CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL
HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2007
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 6.30 PM)

PRESENT: Councillor Jim Clark (Chair). Councillors Hawkins and Charlie Powell.

Late Arrivals: None.

Early Departures: None.

07/07 - **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Elwin Hinchcliffe, John Lockhart and Simms.

(5.30pm)

08/07 - **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were no declarations of interest.

(5.30pm)

09/07 - **MINUTES:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 30 July 2007 were unanimously approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(5.30pm)

10/07 - **EXEMPT INFORMATION:** There were no exempt information items.

(5.30pm)

11/07 - **PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS – QUESTIONS:** There were no such questions to consider.

(5.30pm)

<u>MATTERS FOR REPORT</u>

12/07 - **DATA QUALITY MANAGEMENT SELF ASSESSMENT 2007:** The Acting Executive Director (CP&I) submitted a written report, the purpose of which was to set out the results of the Council's 2007 self-assessment of its Data Quality Management (DQM) arrangements. He highlighted that DQM formed a key part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Framework and that the 2007 self-assessment had confirmed that the Council's arrangements for securing data quality had been maintained year on year (The Audit Commission had assessed them as adequate in 2006/2007).

The Executive Director then referred to paragraph 5.2 of the report and invited the Panel to consider and comment upon the key improvements in relation to the Council's DQM arrangements implemented since the 2006 self-assessment.

The Executive Director referred to the quarterly governance meeting with the Audit Commission whose 2007 audit of the Council's DQM arrangements agreed with the

Council's own conclusion that adequate DQM arrangements had been maintained. The Acting Executive Director updated the Panel on a minor data quality issue that the Audit Commission had identified in its 2007 audit of data quality on Housing Investment Programme (HIP) performance indicator. The Acting Executive Director confirmed that the issue was being addressed and also confirmed that the Cabinet would be provided with an update on this issue at its meeting to be held on 19 September 2007.

Councillor Clark referred to the issue on un-audited external data highlighted in the report under paragraph 5.3. The Acting Executive Director referred to a revised timetable for the Council's Best Value Review of partnership governance arrangements and advised that the external data issue would be addressed as part of the review and that the Council's Governance Panel would be consulted on any revised governance arrangements resulting from the review.

Councillor Charlie Powell referred to the above data quality issue for the Council's Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and asked why the Audit Commission had raised this issue and whether the Council's arrangements in relation to DQM had had any bearing on this matter. The Acting Executive Director advised that there had been a significant change in performance on the HIP Performance Indicator year on year which should have been reported to the Head of Service for them to check the data and identify the reason for the variance in performance. This had not happened and the Audit Commission had identified it as a weakness in the Council's DQM arrangements. The Acting Executive Director advised the Panel that arrangements would be put in place to avoid a recurrence of this in future on this HIP PI.

The Panel noted that the Council's Best Value review of partnership working would include the development of a protocol on data quality between the Council and its key partners to address the DQM weakness on data from unaudited external sources identified in the 2006 self assessment.

The Panel then considered their comments to the Cabinet on this report including the fact that the Department of Corporate Policy and Improvement were addressing the weakness in the Council's DQM arrangements identified by the 2007 self-assessment.

The Panel noted the key improvements to the Council's DQM arrangements implemented since the 2006 assessment.

(5.31pm - 5.40pm)

13/07 - **THE COUNCIL'S 2006/2007 VALUE FOR MONEY PROFILE:** The Acting Executive Director (Corporate Policy and Improvement), submitted a written report which set out the results of the Council's self assessment of its 2006/07 Value for Money (VFM) Profile published by the Audit Commission in May 2007.

The Panel recognised that this was an important part of the Council's Use of Resources agenda in managing and monitoring the Council's costs and performance to challenge whether they represented good value for money for local people.

Attached as Appendix 1 to the written report was a copy of the VFM Profile of Harrogate Council published by the Audit Commission. The Profile had been assessed by officers and the results of that assessment had been used to produce the cost and performance charts set out in Appendix 2. The Acting Executive Director explained that the chart in Appendix 2 provided a comparison of Harrogate Borough Council's cost per head of population with the same costs of the authorities listed in the "nearest neighbour comparative groupings" in the Profile. The Panel queried the criteria used by the Audit Commission to establish the comparator group. Members of the Panel referred to the size of the Harrogate District (505 square miles) and said that this set Harrogate apart from its "nearest neighbours" and that this difference should be borne in mind when reviewing the comparative information set out in the report. In relation to Home Office Services (Emergency Planning), Harrogate Borough Council spent more per head than the other 15 authorities in the comparator group. However, overall, none of the Councils in the comparator group tended to commit significant funding in this particular service. It was acknowledged that Councils set different priorities which impacted on a Council's pattern of spending on services. The Acting Executive Director advised that although this VFM profile was considered useful it was only a "signpost" to identify cost and performance issues that the Officers and Members might wish to examine in more detail through benchmarking or Best Value review. The Officer advised that, as yet, no feedback had been received from the District Auditor on the audit of the Council's Use Of Resources self assessment that also included value for money, however the 2007 audit of use of resources/VFM was expected in September 2007. In response to questions from the Panel, the Acting Executive Director referred to the VFM chart in Appendix 2 on "unapportionable central overheads" and explained the significance of these overheads on comparable service costs and the variations in local authority accounting practices.

Councillor Hawkins queried the lack of comparative cost information in the VFM Profile for Housing for 2006/2007. The Performance Manager advised that the Audit Commission had not received that information from CIPFA at the time of publishing the VFM Profile.

In relation to sport and recreation, Councillor Hawkins commented that Harrogate Borough Council was a comparative high spender on this service but that it was not unexpected since the Harrogate District covered such a large geographical area.

The Panel requested information from the Performance Manager regarding how public satisfaction was measured, particularly for sport and recreation, waste collection and street cleansing and litter.

In relation to the VFM Charts on the Street Cleansing & Litter Service and Environment & Public Health Service the Panel noted that the Council's performance was high in comparative terms but the comparative cost per head in providing these services was low. Whilst that represented good Value For Money, the Panel queried how that had been achieved. It was **agreed** that this VFM question should be referred to the Organisation Improvement and Environment Commission for consideration. Councillor Powell referred to employee costs and salaries and the extent to which variations on employee costs between local authorities impacted on the comparative cost/head data in the VFM Profile. The Acting Executive Director agreed that this would be one of the factors to examine in detail on a particular service as part of benchmarking or a service review to address significant variations in comparative costs or performance "signposted" by the VFM Profile.

The Panel unanimously received the report and noted the positive improvements in VFM in 2006/07 through improved year-on-year performance in core services for the same year-on-year comparative costs per head.

(5.40pm – 6.12pm)

14/07 - **2006/2007 BEST VALUE USER SATISFACTION SURVEY QUARTILE ANALYSIS:** The Performance Manager submitted a written report to provide an update to the Panel on the quartile performance of the Council's 2006/2007 Best Value User Satisfaction Survey (BVUSS) performance indicators. The Performance Manager advised that in August 2007 the Audit Commission published the BVUSS comparative results of all councils including their quartile rankings and that the report described how Harrogate Borough Council compared to other district councils in the 2006/07 satisfaction survey performance indicators. Information set out within the report would be used as part of the Council's CPA re-categorisation bid. The Panel noted the good performance on user satisfaction in the 2006/07 survey with 56.5% of the Council's BVUSS performance indicators in the top quartile and compared that performance with the results from the two previous surveys. The results were set out in paragraph 6.1 of the report. The Performance Manager referred to BV03 – "overall satisfaction with the authority" – which at 59% was only 1% below the top quartile. In addition, the Council's overall satisfaction level had increased from the previous survey level which bucked the trend set by District Councils nationally. In relation to BV90 b – "satisfaction with waste recycling" - the Council had achieved a 64% satisfaction level which was in the third quartile. However, the Panel noted that this particular indicator formed part of the general satisfaction survey, therefore covering residents across the district as a whole whereas not everyone in the District was included in the Council's recycling schemes. The Performance Manager explained that the survey results on BV90b indicated that most respondents wanted to recycle more.

In relation to BV74 b the Panel noted that the reference to "ethnic minorities" did not include white minority ethnics in the Home Office category on this BVUSS PI.

The Panel also considered BV111 - "overall satisfaction" with the planning service - and noted that whilst the Council was no longer a Planning Standards Authority, the satisfaction level was in the bottom quartile for 2006/07. The Panel felt that the satisfaction results on planning could be skewed by those who were not satisfied with the service simply because they had applied for but not been successful in obtaining planning permission. The Panel noted that the Council was currently undertaking a Best Value Review of planning and proposed that part of that review could look at the way in which other councils had scored in their BVUSS quartile rankings, particularly those councils in the top quartile to find out how this performance had been achieved. The Panel also agreed that it would be useful to split the results of the planning survey into those respondents that had been successful with a planning application and those that had not.

The Panel were then referred to Section 6.2 of the report and advised that the 2006/07 and 2003/04 survey results would be used as evidence of improvement in the Council's forthcoming bid for CPA re-categorisation.

Councillor Hawkins referred to indicator BV75 b – "Housing tenant satisfaction with participation (ethnic minorities)". He said that whilst the quartile ranking for 2006/07 on this BVUSS PI was third quartile, he noted that the actual number of tenants this ranking was based upon was in the single figures. It was agreed that this should be brought to Cabinet's attention as part of the Panel's comments on the report.

The Acting Executive Director also responded to Members' questions in relation to the satisfaction level on waste recycling and confirmed that the Council's investment in this service would begin to take affect in 2007/08 and that he expected that the Council's BVUSS quartile ranking on recycling would improve in future surveys as a result. The Panel expressed concern that a move to fortnightly collections could adversely impact on that satisfaction ranking.

In conclusion, the Panel agreed that the results from the Benefit Survey were excellent and that the Benefits service in particular should be congratulated on the significant improvement on its customer satisfaction levels between the 03/04 survey and the 06/07 survey.

(6.12pm – 6.30pm)