

**COUNCIL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
(FURTHER MEETING)  
HELD ON 23 MARCH 2004  
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 6.25 PM)**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Skidmore in the Chair. Councillors Heather Adderley, Broadbank, Fox, Andrew Jones, Newby, Simister and Webber.

**Late Arrivals:** Councillor Simister at 5.40 pm.

**Early Departures:** None.

**82/03 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES:**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Theakston, Powell, D Smith, Simms, de Courcey-Bayley and Mrs Atkinson. Notification had been received that Councillor Heather Adderley was the substitute for Councillor Nash and that Councillor Atkinson had been appointed to act for Councillor J Smith.

(5.30 pm)

**83/03 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were no declarations of interest.

(5.30 pm)

**84/03 - MINUTES:** Councillor Andrew Jones referred to Council Resources Commission Minute 77/03 in relation to the future work programme, and provided the Commission with an update in relation to the work of the Communications Review Panel. The Panel had been established to review the procedures used to communicate information to both past and current administrations, and to the public. It had been found that mechanisms used could vary significantly between departments. There was at this time no evidence to suggest any political interference had ever taken place in relation to the issues considered by the Panel, and, indeed, there were no reasons to consider the introduction of any recommendations to suggest to political groups how to deal with the supply and demand of information. It was now believed that the way forward would be to provide Officers with advice in relation to the provision of information to politicians, however, the Panel had achieved its goal and it was also believed that the next meeting to be scheduled would be the last. It was agreed that the Commission would ask the Chief Executive to review these issues surrounding communication as part of the overall review of the corporate structure.

In relation to Minute 74/03, Councillor Webber questioned whether or not the report back from the Leader of the Council in relation to the draft General Fund Revenue Budget and the costs associated with community research in relation to young people had progressed any further since the last meeting. It was agreed that a written response would be provided to all Members of the Commission in relation to this issue and that the Chairman would progress this with the Officers involved, following the meeting.

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In relation to Minute 79/03, Councillor Webber inquired as to whether BVPI 12 and 15 relating to the number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness and absence and a percentage of employees retiring on health grounds as a percentage of the total workforce would be raised at the next meeting of the Recruitment and Retention Panel. Councillor Webber further enquired as to whether the recent recruitment and retention survey had provided any information relating to stress levels, particularly within specific departments. It was confirmed that information relating to the potential causes of stress was contained in the survey. It was also confirmed that the information relating to sickness and absence including stress would also be available to the Panel. It was noted that it would greatly help if these issues could be correlated.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2004 were then approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(Seven Members voted for the motion and there was one abstention).

(5.32 pm – 5.45 pm)

85/03 - **EXEMPT INFORMATION:** There were no exempt information items.

(5.31 pm)

86/03 - **PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS – QUESTIONS:** There were no questions received.

(5.31 pm)

87/03 - **REQUESTS FOR INCLUSION OF ITEMS IN FUTURE WORK**

**PROGRAMME:** The Chairman referred to the meeting of Cabinet and Extraordinary Council held on 17 March 2004 which considered a joint report from the Directors of Technical Services and Harrogate International Centre, in relation to the breakout space project, and the problems encountered as a result.

At these meetings it had been agreed that the processes leading up to the collapse of Ballast Plc would be referred to the Council Resources Commission for scrutiny. The Chairman advised that he had had discussions with the Director of Finance, Chief Executive and Chief Solicitor about the arrangements for review. He had been advised that the Constitution prevented scrutiny of matters where court proceedings or an audit inquiry were ongoing.

The Chief Executive was in the process of compiling a report based on an internal audit investigation. Before it was completed, advice was required from a barrister, and this was going to be obtained soon. The Chairman had agreed that the report should be finalised before the Commission decided on the scope of the review. He had also agreed that the review would not cover disciplinary matters which were the responsibility of the Chief Executive. Members of the Commission expressed concern with regard to the timescale of the current investigation, and the considerable loss experienced by the Council as a result of the project. The Commission questioned the Chief Solicitor as to when they could reasonably expect

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to begin their investigation the scrutiny of the project that had been referred to them by Council. The Chief Solicitor acknowledged the Commission's concern and undertook to report on the progress made at the meeting on 17 May.

**RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):**

That, (1) the Commission request a report from the Chief Solicitor in relation to the progress made regarding the investigation into the HIC breakout space project at its meeting to be held on 17 May 2004; and

(2) the Commission also request that the Chief Executive make available as much of the Officer report as is reasonable to include at that stage.

(5.45 pm – 6.10 pm)

(D)

88/03 - **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS:** There were no forward plan decisions to report to the Commission.

(6.10 pm)

**MATTER FOR REPORT**

89/03 - **NOTICE OF MOTION – MEMBER WARD BUDGETS:** The Director of Administration submitted the Notice of Motion tabled at Council on 3 March 2004, in the names of Councillors de Courcey-Bayley and Webber, as follows:-

“That this Council confirms its intention to reinstate Member Ward Budgets at the earliest opportunity and, in the meantime, undertakes a full review of the conditions regarding the projects that can be so funded.

The Notice had been referred from Council to Cabinet and from Cabinet to the Resources Commission.

In the absence of Councillor de Courcey-Bayley, Councillor Webber was asked to elaborate on his reasons for seconding the Notice and advised that, in addition to seeking the reinstatement of the scheme, he also wished to review the usage of the budget and the scheme of guidance used as a criteria for the approval or otherwise of schemes proposed by Members of the Council.

It was Councillor Webber's view that any future Member Budget Scheme should be in line with the Council's strategic objectives. It was proposed that the current scheme could be considered in relation to the Council's strategic objectives and then Members could agree relevant proposals for a new scheme in time for the future reintroduction of the Member Budget Scheme. This, of course, depended upon the necessary resources being available.

The Commission considered the timescale of the review, and considered whether such a review should be suspended until such time as sufficient budget allocation had been identified to allow the reinstatement of the scheme, however, it was agreed

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that Officer time would be scarce during the budget process, and that since the scheme had been suspended and Members were not actively engaged in seeking schemes for use of their Member Budgets, now would be a good time to review how money had been allocated under the scheme.

**RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):**

That the Commission agree to undertake a review of Member Ward Budgets, which would include the consideration of the Council's strategic objectives and scope this review at the next meeting of the Commission to take place on 20 April 2004.

(6.10 pm – 6.25 pm)

(D)