

**ORGANISATION IMPROVEMENT & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW  
AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
HELD ON 16 APRIL 2007  
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 7.45 PM)**

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

**In attendance:** Councillor Cooper for Minutes 70/06 and 77/06.

**Late Arrivals:** Councillor Willoughby at 5.33 pm.

**Early Departures:** Councillor Grange at 7.15 pm

**64/06 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF**

**SUBSTITUTES:** An apology had been received from Councillor Newby. Notification had been received that Councillor Anthony Alton was to act as substitute for Councillor Trotter.

(5.30 pm)

**65/06 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were no declarations of interest.

(5.30 pm)

**66/06 - MINUTES:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 5 March 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

**67/06 – EXEMPT INFORMATION:** There were no exempt information items.

(5.32 pm)

**68/06 – PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS – QUESTIONS:** There were no questions to consider pursuant to Standing Order No 27.

(5.33 pm)

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

**69/06 - HACKNEY CARRIAGE LICENCES REVIEW OF FARES 2007/08:** The Scrutiny Officer submitted a written report in relation to a representation from Mr Fieldman, Chairman of Ripon City Proprietors Association, regarding the increase in Hackney Carriage fares for 2007/08. The report detailed all relevant information and indicated that the Commission would not review the decision to increase the fares in 2007/08 as it was not a key decision and, therefore, would not be revised or reviewed without agreement by the Cabinet Member. The Commission could

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consider if further work was required. It was also noted that if further work was considered appropriate this would have to be considered by the Organisation Improvement and Environment Commission for 2007/08 for inclusion in its work programme. The Chair then introduced Mr Fieldman to address the Commission. He outlined the position of the Ripon taxi drivers and the affects the 2007/08 increase would have on them. He explained that his concern was the yardage for the "initial drop" as the nature and type of trips/distances covered in Ripon, were very different to Harrogate, as many of the journeys were short ones throughout the daytime. Ripon City Proprietors Association had submitted their own proposal to the Cabinet Member (Public Protection and Rural Affairs), which had been considered when the decision was made.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Commission should consider the request from Mr Fieldman and determine whether any further work to inform the consideration of fares for 2008/09 was required and whether it should be included in the future work programme for 2007/08. He emphasised that the decision of the Cabinet Member, in relation to the 2007/08 fares, could not be changed unless he decided to review it.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the item not be recommended for inclusion in the work programme for 2007/08 and that no other work was required.

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

(6.05 pm - 6.30 pm)

**70/06 – FIXED PENALTY NOTICES - LITTERING:** The Scrutiny Officer submitted a written report regarding the current policy on litter dropping which was requested by the Commission at its meeting held on 6 November 2006. The enforcement policy was attached to the report as Appendix 1. The Cabinet Member (Environment) and the Head of Environment were in attendance for this item and highlighted the current good performance on public satisfaction and standards of cleanliness in the District. One Member queried how many staff were employed to carry out the enforcement of litter dropping. The Head of Environment advised that it was a very limited resource within the Environmental Services Section and that there was only a small part of one post to deal with the enforcement and, as a result therefore, the capacity to catch somebody dropping litter and serve an enforcement notice was very limited. To date there had been no penalty notices issued. In light of the limited resources, one Member queried whether Parish Councils could become involved in the enforcement of notices. The Cabinet Member commented that, statutorily, he was unsure of the practicalities but would pursue the issue.

One Member referred to the amenity tip site at Wetherby Road, Harrogate and specifically the problems caused when there were strong winds blowing the rubbish out of the site into the surrounding trees etc. The Head of Environment commented that new working arrangements were in place and that security had improved at the site with new fences erected but he agreed to discuss the issue with NYCC and a review of the new working arrangements be undertaken. One Member queried whether traffic wardens could be involved in the enforcement of penalty notices and

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it was noted that this would be impractical. It was also emphasised that one priority area identified in a recent district panel would be to raise awareness and educate people, particularly school children.

### **RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):**

That the report be received.

(5.45 pm - 6.05 pm)

71/06 – **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF BENEFITS AND LOCAL TAXATION:** The Head of Revenues and Benefits submitted a written report which updated Members on the progress Review of Benefits and Local Taxation which was one of the strategic cross-cutting Best Value Service Reviews. Appendix 1 detailed the main features of progress on the review.

### **RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):**

That (1) the report be received and that the progress made on individual elements of activities be noted; and

(2) in future, progress on the issues which comprised this review continue to be monitored and developed through the relevant portfolio holder and co-ordinated through the regular monitoring and review of the corporate plan.

(6.30 pm - 6.32 pm)

72/06 – **SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - LOCAL ECONOMY:** The Director of Harrogate International Centre and the Head of Property and Economic Development submitted a joint written report which updated Members on the progress of the Service Improvement Plan - Local Economy, which was one of the strategic cross-cutting Best Value Service Reviews. Appendix 1 detailed the progress made on individual elements of activities.

### **RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):**

That (1) the report be received;

(2) the progress made on individual elements of activities be noted;

(3) the officer group on this project be formally disbanded; and

(4) in future, progress on the issues which comprise the review be monitored and developed through the relevant portfolio holder and co-ordinated through the regular monitoring and review of the Council's Strategic and individual Service Plan.

(6.32 pm - 6.40 pm)

73/06 - **ECONOMIC HEALTH OF DISTRICT'S MARKET TOWNS:** The Assistant Economic Development Officer delivered a presentation in relation to the regeneration initiatives currently being developed in the District's four market towns. She advised that within the Regeneration Team there were three officers, the

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Partnership Development Officer, the Principal Projects Officer and the Assistant Economic Development Officer, each with specific responsibilities in the relation to the market towns. She outlined the current position regarding the sub-regional investment plan and detailed the roles and the current key projects carried out by the partnerships, namely, Renaissance Knaresborough, Yore Vision, Nidderdale Plus Partnership and Ripon City Partnership.

Questions were then invited. One Member expressed concern that, apart from the Ripon City Partnership, the other Partnerships were lacking involvement by provision for young people and that they should be encouraged to become involved in the process. He also commented that there was a lack of hotel accommodation in the District, in particular in Boroughbridge and Aldborough. The Head of Property and Economic Development acknowledged the point regarding the involvement of young people and, in relation to the lack of hotel accommodation, added that action was being taken to address this, however, there were no quick and easy answers. One Member commented upon the number of empty shops in Knaresborough and it was noted that, although numbers in Knaresborough and Ripon had slightly increased, the District, as a whole, had seen a reduction. He also advised that, as a whole, high street retailing was experiencing a downward trend mainly due to the increased use of the internet to buy online. A discussion ensued regarding the provision of a medium sized supermarket in Knaresborough and the potential use of York Place Car Park for this purpose with replacement car parking provided on the Cattle Market site. Concern was also raised at the lack of communication between some of the Partnerships and the Town/City Councils and that the situation needed to be addressed. The Assistant Economic Development Officer **agreed** to liaise with the Partnerships so that appropriate literature be sent to the various City/Town/Councils, such as the Sub-Regional Investment Plan Steering Group progress report, which list all key projects the partnerships were developing.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their attendance.

(6.40 pm - 7.25 pm)

**74/06 - PLANNING SERVICES REVIEW:** The Scrutiny Officer submitted a written report in relation to the Planning Services Review which was part of a three-year rolling programme of reviews based on undertaking a cross-cutting review and single service review each year. The Scrutiny Officer advised that the review was divided into two stages. The first phase an External Peer Review, which would be undertaken by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and IDeA. The second phase would be dependent upon outcomes of the Peer Group Review and would also include a financial review of revenue budgets and consultation with the District Panel and focus groups. The External Peer Group review would be undertaken between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> April 2007 and would involve a range of officers, Members and partners and would be reported back to a future meeting of the Commission.

The report was received.

(7.25 pm - 7.30 pm)

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### **75/06 - ORGANISATION IMPROVEMENT AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2006/07:**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a written report which provided a summary of the work undertaken by the Commission in 2006/07 and also sought Members to consider and agree any issues that they wished to be included in the 2007/08 work programme. Councillor Marsh advised of the work of the Car Parking Policy Working Group and requested that the this item of work be carried over to the 2007/08 work programme.

#### **It was agreed:**

That (1) the report be received; and

(2) the work indicated in the programme that was still to be undertaken be recommended to the Organisation Improvement and Environment Commission 2007/08 for consideration for inclusion in its work programme.

(7.30 pm - 7.32 pm)

### **76/06 - REQUESTS FOR INCLUSION OF ITEM IN FUTURE WORK**

**PROGRAMME:** There were no requests for future items of work.

(7.32 pm)

## **SCRUTINY CONSULTATION**

### **77/06 - ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVES FUND (EIF) - FINAL FUND ALLOCATION:**

The Executive Director (Corporate Policy & Improvement) submitted a written report in relation to the final fund allocation of the Environment Initiatives Fund. The guidance and protocol was attached as Appendix 1. The Cabinet Member (Environment) referred to the light bulb for recycling scheme, which was approved in February 2007, and commented that, as a result of the joint promotion, at a point part-way through the scheme, 26,600 light bulbs had been sold and that the energy advice centre had received approximately 400 calls. The result of this was that about £225,000 could be expected to be saved from energy bills. The scheme was at its half way stage when these figures were provided by the Council's promotion partner so these figures could yet increase. He also advised that he hoped to pursue the Business Accreditation and Support Programme at a later stage.

#### **RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):**

That the report be received.

(5.34 pm - 5.45 pm)

## **MATTERS HOLDING EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT**

**78/06 - FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS:** The Chair invited the Commission to consider those issues in the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions that affected the Commission. It was **agreed** that the Commission request that it became a consultee in relation to the key decisions regarding the Harrogate District Local

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Development Framework - Community Sports Regeneration Area Action Plan Preferred Options and the Approval of Preferred Options for the Site Allocation (Homes and Jobs) Development Plan Document and Scrutiny Officer **agreed** to follow this up.

(7.33 pm - 7.45 pm)