



# Media Release

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## **COUNCIL LEADS THE FIELD ON BUSINESS WEBSITES**

**RESEARCH** commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has put Harrogate Borough Council in the top five local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber area for the quality of information provided on its website catering for the needs of local businesses.

Funded by the Working with Business National Project and carried out by the Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM), the research showed that only 25 council websites in the country were found to have any coherent focus on business-related information.

The key findings of the report show that some of the best local authority websites have special sections devoted to businesses. The report particularly commended Harrogate Borough Council for “its excellent introduction for local businesses as to what the council can do for them”.

The overall conclusion from the SOCITM research is that, with some notable exceptions local authorities need to work hard on creating a truly useable business sections on their websites.

Harrogate Borough Council has an area on the website dedicated for business use. The site was re-vamped last year to make it much more customer focussed and more work is planned for this year.

Councillor Alan Skidmore, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, said: “We are extremely pleased that Deputy Prime Minister has recognised the work we have done to make our website useful for businesses.

“We scored highly for our property information pages and the fact that businesses can make on-line enquiries about available premises. But it isn’t just about what the council’s economic development unit is doing for businesses, our website aims to cover all issues which either a local business or a new venture might need on such issues as planning or transport information. We plan to make continual improvements to the web site to make it even easier for people to navigate and to offer more electronic service delivery.”

The latest figures on the district’s workforce and labour market show that we have above average economic activity with low and stable unemployment rates (0/. 9%

Harrogate, 2.3% GB). A high proportion of the working age population are in employment or education (85.6% Harrogate – 78.3% GB). The district also has above average levels of self employment (13.7% Harrogate – 8.7% GB).

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**FURTHER INFORMATION : Councillor Alan Skidmore is available for comment on 01765 658785 . Further technical information is available from Mr Nigel Avison, Economic Development Officer on 01423 556077.**