



REPORT TO	Environment Overview and Scrutiny Commission
DATE:	22 April 2004
REPORTING OFFICER:	Scrutiny Officer Mr M Codman
SUBJECT:	GM Food Review Information
WARDS AFFECTED:	All
FORWARD PLAN REF:	N/A

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 16 February 2004 The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered a request from the Cabinet Member for Environmental Health for the Commission to undertake an investigation into whether Harrogate Borough Council should become a GM Free Council.
- 1.2 It was agreed that this item be included in the work programme for the Commission and that the Chairman propose how it should be included.
- 1.3 This report therefore details relevant background information in order that the Commission can determine the final scope of the review, additional information requirements and key stages for the programme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 That the Commission use the information to determine the final scope of the review, additional information requirements, key stages for the programme and the full review methodology.

3.0 INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 In June 2003 Friends of The Earth requested Harrogate Borough Council to adopt a policy to become GM Free and in particular to commit to the following:
 - To ensuring that no GM crops are grown on land over which it has control;
 - To adopting a GM-free policy for all goods and services for which the council is responsible;
 - To declaring the Harrogate District to be a GM Free Zone;

- To considering each prospective GMO Marketing Consent and, where appropriate, writing to both the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and to the European Commission requesting that a condition under Article 19(3)(c) of 2001/18/EC be added to such marketing consent so as to exempt the Harrogate District from the scope of such consent. (The full draft resolution text is available on request)

3.2 Friends of the Earth also gave a presentation to the Council facilitated Action for the Environment Group in November 2003. After this presentation the Cabinet Member for Environmental Health decided to refer the issue to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Commission who agreed to progress the work to enable it to consider if the Council should declare itself GM Free.

Information

- 3.3 Attached at **APPENDIX A** is the draft scope of the review considered by the Environment Commission at its meeting on 16 February 2004.
- 3.4 Attached at **APPENDIX B** is the Booklet 'Now or never' Why you should make your area GM Free distributed by Friends of the Earth with their original letter.
- 3.4 Attached at **APPENDIX C** is an introduction to the issue of GM Food published by the Food Standards Agency called 'GM Food Opening up the debate'
- 3.5 Attached at **APPENDIX D** is a map indicating those areas where genetically modified crops can be grown in Britain.

GM Food

- 3.6 In May 2002 the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs agreed to the principles of a public debate on GM issues. It was agreed that this would take place together with an assessment of the overall costs and benefits of GM Crops, by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (See 3.7) and an independent review of the science of GM to be chaired by the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser (See 3.7).
- 3.7 The debate would cover the full range of issues raised by GM technology and there was a promise that the UK Government would listen to the outcome of the debate and respond to it in public. An independent Steering Group was therefore set up to organise the debate at arm's length from the Government. Attached at **APPENDIX E** is information concerning the debate and attached at **APPENDIX F** is an Executive summary of the results of the debate that was published on 23 September 2003.
- 3.8 Attached at **APPENDIX G** is an Executive Summary of the results of the assessment of the overall costs and benefits of GM Crops that was published in July 2003.
- 3.9 Attached at **APPENDIX H** is the GM Science Review First Report published in

July 2003 and attached at **APPENDIX I** is the GM Science Second Report published in January 2004.

- 3.10 Attached at **APPENDIX J** is the statement made by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 9 March 2004 setting out the Government's overall policy on GM crops after consideration of the GM Public Debate, Science Review and the Cost and Benefit Study (See above). The full written response is available on request together with the results of the Farm Scale Evaluation (FSE) Trials and the Report by the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission on co-existence and liability issues.
- 3.11 Attached at **APPENDIX K** is a press release dated 1 April 2004 concerning one of the major manufacturers of GM crops in Britain.

4.0 THE WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 At its meeting held on 16 February 2004 The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Commission agreed to undertake an investigation into whether Harrogate Borough Council should become a GM Free Council. This report details the appropriate background information to enable the Commission to consider the issues involved.

Further Information

- 4.2 The scope of the review agreed by the Commission indicated inviting appropriate organisations to give evidence the Commission could therefore seek additional information from such organisations. Friends of the Earth have already expressed an interest in presenting information at a future meeting in support of declaring Harrogate Borough Council GM free. It would also be appropriate to invite other organisations in support of GM food to give their views at the same meeting. It may also be possible to invite academic experts in GM Food and other interested groups to the same meeting.
- 4.3 Additional work is required to assess the implications of declaring the Council GM Free particularly by adopting a GM free policy for all goods and services for which the Council is responsible. This may have additional legal, technical and resource implications.
- 4.4 The scope also identified a survey of local residents in the form of the Council's District Panel. The next District Panel survey is due for distribution in June 2004 and GM Food has been identified for provisional inclusion on the questionnaire. In addition to this the views of members of the public could be also be obtained by invitation in the press.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 At its meeting held on 16 February 2004 The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered a request from the Cabinet Member for Environmental Health for the Commission to undertake an investigation into whether Harrogate Borough Council should become a GM Free Council.

5.2 This report therefore details relevant background information in order that the Commission can determine the final scope of the review, additional information requirements and key stages for the programme.

Background Papers – None

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Mr M Codman, Scrutiny Officer if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at the Council Offices Crescent Gardens Harrogate HG1 2SG by telephone on 01423 556153 or by Email – mark.codman@harrogate.gov.uk

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT / POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

		Implications are		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
A	Economy		✓	
B	Environment		✓	
C	Social Equity		✓	
i)	General			
ii)	Customer Care / People with Disabilities			
iii)	Health Implications			
D	Crime and Disorder Implications		✓	

If all comments lie within the shaded areas, the proposal is sustainable.