



Media Release

Lynne Mee

Direct line 01423 556022

Communications and Media Manager Direct fax 01423 561154 not 24 hrs
24 hour fax " 556010
Mobile 07884 226409

Email lynne.mee@harrogate.gov.uk

www.harrogate.gov.uk

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CABINET MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS ON COUNCIL RESTRUCTURE

AT its meeting last night, the council's Cabinet made recommendations to full council on proposals for a restructure of council departments, which will lead to significant savings.

On taking overall control of the council in October last year, the new administration had wished to consider an early modification of the council's structure in order to save costs and a subsequent government assessment of the council's performance confirmed the Cabinet's belief that the council needs a clearer corporate direction.

Councillor Mike Gardner, Leader of the Council, said: "As a new administration, we want to streamline the council as far as possible in order to save money, particularly in the light of current financial pressures and the threat of government capping. And whilst there is no doubt that the current structure has been very successful in delivering first class services we have lost some corporate direction, which needs to be addressed."

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 and, for the foreseeable future, councils will be judged against that criteria.

Councillor Gardner added: "The government is also asking councils to take on additional functions – such as taking over licensing from the Magistrates' Courts – and giving us a statutory duty to make all our services available electronically. We need to make sure our structures reflect these changes. By reducing the number of departments from seven to five, the council can make significant cost savings and it will also give us the chance to bring services, which now sit more closely together, into better aligned departments. None of these recommendations will take away our promise to provide our residents with quality services.

"We are recommending the creation of a corporate improvement department which will relieve service departments from some government bureaucracy, to help them carry on doing what they do best, delivering first class services."

All council staff and unions have been consulted on the report and the recommendations will not lead to enforced retirement or redundancies. They also do not affect the council's conference and exhibition business.

Council will consider Cabinet's recommendations at its meeting on 1 December. The report will be exempt only because it contains information of a personal staffing nature. If approved, the new structure will come into force on 1 April 2005. ENDS

FURTHER INFORMATION: Councillor Mike Gardner is available for comment on 01423 816774.