

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Scrutiny Committee
9 July 2015

Subject: ANNUAL REVIEW 2014/15 – HAMBLETON HIGHLIGHTS

All Wards

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Council's performance and achievements during 2014/15.
- 1.2 Attached at Annex A is the Annual Review 2014/15 – Hambleton Highlights – which provides an update on the successful progress that has been made against the Council's key priorities.
- 1.3 This is a review of Hambleton District Council's 2014/15 year and provides information across all service areas.

2.0 MONITORING PERFORMANCE

- 2.1 Performance for 2014/15 has been closely monitored on a quarterly basis with the support of Heads of Services and Service Managers. This framework is well-established and successfully operates a rigorous quarterly performance monitoring regime. In addition, performance of the Council is challenged via quarterly reporting to Management Team, Performance Boards and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.2 A thorough review of performance indicators was undertaken by all services for 2014/15 to ensure the most meaningful and measurable targets were used to accurately illustrate progress towards the priorities outlined in the Council Plan. As a result, the Council was assured that performance was properly monitored, managed and actions were put in place to achieve its priorities.
- 2.3 When designing indicators and determining the target levels of performance to achieve, the following was taken into account:
 - The impact of service delivery on customers and residents
 - The financial implications and financial settlement in 2014/15
 - The economic climate and likely demand for services
 - The council plan and matters arising from its review, performance monitoring, risks and strategic direction
- 2.4 By following progress towards these targets, using carefully designed indicators, the Council is able to make informed decisions to support its priorities as detailed in this 2014/15 Annual Review.
- 2.5 The Annual Review provides information across the five priority areas, as listed below; it also details the year ahead and completes with a snapshot of performance statistics. Five priority areas:

- Providing Customer Excellence
- Driving Economic Development
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing
- Improving Waste and Recycling
- Delivering Services for a Changing Population

3.0 CONCLUSION:

3.1 The Annual Review 2014/15 – Hambleton Highlights – shows performance for the year 2014/15 and gives a strong platform for further development towards the Council Plan 2015-19 and shows the Council continues to strive to achieve for the community.

4.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

4.1 This report demonstrates the monitoring of performance against the Council Plan key priorities for the year 2014/15 and provides an overview of Hambleton District Council performance to deliver local outcomes.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION:

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the Annual Review report for 2014/15 performance to deliver services to the community and it is accepted.

JUSTIN IVES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Background papers: Hambleton District Council (HDC) Plan 2014/15
HDC Economic Strategy 2014-24
HDC press / media releases
HDC website
HDC Quarterly Board and Cabinet Reports, Service Plans
Insight 2014-15
Business Roundup Feb / April 2015
Public Health England Health Report July 2014
www.pwc.co.uk/the State we're in

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HAMBLETON

DISTRICT COUNCIL

Hambleton

Highlights

ANNUAL REVIEW

2014-15

THE HAMBLETON YEAR IN REVIEW

The Annual Review gives an overview of how Hambleton District Council ('HDC', 'the Council') performed during the 2014/15 financial year, summarising our progress and highlighting significant local outcomes.

As we look back at how far we've come this year, it's also a good time to assess where we are now and what lies ahead for the coming year in Hambleton.

Our Vision

Hambleton - a place to grow, be happy, be healthy, be prosperous

A quick look at some of the features of Hambleton life reminds us of the unique mix of characteristics we often take for granted, that make this region such a lovely place in which to live, work and holiday.

Lifestyle

- named after the Hambleton Hills, nestled in the heart of rural Yorkshire between the Moors and the Dales National Parks, a wonderful living, working and holiday environment
- covers 506 square miles, of which 485 square miles are green space
- a total population of 89,600, with a density of just 180 people per square mile - compare this with Scarborough with 340 or Greater London with 13,870 per square mile.
- above average health and life expectancy, below average deprivation

Business

- excellent rail and road transport links
- accommodation, food services manufacturing & distribution networks
- forestry & fishing opportunities
- established food & drink manufacturing

Economy

- booming rural economy of £1.54bn
- 54,800 working age population with low unemployment at 5%
- 3,650 enterprises in 31 different employment sectors
- some major employers and a strong self-employed and micro-business base

Meeting the Challenge

In common with other authorities HDC experienced a period of considerable change during 2014/15 as we addressed the complexity of the challenges brought about by a shift towards greater local authority responsibilities, within a difficult economic climate.

Irrespective of these considerations however, our citizens continue to need co-ordinated services which remains our focus. Our unique rural location and particular local advantages provide a more solid base on which to build and develop than many other regions.

Recognising that, to achieve continued growth we must do things differently, we looked beyond traditional boundaries for smarter, more efficient ways to deliver the services our community needs. We began with a wide-ranging operational restructure which reshaped the organisation, achieving significant savings.

<p>Restructure</p> <p>Reshaping the organisation has helped to deliver significant cost savings this year, and into the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieved cost savings £500,000 ▪ Business Rates Pool £174,000 ▪ Reduce Councillors from 44 to 28
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Council also took the opportunity to refresh its Business Plan for the 2014/15 year, carefully balancing streamlined resources to focus on outcomes that meet the needs of the Hambleton community. As we redesigned our operations, so we reviewed the way we work, developing a strategy to deliver.

<p>Priorities</p> <p>Operational priorities were identified in order to achieve our vision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing Customer Excellence ▪ Driving Economic Development ▪ Promoting Health and Wellbeing ▪ Improving Waste and Recycling ▪ Delivering Services for a Changing Population
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A review of these priority areas below will illustrate what we've managed to achieve during the year.

CUSTOMER EXCELLENCE

At Hambleton we put our customers first. The facilities we provide, the staff we employ, the programmes and initiatives we run are all designed with a single aim: to give our customers the best possible quality, value for money services.

The Customer Service Unit (CSU) based at Civic Centre also manages our satellite centres in Stokesley and at Easingwold, helping a considerable number of our residents every day.

Personal customers visiting us this year totalled **55,273** and our contact centre took **88,244** telephone calls. July saw a new peak with 9,547 telephone calls through our main contact centre in that single month.

Our Customer Service Strategy ensures we listen to our customers, whether individual residents or local businesses, always with fairness, equality and respect.

We do our absolute best to keep you waiting as little as possible, we wear name badges so you know who you've been speaking with, and we offer a wide range of written information in various formats. If we can't help you then we try to find someone who can.

All this is fundamental to the way we operate at Hambleton but we also ask for your feedback to help us know whether we're getting it right, or if we could do a little better.

Satisfied Customers

All callers are offered the opportunity to leave feedback and Civic Centre visitors are encouraged to use the touch panel in the foyer. Your comments are forwarded to our service managers and often provide helpful suggestions for service improvements.

During 2014/15 a total of 15,851 customers provided feedback with **90% face to face** and **99% telephone** customers rating the service at the highest level, keeping customer satisfaction levels at HDC consistently high.

As well as this, the GovMetric system records feedback ratings from over 70 authorities and our customer services has appeared in the 'face to face' sector top five, 16 times since July 2013 and the top ten on 18 occasions for our telephone service.

New website

The customer experience is at the heart of everything we do at HDC, and a major part of this involves providing information. Our website received some **871,426 page views** this year and, responding to rising customer expectations and technological advances, we are in the process of overhauling this valuable resource.

A new website is being designed to provide residents with instant access to the information and guidance they need in a clear, easy to navigate design.

The new site will be launched in July 2015 offering a range of eForms, increasing electronic payment options, embedded maps of such useful data as air quality monitoring, listed buildings, licensed boarding establishments and a host of other useful information.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic downturn was brought into sharp focus locally with the closure of some large employers such as HM Prison and the Rural Payments Agency as well as continuing job cuts at NYCC all of which directly affect Northallerton in particular, and the wider district generally.

To help redress these pressures one of the Council's key focus areas this year has been introducing a number of measures to give the authority a more 'business friendly' approach, determined to build strong relationships with our businesses and ensure our market towns and rural areas thrive.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

HDC initiated and invested in some major projects during the year to support growth in the region through a programme of sustained development.

Major Cash Injection

Demonstrating its commitment to economic growth and regeneration, the Council has earmarked a massive **£10 million** to boost the future economy of Hambleton over the next 10 years. These funds will be invested into the district as part of plans to help existing businesses, bring in new organisations and reduce unemployment levels.

Economic Strategy

This investment will also support the delivery of the authority's new 'Hambleton – a place to grow' economic strategy, adopted in December 2014. The strategy is the result of a lengthy independent study commissioned to establish what is needed to sustain the area's economic future, combined with extensive consultation with local businesses, the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership, the Federation of Small Businesses and local community groups.

Focusing on the next 10 years, the economic strategy targets current business activity to evolve the market towns, boost rural businesses and invest in the infrastructure needed to make this happen. Boosting businesses in this way will also generate more house building and leisure needs.

Projects will include a new railway bridge for Northallerton, new car park in Bedale and a road bridge for Dalton, as well as the redevelopment of central Northallerton and a local plan for each of our market towns.

The amount of money needed to undertake such major schemes is considerable and Council is also actively engaged in accessing the wide range of grants and external funding schemes to further ensure delivery of these and other projects.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding

Hambleton is introducing the new government system for raising funds to create the required infrastructure that comes with new developments.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charged on new buildings and extensions from 1 April 2015 will help pay for infrastructure improvements such as roads, parks and health provision necessary to support the new developments.

Local Development Plan

The Local Development Framework or LDF is the regional spatial planning strategy for which HDC is responsible. A selective review of the LDF was completed this year and we

developed revised supplementary planning documents on Affordable Housing, Housing and Sustainable Development and the Size, Type and Tenure for new properties.

The Council is proceeding with the full review and is evaluating the scope and resources needed to achieve this.

Market Towns

Our market towns are a particular emphasis for us as they form the hub of their own part of Hambleton, and we're especially pleased to have been involved in some important developments this year:

- **Bedale** is celebrating the revamp of its leisure centre; improvements included refurbished changing rooms and a new pool filtration system.
- **Easingwold** now has free wi-fi available in the market place thanks to the involvement of local business, tourist information centre, the Town Council and an investment of £1,500 from HDC to install the equipment.
- **Northallerton** gained a new station platform thanks to the Wensleydale Railway Association and a £40,000 HDG grant. The railway takes commuters and visitors between the town and the Dales and links with main line services.
- **Stokesley** hosted the inaugural Business Network meeting covering free wi-fi for the town and closer working with Darlington college and Teesside University.
- **Thirsk** businesses on the Industrial Park have received a higher profile thanks to a new bespoke website

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Whilst driving growth through a strong programme of business engagement, HDC also helps local businesses thrive by funding apprenticeships and internships, running business networking and information workshops and improving employment opportunities.

Business Centres

HDC manages three business centres to help local businesses get off the ground and thrive.

Evolution Business Centre in Northallerton offers a combination of modern flexible office spaces for new and young businesses, with state of the art conference and meeting rooms and access to a range of on-site support services. The centre can cater for groups of all sizes to meet the needs of a business at whatever stage – be it a new start-up or a growing business demanding larger premises. Facilities are available for hire to both tenants and non-tenants, and virtual office services are available for businesses not quite ready to move into permanent premises.

Springboard Business Centre in Stokesley also welcomes new and young businesses, primarily in the high tech, creative and knowledge based sectors offering fully serviced office space, virtual offices, meeting rooms and more.

Momentum is located adjacent to Springboard and offers high spec office accommodation for lease. Suites vary in size and each has its own toilet and kitchen facilities.

Business Networks

The Council connects directly with people actively engaged in running local businesses through a dynamic programme of events throughout the year.

- **Lunch & Learn:** regular lunches with a speaker on topics offering practical advice in a relaxed networking environment. Some 115 people attended

sessions this year on such varied topics as HR, employment law and working with social media.

- **Strategic Business Forum Conference:** three keynote speakers addressed a diverse range of exhibitors including Jobcentre Plus, Swale Home Improvement Agency and the World of James Herriot.
- **First Monday Network Group:** an informal network of local businesses meets in Northallerton on the first Monday of every month. HDC supported the initiative by hosting the November event at Evolution Business Centre.

Apprenticeships and Internships

To be successful, businesses need skilled staff which is another vital area that the Council supports financially through two initiatives:

- **Graduate funding programme:** HDC has committed £50k a year for three years in a scheme with Teesside University to support up to 15 graduates a year to find jobs. Businesses grants of up to **£5,000** are available for small to medium sized businesses to use independently, or alongside Teesside University's graduate programme which can provide an additional £3,999. Funds can be used to extend the period of support for graduates and essential equipment.

Since its launch the scheme has supported 17 businesses potentially leading to the appointment of 22 graduates. The first successful graduate was appointed in March 2015.

- **Apprenticeship funding:** our 'Changing Lives Building Business' initiative in conjunction with the Job Centre and National Apprentice Scheme, helps small local businesses take on apprentices. The **£2,000** grant is for 16- 24 year olds living in Hambleton, with supporting funds for essential tools or training.

This year, 30 apprentices were hired and 44 businesses approved for grant funding.

Local Enterprise Partnership

The Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) offers grants up to £1m for businesses looking to grow and create jobs. Working with the partnership to identify suitable applicants, Hambleton benefitted from a grant of **£1,311,198**, the highest amount in the area, and also the most jobs created at 145.

Business Awards

An innovative Business Awards scheme was launched this year to showcase and celebrate the range and diversity of businesses in the area. Residents were invited to nominate a business or individual worthy of recognition and awards were presented in nine categories: Apprenticeship Champion, Community Contribution, Local is Best, Innovation, Supporting Entrepreneurs, Engaging Young Minds, Hambleton Champion, Learning & Development and Best Dressed Windows.

Business Roundup

Launched in February 2015 this new bi-monthly publication aimed exclusively at the Hambleton business community will keep local firms abreast of new opportunities and funding streams, as well as the authority's plans to support economic growth in the district. The newsletter will be published by email and on the Council's website for easy accessibility by the whole community. Residents are invited to contact the council to join the mailing list or submit articles for inclusion in future editions.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Council is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of people in our community with a broad range of initiatives and activities at our leisure centres, and through a dynamic platform of community programmes.

LEISURE CENTRES

As well as being aimed at the general community, some programmes are tailored to particular groups such as younger people, 60+ age range, those with disabilities or specific health concerns, or who live in a specific area or neighbourhood.

Quest for Success

Hambleton's four leisure centres in Northallerton, Stokesley, Bedale and Thirsk received the seal of approval from Sport England's national quality scheme – Quest. This is the UK quality scheme for sport and leisure that defines industry standards and a great way to demonstrate the quality of our leisure centres.

Assessed against the 'Quest Plus' upgrade criteria, Bedale, Hambleton and Stokesley leisure centres were all rated as 'good'.

Thirsk & Sowerby leisure centre joined an elite group of just 10% of centres nationwide rated 'excellent', a fantastic achievement.

Take That Step

Launched in June, this new lifestyle service offers district residents age 18+ and referred by a health professional, access to a tailor-made programme of exercise & lifestyle workshops.

The programme is free to individuals who commit to the 12-week programme and attend follow-up 6 and 12 month assessments. Since its launch, the scheme has proved extraordinarily successful with over 300 residents being referred and will continue into next year.

Learn2

Our leisure centres have introduced the 'Learn2' course management system enabling swim teachers to record student progress poolside. As the scheme is rolled out parents will also be able to instantly access the information online to help them see how their children are progressing.

Bike Ability

Hambleton Leisure Centre hosted this hugely successful event on the astro turf pitch to encourage involvement in physical activity for those with disabilities, 55 people aged from 6 to 70 came along, some with their own bikes, others taking advantage of the variety of adapted bikes provided including recumbent, hand cranks, tricycles & wheelchair transporters. The BBQ afterwards supplied by Breathing Space and Mencap was a great chance to socialise and relax after a hard day's cycling.

Multi Sports Club

A new course of sports sessions aimed at encouraging disabled people to become more physically active, meets every week offering a variety of sports for all ages and abilities. Activities include kwik cricket, boccia, dodge ball and as special multi-sport challenge! All sessions are wheelchair friendly and parents, carers and guardians are welcome to attend.

COMMUNITY COHESION

A crucial part of our role in providing essential services is to promote and support cohesive community activities. We do this by initiating and funding a broad range of activities, programmes and events.

Grants & Funding

Community and voluntary groups across Hambleton have been encouraged to take advantage of the Council's Investing in Community grant scheme, and the Community Grants programme.

'Investing in Community' offers two distinct capital funding strands: 'Supporting Area Action' offering up to £3,000 towards local projects and the 'Asset Transfer' fund assists community organisations to manage non-operational assets such as play areas and historic monuments.

The Community Grants programme offers up to £5k for projects that help the Council meet its priorities.

Some of the community projects we've helped this year include:

- Kildale – refurbished memorial shelter
- Husthwaite – village hall black-out blinds
- Stroke Forward – Northallerton based volunteer support group
- Wheels 2 Work – helps young people access work and learning opportunities
- Hambleton Strollers – 'walking to health' initiative
- Community Car Schemes in Bedale, Easingwold, Northallerton, Stokesley & Thirsk
- Community Care Associations in Easingwold, Stokesley and Thirsk
- Hutton Rudby Playgroup – wooden fort and slide

Community Awards

The second HDC Community Awards celebrated local unsung heroes at a ceremony in March hosted by Star Radio's Antony Collins. Awards were made in ten categories including: Services to Young People, Older People and those with Disability, Arts & Culture, Green and Environmental, Community Project, Community Group, Young Citizen, Citizen of the year.

Tom Maddison was voted the Peter Davison Community Champion of the Year, still running errands and helping friends and neighbours in Great Ayton at 82 years of age.

Tour de Yorkshire

In July 2014, Hambleton leapt to the forefront of global affairs as the world's biggest sporting event came to Yorkshire. The 101st Tour de France ran two stages of its Grand Depart over 5th and 6th July, the first covering 190km of countryside and passing through the tiny Hambleton village of West Tanfield.

In the preceding months the whole district was immersed in preparations to mark the largest single event ever to visit the region. HDC ran a series of 'Countdown' cycling related challenges, hosted five 'Sky Rides' along the routes, and worked closely with the West Tanfield Fund setup to organise the community for the big day.

The famous 'caravan' of around 250 promoters' vehicles complete with their own radio technicians, breakdown and medical crew and six elite gendarmerie motorcyclists rode through the tiny village first, followed by 198 riders from 22 cycling teams travelling at incredible speeds.

Blessed with glorious sunshine around 3.5 million people lined the route across the two days. West Tanfield, population 532, welcomed 12,000 people to a massive party with acres of bunting, hot air balloons, funfair, big screens and events.

Acting as event co-ordinator our team of 27 staff and volunteers managed emergency planning, security, first aid and we even provided vehicles with street cleaners to sweep the race road in the early morning and clean up afterwards, making sure the day passed without incident.

Making the day even more special the astonished crowds were treated to a surprise Royal visit as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry dropped in to the village, spending an hour talking to people, meeting local children and astonished visitors.

Acting as 'event co-ordinator', our team of 27 staff and volunteers managed emergency planning, security, first aid and we even provided vehicles with street cleaners to sweep the race road in the early morning and clean up afterwards, making sure the day passed without incident.

A uniquely memorable occasion for everyone involved, and a priceless snapshot of our beautiful home for the 3.5 billion viewers watching around the world.

WASTE, RECYCLING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Our Waste and Street Scene service encompasses all aspect of household waste collection, recycling, street cleansing and environmental health services.

WASTE SERVICES

A less glamorous but equally essential part of our service to the community is providing an efficient waste collection service which meets residents' needs and encourages recycling.

The existing recycling contract ends in January 2016 and we have taken this opportunity for a major review of how we carry out household waste and recycling. A new strategy is in development encompassing:

- consultation to ensure we have a service that improves the service to our customers
- a review of waste collection rounds and the kerbside recycling service
- procurement of improved waste vehicles

Kerbside Collections

To ensure the service will be fit for the future, our review will not only look at the existing collection rounds but will also take into account the planned development of new homes in the district. The scale of the operation is illustrated by the number of bins collected which this year rose to **57,700 each week** and will inevitably keep rising.

Recycling

HDC actively promotes recycling with over **6,000 tonnes** of recycled household waste collected this year. The waste services review includes a close look at the materials we collect, the vehicles used to collect it, the containers we provide and ways to make it easier to recycle.

Residents are encouraged to recycle at every opportunity – even whilst visiting the gym! New recycling bins for cans and plastic bottles were placed outside the leisure centres in Northallerton, Bedale, Thirsk and Stokesley.

Home Composting

HDC is part of the North Yorkshire Waste Partnership and offers subsidised low cost bins, in two sizes, to encourage home composting. 90 Hambleton residents took advantage of this offer during the year.

We also ran a competition to win one of four 'green johanna' garden composters – with a difference. Worth over £100 the device not only accepts traditional garden waste but also cooked and uncooked food including dairy produce, vegetable peelings, bread, meat and even bones.

In total we composted over **10,000 tonnes** of waste during the year.

Fly-tipping

Ever wondered what our crews get up to during the winter months when green waste collections are suspended? Well this year they tackled a growing amount of waste littering roadsides across the district. The verges and laybys were cleared of an astonishing **900 sacks** of rubbish, not to mention mattresses, TV sets, settees, vehicle parts and tyres.

Known as fly-tipping, this type of littering not only pollutes the countryside but costs a considerable amount to clear away. HDC is determined to crack down on fly-tipping and asks residents to help by calling us with information on incidents they come across.

There is never any need to dump unwanted items on the roadside as we offer special collections for large items and there are 20 recycling centres located throughout the district.

Dog Warden

The Council employs a dog warden who deals with lost and found dogs, noisy dogs and dog fouling.

The warden responds to reports of stray dogs during working hours, and aims to reunite it with its owner. Dangerous dogs must be reported to the Police.

The dedicated warden also patrols the district working with local communities as part of a **£40,000** purge on dog fouling hotspots. Incidents of dog fouling are one of the top complaints we receive from members of the public. The service had been outsourced but bringing it back in house we hope to see an increase in fines imposed and consequent decrease in complaints.

Dog waste bins are provided throughout the district and owners failing to clean up after their pet are guilty of an offence which attracts a fixed penalty of £50.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

This part of our work aims to maximise the protection of people's health and the prevention of ill effects of the environment. We involve our customers in order to understand their needs, listening to and incorporating their views on a vast range of issues from reviewing planning applications, animal welfare licensing, private water supplies, traveller caravans, taxi and late night alcohol licensing, to pest control, food hygiene inspections, local air quality control, and cosmetic piercing hygiene.

Our team of officers also provide guidance and information for residents on issues such as smoke and alcohol consumption, and indoor air pollution. Some developments during the year include:

- Northallerton late-night takeaway owner fined £2,000 for running his business without a license
- Private Water Supplies open day for residents and businesses addressed over 150 people at Thirsk Auction Mart with presentations by Public Health England, Drink Water Inspectorate and HDC.
- Gained grants to help fund specific services such as coaching to help businesses improve their higher food hygiene rating
- Advised farmers on open storage of animal fertiliser to reduce fly infestations in rural areas
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) advice to help tenants make informed decisions before choosing a property to rent.

SERVICES FOR A CHANGING POPULATION

Working closely with our citizens, particularly during times of austerity, allows the Council to fine-tune and prioritise services based on actual needs.

In this way, emerging trends such as the ageing population and increased life expectancy lead to recognition of the role of older people and their important, yet often invisible, contributions to society – from caring for grandchildren to mentoring future business leaders.

Demographic projections also show an increasingly diverse constituency, especially among the younger generation. Council is ready and able to include these new citizens and voices in the fabric of our society.

Communication

Not only must our services be targeted to community needs, but the community must be able to access those services. We constantly review the range of access opportunities we provide to ensure choice, speed, ease and convenience through clear, easy to understand information on a large range of issues, made available in a variety of formats including other languages, large print, braille and audio tape.

We have invested in a new website, due to launch in July 2015, with a revitalised appearance and refreshed content including a suite of eForms and electronic payment options. Work is ongoing as part of our continuous improvement programme for customer excellence and we hope residents will find the website an increasingly valuable interactive tool.

Fraud Campaign

The Council's stance on fraud is simple: we will not tolerate people who take money away from those who really need it. No matter what the circumstances, we will not tolerate fraud.

The Council is required by law to protect the public funds it administers and may share information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds, in order to prevent and detect fraud. Through a data matching exercise in conjunction with the Audit Commission, comparing computer records allows potentially fraudulent claims and payments to be identified. The use of data by the Audit Commission in this way is carried out with statutory authority and so does not require the consent of the individuals concerned.

HDC also strongly encourages members of the community to report fraudulent benefit claimants, which can be done anonymously.

We had some major victories in this year's anti-fraud campaign, three of particular note:

- A Northallerton woman received **£18,121.69** in Housing and Council Tax benefits from HDC and Job Seekers Allowance and Income Support from the department for Work and Pensions (DWP) after dishonestly failing to notify that her husband had move back in with her. Pleading guilty, the offender was ordered to complete 150 hours of unpaid work and to pay £85 costs and £60 victim surcharge.
- The Crown Court granted a Proceeds of Crime "hidden assets" Order against an individual we convicted of housing and council tax benefit fraud totalling **£4,802.35**. During the period of the claim the Bedale resident received £209,000 in an undeclared bank account, which he withdrew in cash lump sums and then claimed he could not repay the benefit when his fraud was being investigated. At the hearing, the Crown Court found the customer has hidden assets and must repay the overpayment to HDC. Failure to do so in the set time period will result in an automatic custodial sentence.

- A Brompton man was imprisoned for 18 months after pleaded guilty to obtaining **£49,905.85** in benefits he was not entitled to. The criminal investigation into his affairs uncovered considerable realisable assets which were confiscated under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The Court ordered that from a total of £88,733.91, after repayment of benefits to HDC, the remainder will be divided between the Council, Home Office, and Courts Service to fund further prevention, detection and investigation of crime in the local community.

Affordable Homes

A record number of affordable homes have been created in Hambleton over the past 12 months with the North Yorkshire Rural Housing Enabler Network and its partners delivering **27 new units** in two district communities.

At Lindon-on-Ouse, many years work has resulted in the Harrison View scheme of 20 two- and three-bedroom homes. Another seven two-bedroom homes have been built at Willow Bridge Lane in Dalton.

The rural housing programme has seen **430 new rural affordable homes** developed over the past four years.

The York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Housing Board have also approved a new Rural Housing Enabler programme to run 2015-18, funded by local authorities, North Yorkshire County Council and 14 Housing Association partners.

Warm, Healthy Homes

This initiative was launched to help residents with pre-existing medical conditions living in cold damp homes that put them at risk. The scheme helps to ensure they are able to heat their home to the recommended temperatures, affordably.

The scheme offers a home check to identify problems and suggest ways improvements can be made and paid for. Recommendations can also be made for exercise, quit smoking and healthy eating programmes to improve social interaction.

This winter we received **61 referrals** and helped some 20 homes.

Free Parking

The Council listened to concerns expressed by market traders, local business and visitors about the cost of parking in Northallerton. As a result, free parking was introduced in October when the one-hour fees at the 148 bay short-stay Applegarth carpark were abolished. The Council agreed to remove charges for the first hour, the second hour costing just 60p.

A total of **£51,000** was met from the Council's Economic Development Fund to cover the cost of providing free parking for the 6 months to the end of the financial year.

Free Electric Charging Points

HDC teamed up with Yorkshire Energy Partnership to offer free electric vehicle charging points for all residents with off-street parking.

The Government funded 'Electric Hambleton' scheme was available on a first-come first-served basis until 30 July 2014 and residents were encouraged to apply - even if they don't currently own an electric powered vehicle!

The charging point is the size of a shoe-box and can be fixed to an outside wall or garage, and would usually cost **£1,800** per point to install.

Working for the Community

Striving for excellence in the way we deliver services to our community remains at the heart of everything we do.

Our Staff

A skilled, enthusiastic workforce underlies and drives successful delivery of our services to the community. The Council values its staff highly and appreciates the importance of providing a supportive working environment in which to nurture and retain talented people.

The Council had 660 employees at the end of March 2015, comprising:

- 56.8% female employees, 43.2% male
- 34% or 224 full time staff
- 66% or 436 staff work flexible arrangements such as part time
- 2 apprentices
- an average age of 38 years
- 2.42% employees identify themselves as disabled

We operate equality in recruitment so every applicant who meets the essential post criteria is considered; ensuring candidates are engaged purely on their ability.

To further improve the workplace to attract and retain good people, the mandatory retirement age has been removed, many full time positions are also available on a part-time basis, parental leave and flexible working arrangements are offered, staff are protected from unlawful harassment, discrimination or victimisation and training, and professional development is strongly supported.

Fundraising

As well as working for the community in their usual jobs many of our staff are also very involved in charity fundraising through the year.

The last Friday of every month at Civic Centre is 'Wear Jeans to Work' day when staff bake and sell cakes, and pay a gold coin to dress casually. All the money raised is donated to a nominated charity which this year included Children in Need, Alzheimer's Society, the Royal British Legion, and British Heart Foundation, as well as some lesser known local groups such as Friends of Chernobyl's Children, Myaware and Brompton Juniors football club.

Our choir, Hambleton in Harmony, helped raise £340 for the Hambleton Foodshare project at Sainsbury's in Northallerton during December 2014. And officers took part in the Hambleton 'Bake Off' raising £180 for James Cook University Hospital oncology ward.

Some individual staff went even further – one Customer Services officer did 'Go Sober for October' in aid of Macmillan Cancer, and a Welfare officer ran the Great North Run for the charity Sense.

Dementia Awareness

Some of our staff became 'Dementia Friends' by attending one of a series of workshops run at Civic Centre by the local Dementia Friendly Communities leader, to raise awareness and understanding of this condition. Crucially, staff learned that dementia is particularly difficult to recognise, especially in its early stages, and the sufferer may be unaware themselves.

Whilst of particular importance for staff in public facing services, the authority also recognises the importance of taking such issues into consideration when designing and delivering services to residents who may be afflicted in this way.

A Working Group has been established and the Council has since signed up to the Dementia Action Alliance, to further our commitment to making a positive impact on our services.

The Hambleton Year Ahead

Some projects developed this year that we will begin or deliver during 2015/16 include:

- **Northallerton Prison Development** one of the largest and most exciting new developments to get under way next year will transform the former HM Prison site in central Northallerton. The ambitious plan incorporates the prison's five listed buildings and 3.5 acre site into a town centre development that will include a retail area, new homes, leisure facilities and a town square. The project will also bring opportunities for jobs in the construction industry to develop the site, and in the newly created businesses. Council have agreed to buy the redundant site paving the way for this important development project to get under way in the coming year.
- **Making a Difference Fund £125,000** has been reserved to support projects that will make a real difference to the lives of those living in the district, with £25,000 ring-fenced for each market town. Their elected councillors will recommend projects that show community involvement and a demonstrable need; a minimum of £2,500 is available per scheme which must be supported by a ward member and meet one of the Council's key priorities.
- **Bedale Hall Lift £3,000** from the HDC Investing in Communities Fund towards lift installation costs in Bedale's Grade 1 listed Town Hall will create accessibility for all to currently under-utilised conference facilities and office space on the upper floor.
- **Dalton Bridge £165,000** has been allocated to investigate proposals to replace Dalton Bridge, gateway to the Dalton Industrial Park near Thirsk. Flooding closes the narrow hump backed bridge for days at a time causing a major business interruption. Funding will cover detailed investigations and designs for a replacement bridge that will ensure access 365 days a year to help this important business park realise its full potential.
- **North Northallerton** the largest development in the Hambleton Local Development Framework (LDF) is set to deliver **1,000 homes** to the north of Northallerton alongside land for employment and recreation, with new primary school and extra care facilities. A key feature will be the creation of a new radial road and bridge across the railway line. £6 million funding has already been secured towards a likely total cost of £12 million.
- **Sowerby Sports Village** HDC leads on a **£4 million** sports and recreation village development on the outskirts of Thirsk. Planning permission has been granted for the two pieces of land to be transferred to the Council and bids for external funding are under way. Plans include facilities for junior football, rugby, hockey, cycling, a BMX park, grass running track and other much needed amenities for the 900 new homes to be built in coming years.
- **Bedale carpark** a total of **£612,000** has been allocated to protect the long term economic viability of Bedale, potentially threatened by a new relief road resulting from the A1 motorway extension. Public consultation revealed divided opinion on whether the project, aimed at removing heavy traffic from the town centre, should involve the sale of one of the existing carparks. The Council has stepped in with additional funding to ensure the development of this 'gateway' to the Dales, including a new 300 space car park should that be needed.
- **Rural Housing Enabler £19,500** has been allocated over 3 years to a scheme bringing authorities and housing providers across the county together to build local homes for local people, a key HDC priority. The programme focusses on small

settlements of under 3,000 people where delivering affordable housing is more difficult. The past four years has delivered 85 affordable rural homes and HDC is committed to continuing this vital work that sustains the vibrancy of rural villages.

- **Waste Management Strategy** development work will continue through the year for delivery early in 2016.
- **Homelessness 5-year Strategy** building on county wide initiatives to reduce the number of homelessness, HDC is developing its first Homelessness Strategy. Already signed up to the North Yorkshire and York Housing and Homelessness Strategy, Council believes that adopting our own policy will enable us to prioritise limited resources and deliver innovative services aimed at preventing homelessness through to 2021.

Recovering Economy

Analysts predict that the significant fall in oil prices since mid-2014 should increase overall UK economic activity as the cost of production decreases for businesses, especially those heavily dependent on oil inputs such as agriculture and some service sectors. In a rural area such as Hambleton, this will help to boost both investment and employment.

Real household incomes also rise as oil prices fall boosting consumer spending; as retail prices fall cost savings are passed on to households, and real wages increase with the rising demand for labour.

Regeneration

People engage with what they feel part of, and value what they help to build making consultation with our citizens, businesses and local communities indispensable when it comes to developing a sense of ownership in local decision-making and service delivery.

An example of this featured in plans to develop the former HM Prison site in Northallerton, when over 500 people attended a consultation event presenting options for the site and highlighting the potential long-term impact on the town's economy. With funding from the Council's £10m Economic Development Fund, the Council and its partners including landowners, education bodies, potential developers, occupiers and other local groups welcomed the project as a major redevelopment opportunity. Any money made from the scheme will be returned to the Fund.

Importantly, the development will also complement and enhance existing businesses, increasing their footfall by attracting new customers.

Looking Forward

Although the economic outlook remains challenging, the Council has set economic growth as one of its key priorities. To ensure Hambleton thrives we must be open to new ideas, business and industry opportunities, so we will be taking on board your comments and ideas wherever possible.

The Council will work to support the growth of existing businesses, establish and attract new businesses and evolve the market towns to meet the challenges of changing shopping and leisure habits by investing in the infrastructure needed to make this happen.

Our ambition is to build on our existing strong position to grow local businesses and employment, to equip our workforce for future challenges and exploit emerging sectors. Whilst new ways of working bring new risks and require new skills and collaborative relationships, as we look to 2015 and beyond the challenge is to turn new strategies into opportunities for staff, the public and partners that make a real impact on outcomes.

This is an exciting period for Hambleton; we hope you will embrace it with us and look forward to seeing exciting improvements developing over the coming months and years.

Performance Statistics

For those who love numbers, a snapshot of some figures to highlight our

2012-13	2013-14	Our Service to Our Customers	2014-15
193,678	260,000	Visits to our website www.hambleton.gov.uk .	230,775
762,726	1,006,220 / 3.87	Web pages viewed / average pages per session	871,426 / 3.78
145,900	157,127	Customer Enquiries to our Customer Services Team	157,899
51,503	53,994	Total footfall	55,028 <i>(Insight April 15 55,273)</i>
80,975	89,373	Total contact centre calls	87,077 <i>(Insight April 15 88,244)</i>
32	31	Projects in Hambleton receiving grant funding	39
76,638	71,274*	Council tax bills issued	79,435
2,897 [#]	17,441 [^]	New and existing benefit claims processed	33,921 ^A
2m	2.8m	Waste and recycling bins collected <i>(57,700 every week)</i>	3.05m
9,893 tonnes	12,001 tonnes	Tonnes of compostable green waste collected	10,333 tonnes
1060	1,203 [~]	Planning permission applications considered	1,131
1133	1,616	Licences issued for taxis, alcohol, events and entertainment, gambling, and street collections	1,136
290	512	Families we helped prevent becoming homeless	461
57	60	New affordable homes for local residents	117
718	756	Food hygiene interventions	915
25	24	Contaminated land assessments	12
235	226	Investigated requests for service about noise	205

* figure appears reduced by 5k because March 2014 Council Tax bills were issued in April 2014 to avoid confusion with Annual Statements

[#] new claims only

[^] includes change of circumstances and other existing claim processes

^A includes Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction figures

[~] includes applications subsequently withdrawn