader of the Council on the Regional Assembly.</p> <p>In seeking to ensure that the Council's objectives are pursued through the RSS process, officers and Members work closely with other North Yorkshire Districts, many of which have similar priorities. The County Council convenes meetings at officer and Member level at appropriate stages during preparation of the Draft RSS and the 'North Yorkshire Local Authority Partnership' is formally represented on the Regional Planning Board, which is the key planning decision making body at regional level.</p> <p>Where necessary, the authority pursues its objectives through the formal RSS consultation arrangements lodging representations at appropriate stages and attending public examinations as required.</p> <p>The other key area where the service has a direct involvement in developing regional and sub-regional strategy is the through preparation of the Leeds City Region Development Programme. Working closely with the Economic Development Officer, who is the Council's key officer representative on the partnership, the Chief Planner (Forward Planning) provides technical input to the 'Policy Advisors Group' on planning aspects to help promote the Council's objectives. Input to this group by officers supports higher-level representation by the Leader and Chief Executive on respective City Region structures.</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>The planning service plays an indirect role in helping to ensure the Council's objectives are pursued in other regional and sub-regional strategies, particularly the Regional Housing and Economic Strategies and the Sub-regional Investment Programme. This is largely facilitated through the Planning Strategy Group, chaired by the Chief Planner (Forward Planning), the key purpose of which is to ensure that the Council's corporate interests are properly reflected in regional and sub-regional strategies.</p> <p>Service departments are actively engaged in the formulation of planning policy, particularly through development of the LDF, and understand the importance of those policies in delivering their respective service objectives. A key mechanism in facilitating this is the 'Planning Strategy Group' (see Project Brief). The prime purposes of this Group are to ensure that the Council's corporate interests are reflected in the LDF and that there is close correlation between the LDF and other strategies at Regional, sub-Regional and Corporate level. The Group includes senior officers from all key departments. This Group reports directly to the Council's Corporate Management Team (see latest report)</p> <p>In addition, the joint development of policy is facilitated by the establishment of various working groups. Examples of these include the Corporate Affordable Housing Group which assists in the development of affordable housing policies and guidance, and the Transport Working Group, which co-ordinates and integrates work on the LDF and LTP.</p> <p>The emerging vision of the LDF Core Strategy is that of the Harrogate District Community Plan and the emerging objectives (p5 and 6) related closely to Community Plan priorities and aims of key regional and sub-regional plans including the RSS and LTP.</p>
	<p>4. The Council's financial plans meet the needs of the service.</p>	<p>The 2007/08 Planning Business Unit Budget assumes £300,000 income from Planning Delivery Grant (PDG). This is assessed as a medium risk, but without this income the budget will not balance. If a shortfall occurs it may have a significant impact on the ability to maintain the current establishment and achieve performance targets. Three year forward budgeting has been undertaken and assumes in 2008/09 and 2009/10 £100,000 Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG) and a fee scale increase of 20% in 2008/09. The incorporation in to base budget of much of the additional resources allocated to the planning service on the back of PDG in previous years has not occurred. The future financial sustainability of the service at current levels is still an open question.</p> <p>In addition to base budget much of the expenditure allocated in the Planning Improvement Plan is a combination of business unit reserves and PDG without which much of the planned improvement would not take place.</p>
	<p>5. There is high quality effective leadership.</p>	<p>No officer on the Corporate Management Team (CMT) is a Chartered Town Planner. However the Head of Planning Services is deputy to the Director and in that role attends CMT and of right on planning issues. The Heads of Service meet twice yearly to help shape the corporate priorities and monitor progress. This is</p>



	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>across all services and there is an opportunity to ensure that Planning clearly is taken into account in shaping this agenda. This feeds into the CMT/Cabinet Planning process by informing them of the service priorities. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport champions the service at Cabinet level within the authority. Other Portfolio Holders such as those responsible for housing and leisure recognise the contribution of planning to the Council's overall aims and objectives. For example in the delivery of affordable housing and open space. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport is a Member of the Regional Planning Forum and is supported by the Chief Planner Forward Planning who is a member of the Technical Advisory Group. The importance of this and the sub-regional role is emphasised by the Leader's and Chief Executive's membership of the Leeds City Region group.</p>
<p><b>B)</b></p> <p><b>Integration of policy and delivery</b></p>	<p>1. The planning service ensures the integration of strategies and their spatial delivery.</p>	<p>The LDF will act as the land use delivery mechanism of the Community Plan, seeking to deliver the spatial elements of the Community Plan. The Core Strategy, incorporating the Strategic Policies, will take forward the vision and priorities of the Community Plan and will take full account of the land use consequences of its policies and programmes. In order to assist in integrating the LDF and Community Strategy the Chief Planner (Forward Planning) is a member of the LSP Officer Group and attends LSP Executive meetings to ensure that the spatial links are taken account of and the Executive is made aware of regional and district policy. The Lead Officer for the LSP (Executive Director for Corporate Policy and Improvement) is a member of the Planning Strategy Group.</p> <p>The LDF will also take account of other Council strategies together with the principles and characteristics of other relevant strategies and programmes of agencies that have a land use element. This will present a clear robust and consistent approach to the use and development of land. The Planning Strategy Group, together with various other corporate working groups, ensure that corporate strategies are fully integrated and delivery is effective across the range of Council services. The programme for the production of development plan documents is set out in the Local Development Scheme.</p> <p>The Council has also adopted a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This not only takes account of national and regional planning policy and guidance but also complements other plans and strategies. This allows the Council to have a consistent approach to service delivery. For example the Community Plan has been shaped through discussions with the partnership and focuses on 4 cross-cutting principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sustainability</li> <li>• inclusion</li> <li>• partnership</li> <li>• equality</li> </ul>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>The ambitions set out within the Community Plan, achieved through detailed consultation, aim to establish a framework that everyone can contribute to in protecting the unique characteristics of the district. The ambitions and visions highlighted within the Community Plan are directly relevant to the implementation of the SCI. Community involvement in LDF production will, wherever possible, take account of and link to that of other strategies such as the Community Plan. The Council will work closely with the Strategic Partnership in future consultation regarding the LDF.</p> <p>The Community Engagement Strategy provides a framework for the development of community engagement in the Council. This document has influenced the setting of the Community Engagement Working Group and the District Panel in 1999. The Council also has its own community engagement guidance which sets out the Council's overall approach to carrying out community engagement. The Council will have regard to this guidance in the delivery of the SCI, the LDF and during its consideration of planning applications and reporting to Committee and Cabinet.</p> <p>Policy development is based on a comprehensive and robust analysis of the characteristics of the area. The extent of background work on the preparation of the LDF is set out in Table 3 of the LDS. Key stages of LDF preparation are subject to sustainability appraisal as required by legislation and guidance. The Council employs a dedicated resource to undertake sustainability appraisal 'in-house'. As well as being cost-effective, this ensures that the SA process is fully integrated with policy development.</p>
	<p>2. The service has ownership of the spatial planning, sustainable communities and sustainable development agenda: it enables the Council and other service areas to understand and respond to the agenda in a coherent manner.</p>	<p>Evidence based studies, sustainability appraisal and community engagement ensure that the key inter relationships between LDF plans and policies are fully understood by stakeholders and rooted in proper analysis. This ensures the LDF is a logical and appropriate response to the spatial planning issues of the district and prioritises the right issues for delivery. The service makes available the outcomes of the studies and consultations it undertakes and uses these to inform its actions and through reports to members and officers keeps the rest of the Council up to date on planning issues. All studies and reports are made available on the Council's website. The Development Documents Working Group and Planning Strategy Group play a key role in keeping other sections and departments informed of planning issues.</p>
	<p>3. The service is a critical player in the development and review of corporate policy and strategies and the means of delivery.</p>	<p>Through enactive participation at regional and local level the planning service contributes across a range of internal and external strategies. It leads a Planning Strategy Group within the Council made up of senior officers from a wide range of other disciplines and functional responsibilities. Through Corporate Planning Workshops the Head of Planning contributes to the prioritisation of current and emerging corporate issues.</p> <p>A key role of the Planning Strategy Group is to ensure that the Council's interests are appropriately reflected</p>

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		in all strategies and to secure a high level of correlation through planning representation on the LSP Officer Group and the lead LSP officer's membership of the Planning Strategy Group there is close working between the LSP and planning service.
	4. The service actively engages with other authorities in its sub-region to identify opportunities for joint working.	<p>Joint working arrangements with key agencies and other authorities on relevant projects exists. For example the Golden Triangle Partnership, which is leading work on the delivery of affordable housing with three adjoining high demand authorities. Another example is the joint working with the Leeds City Region Authorities to improve connectivity.</p> <p>The planning service works closely with other authorities within the sub-region to identify opportunities for joint working at different levels. Key examples of joint working are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Yorkshire Planning Officers Group</li> <li>• North Yorkshire Development Plan, Development Control, Conservation Officers and Enforcement Officers Groups</li> <li>• Golden Triangle Partnership</li> <li>• Leeds City Region</li> <li>• North Yorkshire Training Consortium</li> <li>• Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (with Craven and Richmondshire)</li> <li>• North Yorkshire Renewable Energy Study</li> <li>• Sustainable Drainage SPD</li> <li>• Management of the Nidderdale AONB</li> <li>• NYCC archaeology service</li> </ul>
	5. Strategies are subject to a process of review at appropriate intervals with key service areas and agencies.	At present the role and process of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is not clear. There used to be consideration of the involvement of O&S in policy development/consultation and there were examples of where this had been undertaken but in the last few years this has not taken place. The Scrutiny Officer recalls that there was some discussion that O&S could not consider planning policy but this is not the case and it is an area that we are weak in.
<b>C)</b> <b>Decision-making and scrutiny</b>	1. Decision-making arrangements between the Executive and the Planning Committee demonstrate distinct responsibilities but are linked to ensure effective and consistent decisions.	The Scheme of Delegation provides a clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the Portfolio Holder and those of Committees. The Planning Committee is the main body responsible for handling and determining significant planning applications. Its members are also members of the District Development Committee which is a major consultee during the policy formulation process. Development Control officers contribute to policy formulation through a Development Documents Working Group which has a flexible membership to ensure valuable knowledge and experience is exchanged between officers responsible for development management and those responsible for the policy framework.

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
	2. The conduct of members and officers complies with the principles of probity.	All members of the Planning Committee and the District Development Sub-Committee(DDSC) (reference up committee) are required by the Council's constitution to undertake compulsory planning training. To assist members in their conduct particularly when considering planning applications all members have been issued with the Planning Code of Good Practice and training on its dos and don'ts sections. Monitoring of Planning Committee decisions on planning applications is undertaken to ensure that only a moderate level of overturns occurs and for reasons based upon subjective matters. Reference up from Planning Committee to the higher DDSC occurs where members wish to make a decision contrary to an objective policy of the Local Plan or where officers advise the decision is unreasonable and risks an award of costs. Members are required to give their reasons for making a decision contrary to an officer's recommendation and these are minuted so that the process is transparent. A recent ombudsman case demonstrates there are effective checks and balances within the system to ensure redress when a decision is taken without compliance with the Code of Conduct.
	3. Member/officer relations are positive and together with appropriate levels of delegation this facilitates effective decision-making.	On 1 November 2005 the Council moved away from three Area Development Control Committees meeting every 4 weeks, to a single district-wide planning committee meeting fortnightly. This has significantly improved consistency and timely decision making by bringing more options for committee dates within the 8/13 week decision period. Delegation arrangements to officers to take decisions on planning applications are effective at 90% but over complex. A report to general purposes Committee on 23 March 2006 recommending the adoption of the "by exception model" recommended by the LGA/ODPM was rejected. The present delegation scheme is too cumbersome and complex and requires a disproportionate amount of consultation with the Chairman.
	4. Decisions are taken in the context of an informed evidence base.	Written reports to Planning Committee on applications are comprehensive. Reporting arrangements at Committee have been improved to include a Powerpoint display of application plans and colour photographs. Funded arrangements to install a new microphone system for members and officers have been put on hold pending the outcome of local government review. The percentage of allowed appeals is less than the national average.
	5. Scrutiny provides an opportunity to build on the reputation of the service for clearly researched conclusions, well 'consulted on' proposals and sustainable decisions which reflect the key objectives of the Council and community.	At present the role and process of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is not clearly defined. There needs to be further work in relation to the input of O&S in the policy development/consultation of Planning as there has been minimal engagement in the last two years.

## CUSTOMER FOCUS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

What do we mean by customer focus and community engagement?

The planning service understands and is meeting the needs of its full range of customers: individual applicants, the neighbourhood; the wider community; external and internal stakeholders and the business community. It understands the community and customer needs, who they are, and is organised to inform and engage the community and stakeholder regularly in a way that suits them. The benchmark considers this theme under three elements: transparency of process, accessibility and responsiveness

- A) Transparency of process for users** – stakeholders are clear about how and why they engage with planning process;
- B) Accessibility** – services can be accessed in ways and times that are convenient and in such a way that stakeholders can effectively engage;
- C) Responsiveness** – information received is fed into the design of the service and development of policy explicitly.

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
<b>A)</b>  <b>Transparency of process for users</b>	1. The service informs the community about its services, activities, performance and decision-making.	<p>All residents receive a leaflet summarising the Council's performance with their council tax bill each March. Residents are invited to request a copy of the Performance Plan and are directed to the Council's website for further performance data.</p> <p>The SCI is the main vehicle for ensuring that all sections of the community are provided with an opportunity to take part in the planning process at the earliest opportunity so that decisions can take account of the range of community use and reflect as far as possible the concerns and aspirations of the people affected by them. The SCI shows the methods that the Council will use to encourage and facilitate participation at different stages of plan preparation and encourages developers to carry out pre-application community involvement on significant development proposals.</p> <p>"Planning Our Service for You" complements the SCI by clearly setting down what the community and other stakeholders can expect from the Planning service. Both these documents are widely available at Council offices, libraries and the Council's website.</p> <p>Planning performance is monitored corporately and at a service level and performance reports are published on the Council's website and available in hard copy form. A key example is the Annual Monitoring</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>Report. "Public Access" on the website gives access to applications and decisions, both historic and current.</p> <p>The Council has undertaken a self assessment of the PARSOL Better Planning Services standard and is making progress to achieve the standards – expected to hit these in PDG review March 07. Guidance for the community on the operation of the planning process is available comprehensively on the website and through a series of information leaflets available both on-line and in hard copy.</p>
	<p>2. Policy and practice in all elements of planning is explicit to participants and the wider community, and consistently applied.</p>	<p>Office systems and procedures are documented in Development Control Practice Notes and other protocol available across the network. For internal purposes and for advising agents and applicants a validation check list has been published on the website. This is complemented by information on planning constraints, consultee guidance and standard conditions. Hard copies are available for inspection at Planning Enquiries or a copy for a small charge. The website includes a My Property facility which provides easy access to a wide range of information including conservation areas, TPOs, listed buildings etc and also showing these locations on a map. Access to planning information is also available at the Knapping Mount offices through a Planning Enquiry facility dedicated to that purpose. On average this handles 640 visitors and 1254 telephone enquiries per month. The Public Access website allows tracking of current planning applications and the ability to view application documents and plans and make representations on line. Decision notices are also available. Consultation on LDF documents is also e-enabled. Guidance on committee procedures and the "Opportunity to Speak" is similarly accessible and assisted by officers. Documents if required will be made available in large copy print, audio cassette, Braille or languages other than English.</p> <p>At consultation stages on DPDs, a simple easy to read summary of the main document is made widely available to the community. This includes an explanation of the process. (see examples of 'newspapers')</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>Consistency of decision making is ensured through management systems and adherence to development plan documents SPD, SPG and officer and member training. The annual feedback letter from the Ombudsman confirmed no cases of planning service maladministration against a background of much higher than national average complaints.</p>
	<p>3. The factors taken into account in policy and development control decisions and the path of the decision-making process is clear.</p>	<p>The whole of a planning application file is open for public inspection not merely the Part 1 copy. This includes information on Section 106 Agreements. Reports on planning applications include a summary of the representations and consultation responses received, the relevant policies of the development plan and other material considerations and the weight attached to these is explained prior to coming to a recommendation. Any requirements for a Section 106 Agreement are included in the officers' reports.</p> <p>All background information/evidence used in the formulation of policy is publicly available in hard copy and on the website. All SPG/SPDs used to inform decision making are also available. Sustainability appraisal is a key component of the policy formulation process and SA reports are public (see example).</p> <p>At committee the conduct of members and officers is regulated by the Members Code of Conduct and the Planning Code of Good Practice. Decisions that are regarded to be unsound on planning grounds are referred up to the District Development Sub-Committee for reconsideration and to the Monitoring Officer if there is an allegation of impropriety.</p> <p>Sustainability appraisals underpin DPD production and is accessible and transparent to stakeholders and the community. All decisions are minuted and where a decision is made by members contrary to officer recommendation on a particular application, the members' reasons are recorded in the minutes.</p>
	<p>4. Stakeholders are clear about their role in the decision-making process and are provided with the information to engage effectively.</p>	<p>Applicants and consultees, whether it be as a result of development control or policy work, are given feedback. Issues and options consultations allow early input by stakeholders and the community. In relation to LDF consultations, stakeholders are provided with all</p>

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		background information and their role in the process is clearly explained. Reports of consultation explain how comments have been taken into account and are made publicly available (see example).
	5. The service enables others to understand the implications of development proposals and the relationship between policies and what happens on the ground.	Alternative strategies or options are generated for DPDs and assessed by sustainability appraisal. Options which are not preferred are still on the table. Public meetings and associated workshops and exhibitions operate in an open and positive way to stimulate dialogue and assist the community in participating in the planning process and understanding the implications of policies and proposals. (see notes of workshops)
<b>B)</b> <b>Accessibility</b>	1. The service is accessed by users in ways and at times and locations that respond to their needs.	<p>Respondents' details are set out in the LDF consultation database and individuals, groups and organisations are contacted in writing at each consultation stage. The different means of engaging the community are set out in the SCI. These are utilised according to a particular target audience. For example, work on the Core Strategy has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formal meetings for developers and agents</li> <li>- informal workshops and question and answer sessions for members of the public</li> <li>- a summary newspaper free from planning jargon sent to all households and businesses</li> <li>- a questionnaire to all AONB households in order to engage with rural residents</li> <li>- a questionnaire specifically designed for young people sent to all schools and colleges.</li> </ul> <p>The SCI identifies groups that are hard to reach. The Council consults with individuals, groups and organisations that represent these groups.</p> <p>Survey work leading up to the adoption of the SCI and other work built a clear picture of the needs of the community and the planning services customers in terms of their preferred method of access. The SCI was tailored to facilitate this.</p>



	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		The Planning Enquiries unit is a dedicated response team accessible face to face, by phone and email Mon-Thurs 8.30-5.15pm, Fri 8.30-4pm. The website has been tailored to be informative and transactional handling on-line submissions, DC and LDF representations. Applications from 2005 to date are viewable 24/7 including submitted/amended plans and decision notices. Access for people with disabilities is provided with all public buildings used by the planning service being DDA compliant. Consultation events are held in accessible locations. Documents can be made available in different formats. The website has achieved Bobby standard. There is provision of tailored documentation when required and one to one assistance from trained Planning Enquiries staff is always on hand. A planning duty officer is also available at Planning Enquiries when necessary during office opening hours. Community engagement on the LDF is integrated with other corporate engagement through use of the 'District Panel'.
	2. The service reflects in its provision the particular requirements for its diverse community to participate effectively.	The majority of planning information is provided free of charge on the Council's website or in hard copy. A minimum charge (10p per A4 copy) is made where for example a copy of information from a planning file is required. This low charge reflects a recent decision by the Information Commissioner.  There is a corporate project on Equality/Diversity issues with surveys undertaken to establish community needs to feed into the service.
	3. The service provides information that is easy to understand from a lay perspective.	The LDF consultation newspapers are an example of this.
<b>C)</b> <b>Responsiveness to users</b>	1. The service regularly canvasses feedback and uses the views of the community and customers to inform policy-making and service design and delivery.	The District Panel is used to carry out opinion surveys on Council services. The BVPI 111 statutory survey shows an increase in overall customer satisfaction rate over the last 3 years from 52% to 63%. LDF consultation reports show how stakeholders' views have been taken into account. The Planning Improvement Plan proposes the establishment of an Agents Forum in Sep 07 – consideration will be given to extending this to a users panel.

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
	2. Those who have participated in policy-making, the application process or any part of the planning process, know what happened to their input.	<p>Reports of consultation ensure that the key outcomes and how they have influenced the final shape of policy are explained and available.</p> <p>Representations on planning applications are summarised in officers' reports to Planning Committee and receive an acknowledgement, invitation to the meeting and a final letter informing the decision and conditions/reasons. (see leaflets on website)</p>
	3. The service is pro-active in responding to complaints, comments or representations.	The Council has a corporate complaints system which sets clear procedures and timescales for the investigation and reporting back on complaints and the putting right of errors the Council has made and capturing relevant learning. A procedure is in place for dealing with pre-application enquiries. A development team approach is used on major major applications.
	4. The service resolves through negotiation objections or shortfalls in proposals wherever possible.	The evaluation and responses to representations on LDF documents includes the use of sustainability appraisals to evaluate alternative options put forward by the community and stakeholders. The level of negotiation on planning applications is explained in the SCI and the DC charter "Planning Our Service to you". An internal DC Practice Note explains for case officers the line drawn between negotiation "easily amendable" and the BV109 performance requirement. A tough line on validation and limited pre-application advice assists this process.
	5. The service recognises, respects, values and harnesses diversity.	The SCI recognises the diverse make up of communities that the Council serves and describes policies and procedures to ensure equal access. There is a corporate project on Equality and Diversity issues.

## ACHIEVING OUTCOMES EFFECTIVELY AND SUSTAINABLY

What do we mean by achieving outcomes?

The planning service works to deliver good quality and sustainable development outcomes for the area that are identified by the local authority. It manages the delivery process to this end. The benchmark considers this theme under three elements: efficient and effective processes; partnership working and sustainable stewardship.

- A) Efficient and effective processes** – planning processes are orientated to achieving outcomes sought, within available resources
- B) Effective Partnership working** – the service proactively addresses the differing views of stakeholders, balancing private interests against the wider public interest through partnership working and conflict resolution
- C) Delivery sustainable stewardship** – the planning service acts as a facilitator of the management of change ensuring sustainability and is an effective custodian of the area – this is visible on the ground

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
<b>A) Efficient and effective processes</b>	1. Outcomes for the service (including the contribution to corporate outcomes) are agreed, corporately owned, regularly monitored and reflect national and local needs and priorities.	Sustainable development outcomes owned by key stakeholders result from the clear linkages and joint working on the Community Plan, Strategic Plan, Local Development Framework and Service Plan. Sustainable development outcomes underpin the Local Development Framework DPDs and SPDs. For example the Core Strategy Preferred Options report clearly states the type, amount and location of development it aims to achieve. SPD and SPG set high standards for the built and natural environment. The LDS sets out the programme of LDF document production considered necessary to achieve sustainable development.
	2. The local authority defines what it means by 'quality' and 'sustainable spatial outcomes' through policy development and targets process to achieve them.	The LDS, sustainability appraisal and annual monitoring are key to the Council's delivery of quality outcomes. The LDS sets out how the Council intends to deliver 'sustainable spatial outcomes'.  A wide range of supplementary planning guidance seeks high quality outcomes.  A single district wide Planning Committee meeting on a two weekly cycle delivers efficient processing of the most significant planning applications. Around 90% of decisions on planning applications are taken by officers under delegated powers. Approval of core policy documents and consultation with members is arranged through

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		Committee, Cabinet and Council to ensure delivery according to the milestones in the LDS.
	3. Procedures are efficient and lead to high quality development.	<p>ICT is driven by the CAPS Uniform system which is extensive in its range of modules and highly developed and integrated into office processes, eg GIS is replacing a manual hard copy constraints search. MS Access is used as a query and reporting tool and a database of management reports is available across the network to all staff and is used on a daily basis and provides effective monitoring and management control. A range of Development Control Practice Notes and other internal guidance is available to all staff on a shared folder "Plan Info" across the network.</p> <p>A validation manual has been published on the website and this includes innovations eg "Affordable Housing Proforma".</p> <p>Regular contact with key partners eg Legal, EHOs makes for efficient working and quality outcomes but formal liaison meetings are infrequent.</p> <p>Section 106 policies are explained in SPD relating to public open space/village halls, primary education and affordable housing. Uniform development monitoring module is used as a database for Section 106 Agreements linked with GIS. Grampian conditions and post decision S106 Agreements are used to deliver planning permissions within target timescales. Delivery is monitored through an Affordable Housing Monitoring meeting.</p> <p>The authority has signed up to the Enforcement Concordat and has an enforcement protocol in place going back many years. The Service Improvement Plan includes an action for the review of this policy for implementation in 07/08. There is close working between Development Control and Enforcement officers and Building Control and this is facilitated by joint use of the Uniform system and being part of the same Division.</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>The annual review of development schemes by Planning Committee members and senior officers has not taken place since 2001. Similarly the Design Awards Scheme was suspended in 2003/04 due to a need to focus scarce heritage and design resources on assisting DC and producing SPD (eg House Extensions Design Guide).</p> <p>A self assessment using the LDF soundness toolkit is being prepared to support the Core Strategy (see progress so far).</p>
	<p>4. A clear electronic delivery strategy is in place and is delivering efficiencies and quality for the customer.</p>	<p>A Planning ICT group leads and monitors system implementation and development through regular meetings, minutes and a project plan. The website has been developed to a point where it has moved from an information website to a transactional website. Customers can now make applications, track, view and comment on planning applications and view the outcome both current and historic on-line. Similar access is available for appeals and enforcement notices.</p> <p>A dedicated Planning Enquiries facility at the Knapping Mount offices uses both website technology and back office systems to deliver a full range of information, guidance and help to customers of the planning service. The website, front of office and back office systems are all integrated with GIS serving up relevant site information in a form that is easy to understand.</p> <p>The Development Plan is on line and new policy is communicated through the website including consultation and report back on consultation. Textual and spatial information on conservation areas and listed buildings and related policy and guidance to ensure their effective management is available on line and through Uniform back office systems.</p> <p>Network access to the Sweet and Maxwell Encyclopaedia of Planning Law and Practice and Development Control Practice (DCP) is available to all officers on their desktop across the network. Web enabled versions of these are being progressed. (Now available for DCP)</p> <p>Officers have access to web mail which allows remote access to their</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>email account and steps are being taken to facilitate remote access to the Uniform back office system to facilitate home working. A major building block not yet in place is a document management system. The "idocs" product is currently being negotiated with ITD who hold the key to delivery, having previously insisted on a corporate solution.</p>
	<p>5. The range of 'consultancy' services provided both internally and externally to other parts of the Council and its partners add value to the development delivered.</p>	<p>Specialist officers qualified and experienced in architecture/urban design, landscape, ecology, conservation, building control act as consultants to internal staff by leading or contributing to the development of policy or guidance and in direct working with development control officers on planning applications and in particular advising on development in conservation areas and affecting listed buildings. These consultants hold internal surgeries or receive direct consultation from development control. They also design and deliver learning at the weekly training hour sessions for planning staff. They also work alongside Policy and Development Control officers at a corporate level. For example development control, architect and landscape architect are key members of a corporate team advising on a proposed £25m extension of HIC.</p> <p>A key area of work for the 'consultancy' is the preparation of SPG/SPDs. Guidance is available on a wide range of issues including Conservation Areas, Landscape Character Assessment and Biodiversity Design Guide. The Building Design and Conservation Team is currently reviewing the 52 conservation areas with a view to preparing management proposals. (see report to CMPT)</p> <p>A development team approach is used to deliver expert advice on projects at pre-application and application stage. In addition to the specialists mentioned above transport and highway engineers are available through the agency and a policy officer who specialises in sustainable transport is engaged in this process. Similarly arboricultural support is provided through DCS which the service make a financial contribution to.</p> <p>The Annual Monitoring Report is the means of evaluating outcomes against the plan.</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
<p><b>B)</b></p> <p><b>Effective Partnership Working</b></p>	<p>1. The service works in partnership with all its communities to achieve common goals and aspirations and in particular is actively engaged in the LSP, working in an integrated way.</p>	<p>The service is involved in a range of partnership working with the local community. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links with the local community .....</li> <li>• The service leads the management of the Nidderdale AONB through the establishment of a Joint Advisory Committee which includes representatives of the local community. The management plan and annual reports set out details of the mechanisms for partnership working</li> <li>• Preparation of SPD/SPG has involved close partnership working. Preparation of Village Design Statements, the Landscape Character Assessment and the Biodiversity Action Plan has involved a high level of consultation with local community groups. Work to review the conservation areas will similarly be undertaken in partnership with the local community</li> <li>• The service is responsible for co-ordinating the Nidd Gorge Advisory Partnership which involves a range of community groups seeking to enhance the environment of the Nidd Gorge area.</li> </ul> <p>There are close links between the LDF and community planning processes. These are secured through the membership of the LSP Lead Officer on the Planning Strategy Group, the Chief Planner (Forward Planning) being a member of the LSP Officer Group and regular presentations on the LDF to the LSP Executive.</p> <p>Coherence and consistency in consultation with the community is assisted through the operation of 'community engagement register' and adherence to the North Yorkshire Compact' which is a framework for developing close partnership relations with the voluntary and community sector.</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>Links with the local community are particularly strong with respect to Parish Councils. They have been actively engaged in developing LDF policy work and in some cases producing their own Parish Plans which are used to inform policy development. These documents can have considerable influence eg the Rainton Plan supporting the delivery on the ground of affordable housing improving the social and environmental status of the village.</p> <p>The SCI recommends developers to carry out pre-application community involvement on significant applications and there are recent examples of this and improved development proposals resulting therefrom more in line with the aspirations of the local community (eg Nidd Vale Motors and Majestic Hotel applications).</p>
	<p>2. The plans of key delivery agencies and other Council departments are integrated and day to day linkages are in place with local and regional bodies responsible for the delivery of agreed outcomes in development including transport planning and infrastructure in relation to both policy and development control.</p>	<p>The planning service has a number of mechanisms to secure integration with other Council departments and key delivery agencies. Corporate joint working is supported through the establishment of groups such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Strategy Group</li> <li>• LSP Officer Group</li> <li>• Corporate Affordable Housing Group</li> <li>• Transport Working Group (includes a representative from NYCC).</li> </ul> <p>In terms of joint working with other key delivery agencies, the service is involved in a range of partnerships, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nidderdale AONB – the Council is lead authority for the Nidderdale AONB, with joint working at member level through the Joint Advisory Committee and at officer level (the Chief Planner (Forward Planning) is the lead officer). Linkages with the community are extensive and deep eg The Friends</li> <li>• Golden Triangle Partnership – this is a partnership between this Council, Leeds City Council and City of York Council established in 2003 in response to concern about affordable housing issues</li> <li>• Northern Affordable Housing Group</li> </ul>



	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harrogate Line Officers Rail Group</li> <li>• Biodiversity Action Plan Group</li> <li>• Nidd Gorge Advisory Partnership</li> </ul> <p>The service also inputs into other partnership groups including Ripon City Partnership, Knaresborough Regeneration Partnership, Nidderdale Plus and the Renaissance Market Town programmes at Knaresborough and Boroughbridge.</p> <p>Working arrangements with other Council's departments are well established in particular with the Housing Development Officer; Legal Services who have 3 Planning solicitors in place and Environmental Health/Protection officers providing support to development control eg noise assessment.</p> <p>Transport/Highway engineers and Drainage engineers are part of the same department as the Planning Division. A Service Level Agreement exists with Legal Services but other services operate effectively without this because joint working is engrained at the case officer level and effectively managed. This means that assembling a Development Team including if relevant external partners eg Environment Agency, County Highway Authority can be done quickly.</p> <p>A weekly major developments meeting chaired by the Head of Planning Services brings together in a development team framework a wide range of officers from across the Council to participate in steering new major applications and monitoring their progress through to decision within the 13 week period. Enforcement action is supported by expert support staff in Environmental Protection, Building Control and Legal Services. In terms of policy development, integration and conflict resolution is secured through the Planning Strategy Group and if necessary, Corporate Management Team,</p> <p>Information flows both upward and downward within the organisation with timely distribution of minutes of meetings via email from CMT, DMT, PMG and Team meetings.</p>

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
	<p>3. The Council openly resolves the inherent conflict that can occur between corporate or other service aspirations and the statutory planning framework at all levels.</p>	<p>Through its corporate planning process and effective links with the Community Strategy and the LDF, conflicts that can occur between corporate and service priorities and the aims and objectives of statutory planning are resolved through consultation and discussion to ensure that aspirations are given a reality check within the context of statutory planning. The Planning Strategy Group comprised of senior officers from services and functions across the Council including Parks and Open Spaces and Leisure, Museums and Arts on open space and recreation acts as the main officer mechanism for mediating between competing interests and ensuring a balanced planning approach. Liaison at Chief Executive, Leader and Portfolio holder level aims to ensure recommendations on applications of major significance are corporately owned.</p>
	<p>4. There are constructive working relationships between different parts of the political structure, formalised in protocols.</p>	<p>Constructive working relations exist at member and officer level with regional and sub regional planning groups. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport is a member of the Regional Planning Forum and the Chief Planner (Forward Planning) is a member of the Regional Assembly's Technical Advisory Group. Members and officers of the Council are also part of the Leeds City Region structure.</p> <p>The role and process of Overview and Scrutiny is unclear with a lack of involvement in policy development/consultation.</p> <p>The structures for officers and members are effective in terms of efficient handling of planning applications and input into policy development. A revised Constitution has established a single Planning Committee for development control. There is a District Development Committee for policy input by a larger number of members to Cabinet and in terms of the Development Plan Documents final approval at Council. The Constitution, Members Code of Conduct, Scheme of Delegation and Planning Code of Good Practice are key protocols.</p>
<p><b>C)</b></p> <p><b>Delivering Sustainable Stewardship</b></p>	<p>1. The service effectively combines regulatory and proactive roles to deliver sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development through regeneration and conservation.</p>	<p>Sustainability appraisal and the objective of sustainable development underpin all forward planning and development management activity. This is evidenced in LDF documents and the Annual Monitoring Report. Responsibility for local distinctiveness and bio diversity is</p>

	Ideal Service	HBC Service
		<p>evidenced in policy and development management and by the considerable resource set aside to employ specialists in architecture, conservation, landscape and ecology, and a countryside ranger. Designation of SINCs, 52 conservation areas, local landscape designations (SLAs) and the completion of a Landscape Character Assessment demonstrate the importance given to the protection and enhancement of environmental assets. A four year programme of updating conservation area character appraisals has commenced and a draft Biodiversity Action Plan will shortly be published for consultation. Environmental capacity is an important consideration in policy work to safeguard the district's high quality environment for the long term. Planning policies have been developed to protect community facilities from change of use. In response to local representations and national policy revised and extended SPD requiring the provision of open space and village hall facilities in connection with residential development has been introduced. An active part is taken by policy and development management in facilitating leisure and social development eg by championing the £8m restoration of the listed Royal Hall as the principal place of assembly for the district as a whole. A key area of conservation/regeneration work is in the Nidderdale AONB where the service leads a partnership to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the Nidderdale area through a range of measures set out in the management plan. The service also assists with various other regeneration initiatives at Knaresborough and Boroughbridge and partnership initiatives at Ripon and Pateley Bridge. The regeneration of West of Market Place, Ripon has involved the service in supporting a CPO to assemble the land and public/private sector partnership working.</p>
	<p>2. The area meets the aspirations of the community in terms of facilities, sense of place and liveability.</p>	<p>The approval of the Core Strategy and Sites for Homes and Jobs DPD will ensure in future a supply of land to meet the development needs of the area. The current position with regard to the supply of housing land is that a 5 year land supply cannot be demonstrated. The district's retail and service centres are in good shape and supported by planning policies and development management practices to ensure appropriate development is facilitated. Within Harrogate traffic congestion is a major issue. Car ownership is high and policy is geared towards improving facilities for walking, cycling and public transport. The local bus company, Harrogate and District Travel is</p>

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		<p>recognised as one of the best in the country with a new fleet of buses and a developing network and frequency. Satisfaction with the local area is high, the town of Harrogate being voted the 4<sup>th</sup> best place in the country to live by the tv programme 'Location, Location'. This is due to the area's outstanding environmental assets, low crime rate and good schools.</p>
	<p>3. The authority adds value to development proposals through success in negotiating appropriate contributions from developers to meet community needs.</p>	<p>Developer contributions to public open space, village halls, affordable housing provision, primary school places and highway infrastructure are negotiated through Section 106 Agreements. Expertise is available within the authority to carry out viability assessments in respect of affordable housing provision. Affordable housing levels do not meet local need and this is a major objective for the LDF Core Strategy.</p>
	<p>4. The authority adds value to development proposals through success in negotiating amendments to schemes to reflect community needs and concerns.</p>	<p>An example of a large housing development which was improved for the benefit of the community is the St Georges Road development where on site provision of affordable housing, open space and social facilities was negotiated.</p> <p>Similarly the redevelopment of the Ripon College site involved the translocation of protected species.</p>
	<p>5. The service achieves a high quality of design in individual buildings streets and places.</p>	<p>Through policy, design guidance and effective development management, local distinctiveness throughout the district is protected and reinforced. Within the AONB a SPD is being prepared to deal with the specific impacts of equine development. The distinctive nature of the AONB contrasted with the Vale of York and similarly the difference between the elegant Victorian/Edwardian character of Harrogate and the medieval character of Ripon and Knaresborough is reflected in policy and the approach to development management supported by the resources of the Heritage and Design Team.</p> <p>It is apparent that there is high satisfaction with the appearance and usability of new development although there is no formal review or design awards scheme to demonstrate external accreditation.</p>

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		<p>The LDF Core Strategy will include policies to promote renewable energy and to reduce the carbon footprint of development by promoting sustainable construction and energy efficiency. A major wind farm development west of Harrogate has commenced and will make a significant contribution to the district's renewable energy requirement providing 10.4MW of the Draft RSS target for Harrogate District of 17.2MW by 2010.</p> <p>Harrogate District is renowned for its very high quality environment. This is reflected in high land values and the fact that much of the District's pressure for housing growth stems from in-migration. The development of policy and planning guidance aims to reinforce the strong sense of local distinctiveness and high environmental quality of the area. Particular examples of new development that makes a positive contribution will be visited during the review.</p>

## PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

What do we mean by people, performance and resource management?

The performance of the planning service is actively managed to ensure that improvement is continuous. The benchmark considers this theme under three elements: capacity and the use of resources; performance management; and learning and supportive culture.

- A) Capacity and the use of resources** – ensuring the planning service has adequate staffing, financial resources and skills to meet its objectives and to deliver the required outcomes, and that it can demonstrate a positive relationship between overall costs and the level and quality of the service provided.
- B) Performance management** – the planning service has systems in place, and uses them, to ensure the effective use of capacity in meeting its objectives;
- C) Learning and supportive culture** – the planning service recognises the inherent conflict in planning activity and the complex nature of the planning process and responds to this positively and supportively.

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
<b>A) Capacity and the use of resources</b>	1. The strategy for corporate procurement covers provision of all key service requirements and makes efficient use of resources from public, private and voluntary agencies.	<p>The Audit Commission Use of Resources Assessment 2006 focuses on financial management but also links to the strategic management of the authority. It looks at how financial management is integrated with strategy and corporate management supports council priorities and delivers value for money. It confirms that the Council's overall score on Use of Resources improved year on year from a "2" in 2005 to a "3" in 2006. The significant improvement in 2006 was on Value for Money which went up to a "3". Key services demonstrate best value compared to other councils providing similar levels and standards of service and the Council has improved the relationship between costs and performance in a number of service areas including planning.</p> <p>The Council is challenging high spending areas eg Planning through a three year strategic/service review programme. This Peer Review is part of that process.</p>
	2. The staffing levels and mix of skills deliver the objectives of the service through effective, balanced workload management and a robust workforce plan.	Staffing levels in Development Control are set to achieve a maximum caseload of 150 cases per officer. Support staff both administrative and technical are employed at a ratio of 1:1. Policy and development management officers are supported by specialists in

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		<p>architecture, conservation, landscape and ecology. Planning Enquiries staff support the whole of the Planning service by providing a front of house service.</p> <p>External consultants are employed to provide expertise not available in house in connection with LDF studies and appeals especially public inquiries. Consultants/agency planners are also employed to cover workload peaks (applications) and staff absence (eg maternity).</p> <p>Member training is compulsory for those sitting on committees handling planning applications and comprises one event annually. There is no budget for member training and the budget for officer training is too limited.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention is currently assisted by career grade schemes and support and facilities to undertake NVQ in Planning (Administrators) and distance learning courses for planning technicians wishing to become Chartered Town Planners. A weekly training hour is supported by RTPI training, the North Yorkshire Training Consortium and PAS training events. Senior managers are also able to participate in a regional development programme and we are active in a project to deliver more planning training across North Yorkshire.</p> <p>The Council has IIP status with an appraisal system linked to training needs, focused on service objectives.</p>
	<p>3. Resources in the planning service are allocated and managed in line with service and corporate priorities.</p>	<p>The three key service priorities are clearly set out in the Service Improvement Plan and this provides both a service planning and bidding document to feed into the budget making process. A Business Unit culture and effective financial monitoring produces underspends 50% of which are recycled into Business Unit reserves.</p>
	<p>4. The service is cost effective addresses the need for efficiency savings regularly and provides value for money.</p>	<p>The service is currently measured as high performing and high cost and is undergoing a Strategic Service Review of which this peer review will form part. Officers can demonstrate high levels of productivity by achieving performance well over BVPI targets and meeting the milestones in the LDS. Customer satisfaction rates with the service have increased over the last 3 years by 11%.</p>

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		The Use of Resources Auditor Judgements 2006 demonstrate the service has improved its relationship between performance and costs compared with 2004/05.
	5. The planning service effectively manages its finances and has appropriate internal controls.	Financial performance is reported to CMT and Cabinet and exception reports are required if spending is out of line with projections. Financial monitoring at a service level takes place according to a pre-defined timetable and includes staff from the Department of Resources. Risks are identified and corrective action taken. Opportunities are identified and unspent budget moved to areas of other high priority. Simplistic 3 year forward budgets have been prepared. The Head of Planning Services attends corporate planning workshops which influence priorities and resource allocations.
	6. The service maximises access to finances to deliver outcomes.	The service has targeted BV109 and BV200 performance to ensure maximum Planning Delivery Grant. To date £1,390,873 of PDG has been received.  The AONB Management Plan and a proactive team capture additional income. Grant schemes eg Built Environment Initiative have a high multiplier effect.
<b>B)</b>  <b>Performance management</b>	1. The service recognises the importance of performance management and gives it sufficient priority and resources.	Covalent, a corporate performance management system, is used to regularly review performance at corporate and service levels. Performance on BVPIs is reported to the Performance Panel and Cabinet and exception reports are required if performance is below target. Performance is also reported to Cabinet Member (Planning and Transport0) monthly in terms of BV109 and quarterly in terms of all other performance indicators and Service Improvement Plan progress.  The weekly Majors meeting chaired by the Head of Planning Services "micro manages" major applications through to decision within 13 weeks. (Last quarter result 100%).



	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		A PAS Terraquest Report into process mapping is scheduled for action in the Planning Improvement Plan in July 07.
	2. The service has a clear performance management framework that integrates finance, people and ICT.	<p>The Uniform computer system is a comprehensive database of information which is accessed through a wide range of management reports which monitor performance and outcomes across areas of planning activity. The planning service has received a very positive assessment under a recent data quality audit. Management processes, team meetings and monitoring reports ensure staff understand the part they play in delivering service objectives and that poor performance without reason is visible. All staff have clear job descriptions which are currently being revised as part of a single status pay and grading review. Selection is on the basis of competencies and staff appraisals focus on personal development requirements to deliver the objectives of the service and the Council. In some cases the identification of training needs and CPD focused on Council objectives is weak.</p> <p>Corporate policies and procedures are used to monitor and take effective disciplinary action and actions on absence, competency and capability.</p>
	3. There is a shared and accurate understanding of how the service is performing and the critical success factors are known and understood.	<p>Performance management is part of the office culture and the responsibility of every member of staff. Staff, through the Uniform system and a suite of reports, have the tools to effectively manage their own performance. Planning Committee members are actively engaged in monitoring the performance of their own committee by receiving quarterly reports.</p> <p>Prince 2 is used to manage projects for example the Universal ICT project.</p> <p>The Service Improvement Plan includes a risk assessment.</p> <p>The 2005/2006 BVPI audit found that all three BV109 PIs had been fairly stated and the Audit Commission identified no significant issues in arrangements to ensure data quality for this indicator.</p>

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
	4. The service effectively appraises all staff and develops their performance through a system that links to corporate objectives.	All staff undergo annual performance appraisal with a 6 monthly review. A work plan is set and training needs should be identified, to deliver the Council's strategic and service objectives.
	5. Action is taken corporately, at service level and individually, if performance isn't satisfactory.	<p>For each strategic action there is a nominated Director or Executive Officer who heads the Corporate Group, along with a lead Cabinet Member, responsible for implementing the strategic action. This group is responsible for developing a programme of work to deliver the strategic action and for monitoring and reporting the performance against the programme of work.</p> <p>Strategic actions and corporate improvement actions are reported on a quarterly basis to CMT, Cabinet and Scrutiny (these are reported with the corporate basket of PIs.)</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny already receive a quarterly corporate performance monitoring report. The Commissions do take an overview but they can request the Cabinet/Cabinet Member to take action on poor performance and the fact that they receive information prior to Cabinet enhances this role. The other point is that they see it after CMT and have the benefit of any comments prior to referring issues to Cabinet/Cabinet Member</p> <p>The Departmental Resources Monitoring meeting attended by the Director, Head of Planning Services and Business Support Manager, monitor and take action across a range of matters including sickness absence and competency.</p> <p>Monitoring at service and team level is carried out by HOPS, CP(DC), CP(FP) and team leaders. The latest BV111 customer survey will be analysed and an action plan produced.</p>
	6. Performance management is part of the day job.	All staff are aware and understand the importance of meeting their personal and team targets/objectives and have the tools and discretion to take corrective action.

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
<b>C)</b> <b>Learning and supportive culture</b>	1. There is a learning culture that takes lessons from both success and failure and applies it to future work.	Feedback through appraisals and team meetings and informal training is available to officers although weak in some areas. Members are required to attend one compulsory training event annually. Team meetings demonstrate an inclusive approach to learning and service improvement. The service is perceived as having undergone significant improvement on the development control side in the past 2-3 years. Officer/member relationships are variable. The service is reticent when celebrating success.
	2. The service maintains positive working relationships internally and with the staff and members of other authorities and agencies.	Working relationships are generally supportive and positive among officers. Officer/Member working relationships are variable between individuals and over time may deteriorate due to a specific application or enforcement issue on which both parties have strongly held but opposing views.
	3. Officers and members work across departmental boundaries and restrictive definitions of individual roles.	Planning policy and SPDs are produced through inter-departmental working eg SPD on open space and village hall facilities and emerging policies with regard to affordable housing have involved joint working with the Department of Community Services. The major developments meeting demonstrates an effective development team approach to applications. This and joint working with Legal, Highways, Housing, Leisure and Community Safety colleagues demonstrates an effective development team approach. The Planning Strategy Group demonstrates inter-departmental working on policy.
	4. External challenge and evaluation is welcomed and exploited.	This peer review is a demonstration that external challenge is embraced by the planning service.  This is part of an on-going process including a planning standards inspection report provided by the Minister and assistance from Addison Associates. HOPS attended in 2005 a PAS regional improvement consortium and there is a track record of implementing innovations to increase efficiency and performance such as Unilateral Undertakings and Grampian conditions in lieu of Section 106 Agreements.
	5. Continuous improvement is taken for granted.	Working relationships are satisfactory and much hard work has gone into moving the organisation to one where learning and improving the service is taken for granted. Success has been variable across

	<b>Ideal Service</b>	<b>HBC Service</b>
		Members and officers and teams and individuals. The Corporate and Service Improvement Plans are key instruments and reference documents.

#### 4.0 KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Customer Service**

- access to pre-application advice
- feedback during application process
- user forum
- link with LSP

- **Flexible working**

- implement idocs (EDMS)
- homeworking (remote access to Uniform)
- overcrowded poor quality offices
- accelerate data capture

- **Officer/Member Relations**

- build greater trust
- training (depth and frequency)
- simplified delegation scheme
- corporate understanding of the role and value of planning/weak scrutiny

- **Capacity**

- middle management capability
- skills
- overwhelmed enforcement service
- project management of policy work