

**ORGANISATION IMPROVEMENT & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2008
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 8.00 PM)**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Atkinson in the Chair. Councillors Ian Galloway, Hawke, Reg Marsh, Bob Nash, Newby, Nigel Simms, Matthew Webber, Willis, Willoughby and Wren.

Late Arrivals: None.

Early Departures: Councillor Hawke left at 7.20 pm.
Councillor Simms left at 7.20 pm.
Councillor Wren left at 7.40 pm.
Councillor Bob Nash left at 7.45 pm.

38/08 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES:
Notification had been received that Councillor Nigel Simms was to act as a substitute for Councillor Hill.

(5.30 pm)

39/08 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: A declaration of interest was made as detailed in Minute 48/08.

(5.30 pm)

40/08 - MINUTES: The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 November 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

(5.31 pm)

41/08 - EXEMPT INFORMATION: There were no exempt information items.

(5.32 pm)

42/08 - PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS - QUESTIONS: There were no questions to consider pursuant to Standing Order 27.

(5.32 pm)

MATTERS HOLDING EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT

43/08 - PLANNING AND TRANSPORT UPDATE: The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport, Councillor Don Mackenzie, who gave a presentation outlining the key issues arising in his portfolio for 2008/09, as detailed below:

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Planning Portfolio

LDF: There had been extensive work over the last four years and the Core Strategy had recently been subject to public examination. The Strategy was currently being assessed by the Government's Planning Inspector and findings were expected within the next two weeks. Subject to it being rated a "sound" document, the Strategy would be presented to Council for adoption in February 2009. The LDF sites for jobs and homes was hoped to be completed by 2010 and would then be subject to annual monitoring. Members discussed the Core Strategy and the requirement to build 390 new houses per year. It was also noted that that the sites for homes and jobs preferred options would be considered next year.

Planning Service - Continued improvement: The Council had continued to improve its planning performance in relation to the treatment of major, minor and other planning applications and was now classed as one of the top efficient planning authorities in the country. Members acknowledged the achievement but raised concerns over the performance of the Enforcement Team and, in particular, the lack of communication. The Head of Planning Services noted the concerns and commented that over the last 18 months the number of enforcement complaints had significantly increased meaning greater demands on the Team but agreed to look into the issue.

Conservation Area Appraisals: There were 52 Conservation Area Appraisals to be carried out, nine of which had already been completed and adopted with the remainder due to be completed by 2010.

Housing & Planning Delivery Grant: The Council had achieved a grant of £303,000 for 2007/08 which was substantially higher than the £75,000 budgeted. This was due to the Council's excellent development control performance and the submissions of the Core Strategy and a five year housing land availability assessment.

Tesco & Dunlopillo: The appeal against refusal for housing development on the former Dunlopillo site had been heard at a public inquiry and the Secretary of States decision was expected on the 26 February 2009. It was hoped that the Inspector would dismiss the appeal and the site would be retained as prime employment land. In relation to Tesco, a planning application had not yet been submitted but was expected in the very near future.

One Member commented that the Council should look into the possibility of using empty buildings for community use as there was a shortage of such facilities throughout the District.

Transport Portfolio

Concessionary Fares: The cost of the Concessionary Fares Scheme was likely to be £3m and the Council was faced with the possibility of having to find up to £1.5m from local sources because of the way the Government had distributed the grant funding. The issue of scrutinising bus companies' claims was also discussed as well as linking in with the Metro Card via the Leeds City Region.

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Agency Agreement: Due to be terminated on 31 March 2011. There were ongoing negotiations/discussions with NYCC over the service implications etc. The possible loss of income through on-street car parking was also a major consideration.

Cycling Issues: The Council had a cycling implementation plan which was delivering various cycle paths throughout the Agency Area. Staff were currently working on the Bilton to Ripon cycle route and consultation on cycling on a limited number of Stray footpaths had begun.

Car Parking: The Car Parking Policy Working Group was nearing the end of its work which had reviewed various car parking policy issues and a final report would be presented to the Commission in due course. It was stated there was a lack of parking facilities in Ripon and a lack of short stay car parking in Knaresborough. Members raised concerns over the recent problems with travellers at Dragon Road car park and the Head of Highways and Transport advised that the Council were looking at a scheme to reduce access to the car park. Members questioned the number of unused disabled persons' bays in various car parks and it was noted that the Jubilee car park had been designed to have a 5% provision of such bays. The Head of Highways and Transport also commented that the Council were looking into the possibility of the payment of car parking fees via mobile phones.

Transport Interchange for Harrogate: Progress was being made on a new first class transport interchange for Harrogate at Station Parade which would be more efficient and welcoming. Discussions would involve all transport providers.

Buses and Trains: There was an ongoing scheme for the improvement of bus shelters and raised kerbs. A trial of new technology to enable buses to gain priority at traffic signals when the bus was running behind schedule was also underway. Talks were also ongoing in relation to improving the rail network, in particular, the Harrogate to London rail line.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation.

(5.32 pm - 7.10 pm)

44/08 - **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS:** The Commission considered Forward Plan Key Decisions which fell within its remit and expressed its interest in considering the expansion of the kerbside waste recycling service and the Scrutiny Officer **agreed** to follow this up.

(7.50 pm - 7.55 pm)

SCRUTINY MATTERS AND REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN BY THE COMMISSION

46/08 - **HARROGATE DISTRICT CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY:** The Acting Head of Environment and the Home Conservation Officer submitted a joint written report which provided a brief introduction to the draft Climate Change Strategy for the Harrogate District. The Acting Head of Environment reported that, since the adoption of the Council's Local Agenda 21 Strategy "Action for the Environment" in 2003, there had been significant changes and additions to national and regional

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environmental policies which were detailed at section 5.2 of the report. She added that key stakeholders were currently being consulted via a questionnaire, which was on the Council's website, to ascertain views on climate change. The Climate Change Strategy was due to be presented to Cabinet for adoption in early 2009.

One Member queried what the Council were doing to ensure that new houses complied with certain levels of energy efficiency. The Home Conservation Officer commented that grants were available for certain energy efficiency schemes and that the Council had a good partnership with the North Yorkshire Efficiency Advice Centre. The Head of Planning Services advised that the LDF Core Strategy contained policies which required developers to comply with the Government Code for Sustainable Homes with the aim of reducing carbon footprints and reducing energy consumption. He added that, over the next couple of years, the Council would be reviewing its building regulations requirements. In relation to a query regarding the promotion of the climate change in schools, the Acting Head of Environment stated that, in the last 18 months, over half of the district's primary schools had been visited which had resulted in schools reducing their energy use. One Member raised concern over potential doorstep crime in relation to bogus house callers pretending to be from energy organisations and the Acting Head of Environment stated that the Council had good working relationships with energy companies and strict guidelines were in place.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That the proposal for the content of the draft Climate Change Strategy for the Harrogate District and the timetable for its completion be noted and that the Strategy be brought back for consideration by the Commission at the appropriate time.

(7.10 pm - 7.20 pm)

47/08 - PLANNING SERVICE REVIEW UPDATE: The Head of Planning Services tabled a briefing note which provided an update on the key recommendations from the Planning Service Peer Review which was undertaken in 2007 by the Planning Advisory Service and the IDeA.

Due to the late submission of the briefing note, it was **agreed** that Members would contact the Head of Planning Services direct with any queries on the key recommendations and that, in relation to key recommendation (v) regarding the Enforcement Team, the Head of Planning Services **agreed** to attend a future meeting of the Commission to address various issues and concerns raised by Members.

(7.20 pm - 7.25 pm)

48/08 - ADVERTISING BANNERS: (Councillor Willis declared a personal interest in the item on the basis that as a freelance journalist he had written about the issue but, on the basis that the interest was not prejudicial, remained in the meeting and took part in the debate). Further to Minute 34/08, the Chief Planner (Development Control) was in attendance and provided a brief summary of the regulations in place to control various advertising boards and banners which were controlled under the

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Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992 - Advertising Banners.

Members had, at a previous meeting, raised concerns over the type of banners which hotels used to advertise various events, in particular Christmas parties, on the boundary walls and trees of their hotels. Members discussed various banners which had gone up throughout the District over the past few months and requested that the Director of Destination Harrogate be contacted to see if an agreement could be reached with local hotels for a period of time when advertisements would be permitted. The Chief Planner (Development Control) **agreed** to write a letter, on behalf of the Commission, to the Director of Destination Harrogate in relation to the issue.

(7.25 pm - 7.45 pm)

49/08 - REQUESTS FOR INCLUSION OF ITEMS IN FUTURE WORK

PROGRAMME: There were none. The Scrutiny Officer advised that a meeting of the HIC Exhibition Halls Redevelopment Panel was likely to re-convened in the new year to continue its work and, in particular, to consider the governance arrangements at HIC.

(7.55 pm - 8.00 pm)

SCRUTINY CONSULTATION

50/08 - NYCC HEALTH SCRUTINY: The Chair invited Councillor Ian Galloway, the HBC appointed representative on the NYCC Health Scrutiny Committee to present the item. He provided Members with a brief account of the issues considered at recent meetings of the Committee and a list of the issues are attached to these Minutes as an addendum.

(7.45 pm - 7.50 pm)