



# Media Release

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## CHANGES TO COUNCIL STRUCTURE

**A NEW** structure at Harrogate Borough Council will bring some significant savings by streamlining services and, at the same, time help it respond to government-led initiatives.

Currently operating over seven different service departments the council will be reducing to five departments as from 1 April. This does not affect the role of the Chief Executive who will remain at the helm and the Harrogate International Conference Centre will continue to be run as an arm's length organisation.

The council structure will now be as follows:

The Department of Finance will combine with the Department of Administration to become the **Department of Resources**. John Sowden, the former Director of Finance, will now become Executive Director of Resources and his responsibilities will include all the council's finance services as well as its human resources, legal and administration functions.

The Department of Health and Housing will combine with the Leisure and Amenity Services Department and the Street Cleansing section to become the **Department of Community Services**. Les Williamson, the former Director of Health and Housing, will now become Executive Director of Community Services. As well as being responsible for all environment health, housing, street cleansing, parks and open spaces, museums, sport and leisure activities, he also takes on responsibility for public protection including community safety. The department will also be taking on new responsibilities following the transfer from the magistrates' court of liquor licensing to local councils.

The Department of Technical Services, which is currently responsible for highways, planning, building control, construction and building management will be combining with the Economic Development Unit and the Estates Division to become the **Department of Development Services**. Pat Fitzgerald, formerly Director of Technical Services, will become Executive Director Development Services.

There are no changes to the structure at the **Harrogate International Centre** and Paul Lewis continues as Director.

As part of the restructure, and to respond to the government's approach to how council's should operate, the council is strengthening its corporate capacity by creating a new **Department of Corporate Policy and Improvement**. Its Executive Director is Kevin Douglas, formerly the Director of Leisure and Amenity Services.

Councillor Mike Gardner, Leader of the Council, comments on the new structure. He said: "The current approach to local government service delivery by central government now tends to concentrate much more on corporate capacity, corporate planning, corporate control and performance management. For the foreseeable future, councils will be judged against these new corporate capacity criteria.

"That is why we have created a corporate policy and improvement department to support services in responding to government expectations and to help them carry on doing what they do best, delivering first class services. We are very pleased that Kevin Douglas has accepted the position of Executive Director for this new department. Corporate planning is an area in which he is especially accomplished and vastly experienced. He has already been a major driving force in customer care, access to services and community planning. We have an excellent management team under Chief Executive, Mick Walsh. We hope that this new structure will work seamlessly and residents will continue to be provided with first class services. In fact, in the future, they should be better." ENDS

**FURTHER INFORMATION: Councillor Mike Gardner is available for comment on 01423 500600 ext 6299.**