



ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Harrogate
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Front cover:

Civic Centre, Harrogate

Harrogate Convention
Centre

Ripon - Phoenix Business
Centre

Fern House - 19-bed
accommodation - opened
April 2021

Welcome

We are delighted to present Harrogate Borough Council's annual report for 2020/21.

It summarises our key achievements during the last financial year and sets out the progress we've made against our four corporate priorities.

Just before last year's annual report was issued, the world was confronted with a pandemic. More than a year later, the pandemic is still with us, although vaccines have offered us hope of some sort of normality. This year has brought much hardship and grief, but we are proud that our staff have risen to the challenge, above and beyond the call of duty.

This will also be one of the last annual reports presented by Harrogate Borough Council. In July 2021, the government took the decision to reorganise local government in North Yorkshire. The government opted for two unitary authorities, a new one covering the county of North Yorkshire, and retaining the smaller one covering the City of York. The Harrogate district will become part of the former, along with the other districts of Craven, Richmondshire, Selby, Hambleton, Ryedale, Scarborough and North Yorkshire County Council.

The new authority will be in place in April 2023, just one year shy of Harrogate Borough Council's 50th birthday in 2024. It will be the biggest change to local government that the Harrogate district has faced since the council was created in 1974.

We've achieved a lot this year and, in spite of the significant impact that the covid pandemic has had on the council as well as the economy of the district, we've been able to keep things moving. Some of our key success are:

- We helped turn Harrogate Convention Centre (HCC) into a Nightingale Hospital in response to the pandemic. While thankfully it was never used for COVID patients it helped thousands have potentially life-saving diagnostic treatment. Harrogate Convention Centre is back open for events as of July 2021.
- On top of this we have been delivering vital services to residents including phoning



Councillor Richard Cooper
Leader of the council



Wallace Sampson OBE
Chief Executive

people who are vulnerable, delivering leaflets, distributing tens of millions in support grants and keeping essential services moving.

- We completed a new temporary accommodation facility at Spa Lane in Starbeck. It provides 19 high quality self-contained rooms to some of the most vulnerable people in the district.
- We worked with other authorities to submit a series of devolution asks to government to unlock significant future investment and further devolved powers.
- We have made significant progress in changing the way we deliver sport and leisure and culture and tourism services. On 1st August 2021 we launched Brimhams Active, our new community health and wellbeing company. Brimhams Active will allow us to transform a conventional leisure service into a leading community focused health and wellbeing service.
- Culture and Tourism functions will be delivered by the Destination Management organisation which will launch in Autumn 2021, following a merger with Visit Harrogate and the marketing team from the Harrogate Convention Centre. We are excited about the opportunities that this will bring to have a strong 'destination' focus to events coming to the Harrogate district.
- We have progressed with our 2024 Transformation Programme. Our ambitious programme has four themes (Sustainable Harrogate, Destination Harrogate, Digital Harrogate and Commercial Harrogate) and includes capital as well as efficiency projects.

It has been another challenging year, dealing with a pandemic that has transformed everyone's lives. We are enormously proud and grateful that 18 months in, our staff continue to provide an excellent service even among difficult circumstances.

A strong local economy

The events industry has been affected heavily by the pandemic. Harrogate Convention Centre has been a unique case as it has been used for most of the year as a Nightingale Hospital.

HCC has just hosted two pilot events as part of the Events Research Programme pilot, and are looking forward to hosting more as the rules allow. In 2019/20, HCC contributed around £29 million to the local economy. Ensuring HCC is back up and operating safely is vital for the economic recovery of the district

Our work on 'digital Harrogate' has made significant progress. This work has been really important to make sure residents in Harrogate are connected with fastest speeds. The first phase of CityFibre has finished in Bilton and work commenced in Starbeck and Knaresborough. Around 20,000 of the 50,000 homes in scope are 'ready for service' and residents will be able to utilise their new connectivity with internet service providers (e.g. Sky, Talk Talk etc).

'AppyParking' has been another digital success story for Harrogate. Last year the app was used by nearly 10,000 customers and the contract has been extended for a further two years.

The Station Gateway project is progressing with partners coming together to agree how to take proposals forward for the site. Progress is aligned with the Transforming Cities Fund which now has funding of £11.7 million.



Above: Harrogate Convention Centre

We completed the build of a new Visit Harrogate website. The old site was in definite need of an upgrade. The website went live in April 2021 and will be a key part of attracting tourists to the Harrogate district. Its sleek design is filled to the brim with things to do, places to explore and more.

Work continues at the site of a new pool for Ripon. The facility will be a great addition to the city and help keep residents fit, active and well.



Above: New pool at Ripon



Above: Station Gateway project (artist's impression)

A sustainable environment

We have secured major investment through the public sector decarbonisation scheme for the Hydro.

The Hydro has been awarded £1.8 million and is expected to reduce CO₂ emissions by 577 tonnes a year.

During 20/21 we recycled 44.2% of household waste, this is down slightly from the previous year's figure of 44.5%, but broadly similar. This has been affected by the various lockdowns throughout the year as domestic waste increased at the expense of businesses and workplaces due to closures.

Work has continued on our ultra-low emissions vehicles strategy. The first phase implementation plan for the roll-out of EV charging points has been approved by Cabinet. Charging points are being implemented as part of the Ripon Pool and Phoenix Business Park developments that complement the EVCPs at the Civic Centre and Conyngham Hall Business Centre.

Early on in the year, Council adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and it came into force in October 2020. The CIL is a standard, non-negotiable charge which applies to developments where there is a net increase of 100 square metre of floor space or the creation of one or more dwellings. The CIL will help to fund the infrastructure needed for sustainable growth.



Above: High Street reopening 'Shop Local Shop Safe' campaign

Our town centres are going to be key to recovering from the pandemic. A wide range of projects are ongoing to support this and are linked to our Economic Recovery Plan. This includes a range of initiatives linked to reopening the High Street Safely and maximising the economic use of open spaces as well as specific town centre projects such as the Transforming Cities Fund, refurbishment of Knaresborough High Street shops and progression of the Ripon Renewal project. Town centres will remain a key focus in 2021/22.



Above: EV charging point at Phoenix Business Centre

Supporting our communities

We provided 363 affordable homes across the district in 2020/21. A selection of these are pictured below.



Spence Croft, Angram



Poppyfields, Summerbridge



Jessamine Terrace, Spofforth



Church View, Dacre Banks



Springfield Cottage, Boroughbridge

This was an improvement in the previous year at 345. This was a particularly strong result as house building was significantly disrupted in the earlier lockdowns meaning we were slightly behind target in the first part of the year. We have supported builders to take advantage of the 'pent-up' demand following lockdown and the stamp duty holiday.

We have been proactive in ensuring homes in the district are not empty for long periods of time. In March 2019 there were 95 properties that were empty for more than five years. In March 2021, this figure was 72, a reduction of 25%. From April 2021, Council tax on properties that are empty for more than 10 years will increase to 400%. This is adding a further deterrent for keeping homes empty.

We have finished the construction of new 19-bed temporary accommodation at Spa Lane in Harrogate. Fern House is now up and running and already making a positive impact to the most vulnerable in the community. It is high quality accommodation and is saving tax payer money as it is cheaper than using expensive bed and breakfasts or hotels.



Above: Fern House temporary accommodation - opened April 2021



Above: Brimhams Active Strategy Launch Event - Sept 2021

Our Sport and Leisure service has been closed for a large part of the year, and when we have been able to reopen we have adhered to social distancing guidance therefore numbers are limited.

Significant progress has been made this year on our new operating model for Sport and Leisure including the Little Explorers nursery and the Turkish Baths. These services are now provided by local authority controlled company, Brimhams Active. In its ambitious new strategy, Brimhams Active aims to transform from a conventional leisure service to become a community health and wellbeing company.

Excellent public services

We are always looking at making our services more commercial to provide the best value for the tax payer.



Above: Horticultural Nursery - summer plant sale

Like any commercial venture, our traded services were hit by the lockdowns. However we have had some great successes this year. In particular, the horticultural nursery at Harlow Moor has had a very successful year, soundly beating its income targets. The team has been innovative by offering more online services like delivery and click and collect giving customers more choice.

As the pandemic has changed the way people access services our website has remained highly ranked within the UK Local Government Index. It has been in the top 10 in the country all year. Customer contact through online channels has increased by 26.4% since last year from 96,021 last year to 121,392 this year. As a proportion of total customer contacts with the council, online contact was 39.3% up from 28.2% last year.



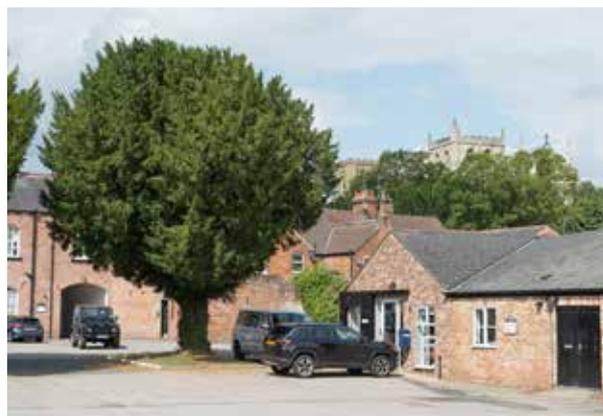
Like many across the country, hundreds of council staff who would have otherwise delivered services from the Civic Centre, have done so from their own homes. This was something nobody could have predicted, but some 500 office-based staff were enabled to work from home on a continuous basis to help ensure services continued to be delivered and projects progressed.

In July 2020, we received an invitation from government to submit proposals for the way that local government is organised in North Yorkshire. As part of a team effort among six of the seven district councils, we put together a bid to create two equal sized authorities in the East and West of North Yorkshire. Although our bid didn't win, we are looking forward to working with colleagues across North Yorkshire to make sure the new authority is a great success and continues to provide high quality services to residents.

We delivered our first socially distanced election for North Yorkshire's Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Our 2024 Transformation Programme has made great progress during 2020/21.

It is a diverse mix, from major capital investments and place making projects, to trading activities and business improvement.



Above: Phoenix Business Centre, Ripon

Sustainable Harrogate

In the Sustainable Harrogate workstream, the following has happened this year:

- HCC development plans are progressing well, with work to develop to RIBA Stage 4.
- For the Clothholme Urban Village at the former Ripon Barracks site, Homes England are reviewing feedback and updating proposals prior to them being put before the Planning Committee for consideration.
- Work has been undertaken to create more lettable units at Phoenix Business Park in Ripon, providing new and refurbished units for businesses to operate from.
- Work has begun on the Strategic Housing and Employment Sites that are in the council's ownership in order to develop masterplans about how these sites could be developed in the future.

Destination Harrogate

Destination Harrogate aims to make Harrogate a competitive destination for visitors. This year we have:

- Made significant progress in setting up a Destination Management Organisation (DMO). The brand identity has been developed and agreed. An events bureau strategy is also underway. The service has undergone a restructure and posts are now being recruited to.
- A longer term Events Strategy will be finalised and sent to Cabinet for approval in Spring 2022.

Digital Harrogate

The Digital Harrogate workstream focusses on improving technology and connectivity. Project updates include:

- Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) Programme - a supplier has been commissioned to deliver broadband to superfast speeds to the hardest to reach areas. 93% of the district can access superfast speeds with a further 3,000 premises planned in Phase 4. Around 35km of fibre has been laid in Harrogate and Knaresborough to connect public sector sites.
- The digital skills and inclusion project was accelerated with the launch of 'Get Digital'. There are now 28 external and 24 internal Champions signed up to access the resources that can be emailed or printed off to assist those who need help to do something digitally.

Commercial Harrogate

The Commercial Harrogate workstream focusses on making council services as sustainable as possible. Project updates include:

- Working around business closures, the Trade Waste service has continued to acquire new customers, exceeding their target of 155 new businesses for the year. Demand for a local trade waste service has remained strong and we continue to acquire new customers.



Above: Trade waste wagon



Above: Plants grown in recycled plastic trays at the Horticultural Nursery

- Commercial trials at the horticultural nursery continue to yield success. Income has increased to £153,477, 23.11% up on budget for the year, which was an increase of £36,977 from Q3. In Q1 21/22 the team will be introducing new environmentally friendly initiatives of recycled trays and pots, trials of 100% peat free compost and alternative growing methods, e.g. growing plants vertically in a hydroponic system in readiness for the summer sales starting in May.
- A planning pre-application has also been submitted for the proposed Pet Cremation Service with the intention for this new service to be operation later in the year.



Above: Turkish Baths

- The Turkish Baths was closed for much of the year but has reopened, and is now fully open for both treatments and Turkish Baths.

Covid-19 Response

It's been more than a year that the world has been dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Public sector organisations across the country have provided key lifelines for citizens and businesses alike.

Here's how we've contributed to that response:

Supporting our businesses

- Linked together organisations that needed support with businesses.
- Directly lobbied government for additional support to businesses where there are gaps.
- Over £77 million was paid out to local business in support grants across 13,631 successful grant applications.
- Three months free rent to 85 of our direct commercial property tenants equating to £197,000.
- Over 5,000 'Operating your premises safely' business toolkit downloads.
- 30 editions of our business e-newsletter to over 3,000 subscribers.
- Three district-wide #ShopLocalShopSafe campaigns supporting the reopening of our high streets after each lock down which included radio advertising, social media films, outdoor advertising and planters in parking bays which promoted safe shopping messages.
- Carried out 1249 proactive Covid-19 Compliance checks undertaken by Environmental Health.
- Supporting Place and infrastructure by:
 - Deploying 17 hand sanitising stations.
 - Granting around 30 pavement licenses.
 - Social distancing supporting measures in place to support a safe return to high streets.
 - Working with partners in the Outdoor Spaces Group.
 - Conducting a HBC Developer/ Agent survey to better understand the impact of Covid-19 on the development industry.



Above: Safe return to the High Street 'Shop Local Shop Safe' campaign



Supporting our communities

- Included regular updates about Covid-19 support and council service changes on our website and promoted through social media, including additional special Covid-19 focused editions of our Residents' News newsletter which has 48,000 subscribers.
- Delivered 34,729 information leaflets to priority areas and tailored to locations.
- Posted 3,700 support information updates to our tenants with calls to each one to identify any needs and some now receive regular welfare checks.
- Daily and weekly calls were made to the community centre users such as those who attend lunch clubs, exercise classes and outreach groups to check on their wellbeing.
- Online wellbeing classes delivered such as fitness/ exercise and food nutrition/ cook and eat classes delivered and accessed by hundreds of residents a week.
- An average of 1,500 welfare calls a week in the first lockdown and just under 4,000 calls were made in the third lockdown by a team of redeployed HBC staff

- The Revenues and welfare team had supported 341 customers to access £469.2k of additional benefit income
- There had been 314 applications for the £500 Test and Trace Support payments totalling £157,000.

Nightingale Hospital Yorkshire and Humber

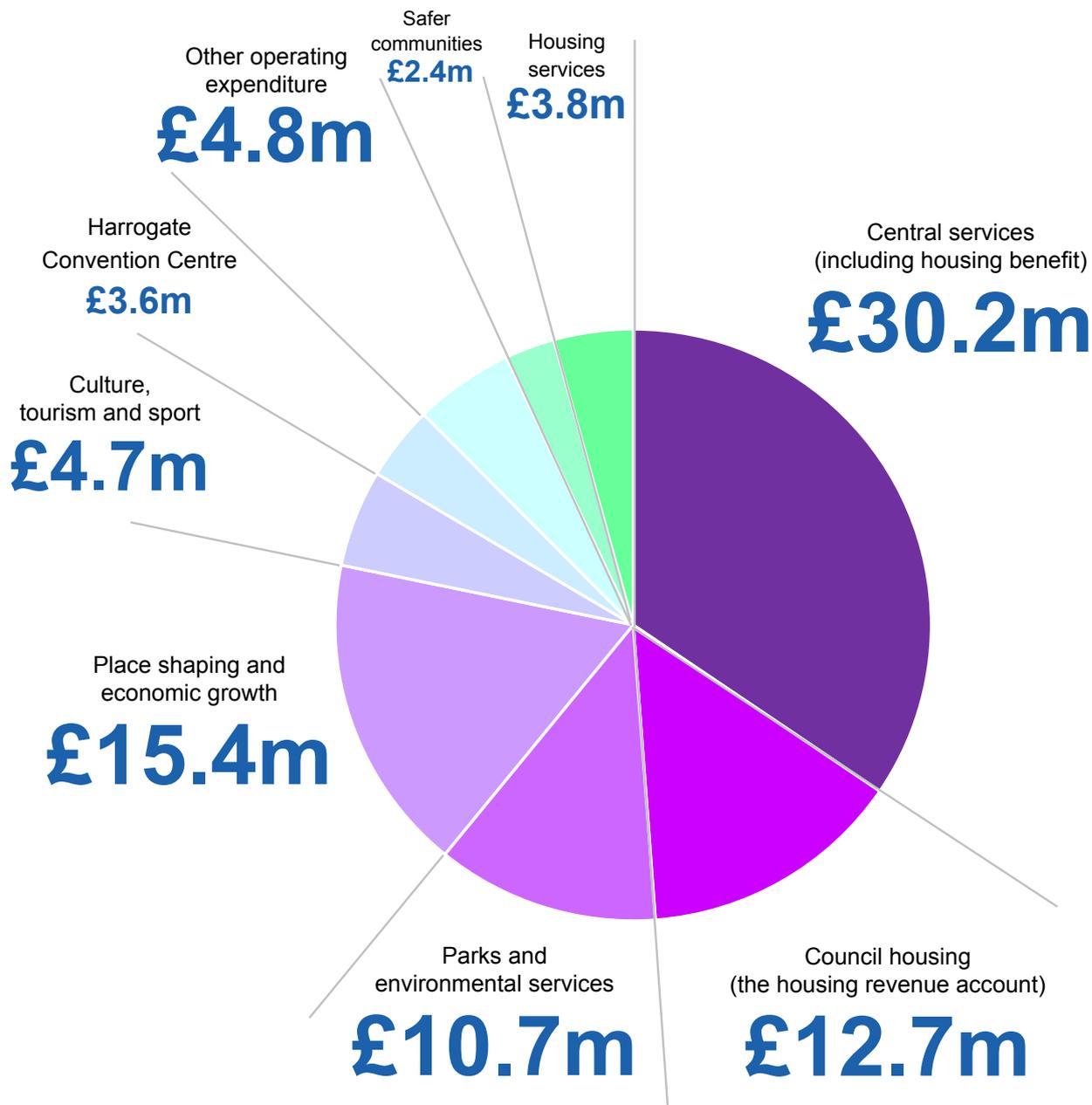
- Colleagues from the Convention Centre, Property Services, Estates and ICT helped ensure that the handover was completed on time so the hospital could be ready for use.
- 500 additional critical care beds were provided for the region
- Luckily the Nightingale never needed to see active duty and colleagues from across the council were involved in converting it back into use for events.



Above: Nightingale Hospital at the Convention Centre

Financial information

Where we spent your money:



Central services

Expenditure on housing benefit and the council's back-office functions such as ICT, HR, legal, finance, organisational development, property, customer services, elections, democratic services, communications and engagement.

Culture, tourism and sport

Swimming pools, leisure centres, the Royal Pump House Museum and Mercer art gallery.

Safer communities

Community safety, CCTV, licensing, food safety, environmental protection and car parking.

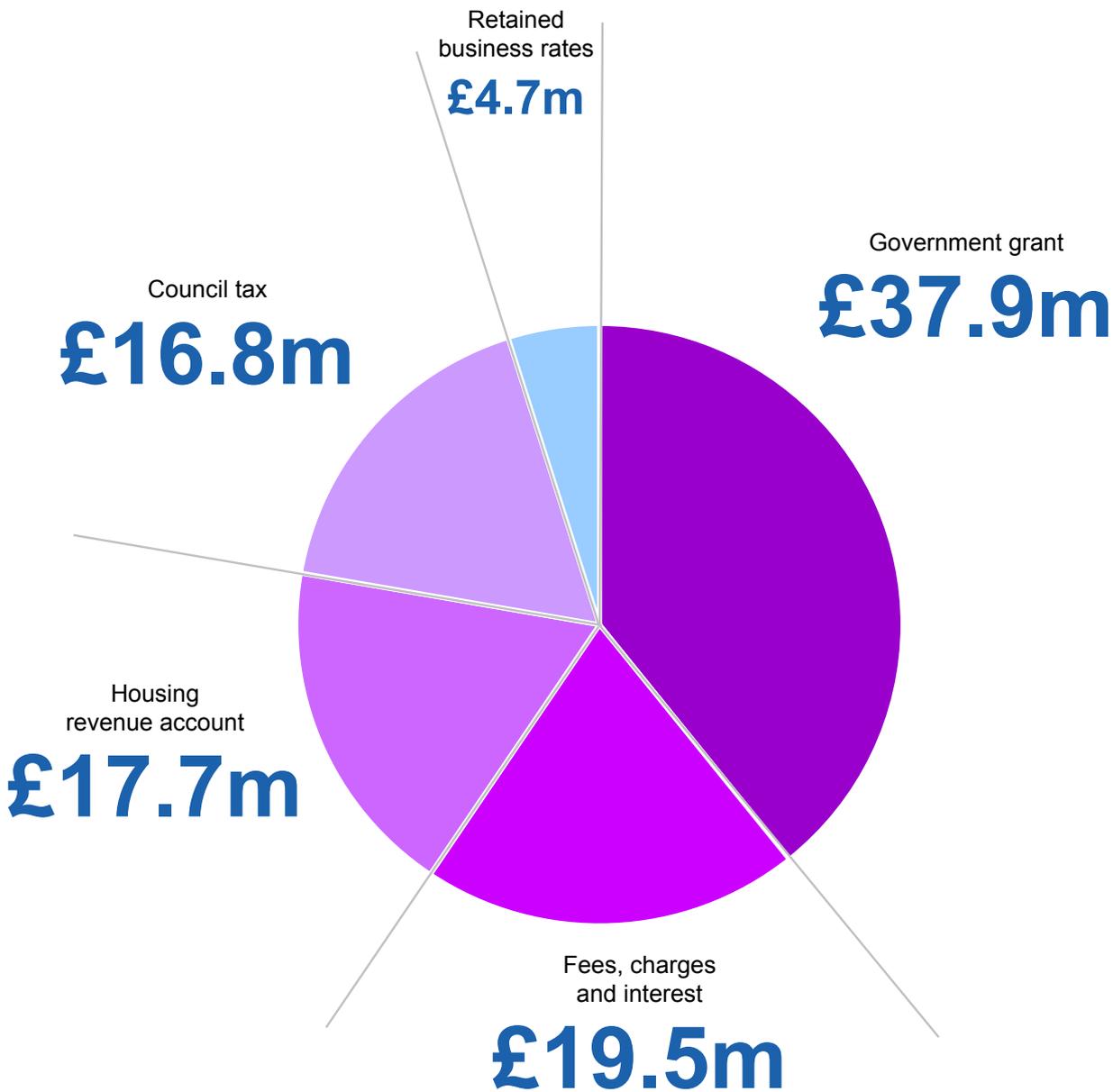
Place shaping and economic growth

Development and building control, economic development and building maintenance.

Council housing

Expenditure relating to the council's own housing stock and tenants.

Where the money comes from:



Housing services

Housing services provided to non-council tenants, the homelessness team, housing advice and housing improvement grants.

Parks and environmental services

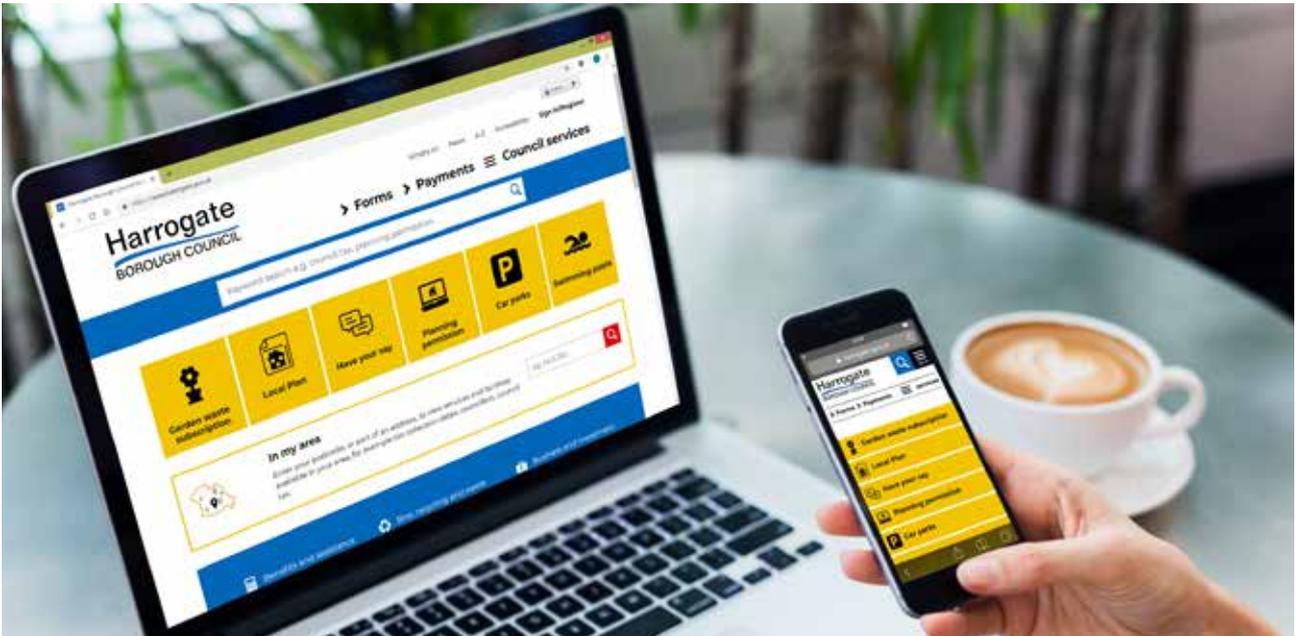
Parks and open spaces, waste collection, recycling, cemeteries and crematorium, street cleaning and pest control.

Harrogate Convention Centre

Services relating to the convention centre.

Other operating expenditure

Cost of interest, precept and grant money paid to parish councils and HBC's contribution to the government's housing capital receipts pool.



Above (left to right):
Harrogate Stray
Masham Market Place
Boroughbridge
Pateley Bridge High Street
Ripon Market Place
Knaresborough Waterside