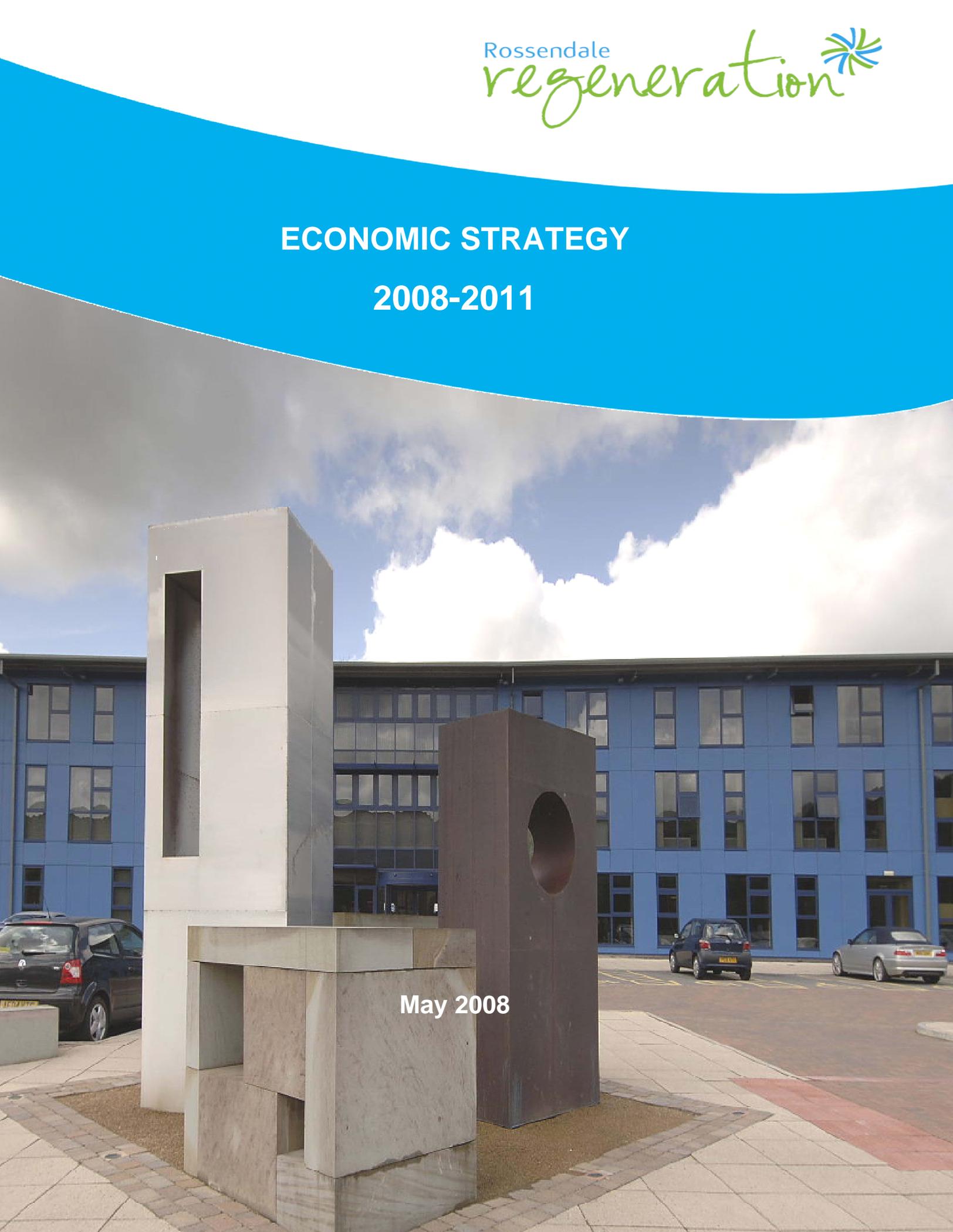


ECONOMIC STRATEGY

2008-2011

May 2008



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FORWARD

I am delighted to present to you the consultation draft of Rossendale Borough Council's economic strategy. The Strategy provides a three year framework for action by the Borough Council, alongside its partners, to deliver local, regional and national priorities for the sustainable growth of the Borough's economy.

We are confident that the strategy focuses on those issues that we, as a Borough Council, need to prioritise over the next three years if we are to ensure that Rossendale can play its role in providing a strong economic future for its residents and businesses.

We would very much welcome your views on this strategy both in respect of its overall approach to taking our economy forward and the individual priorities identified within it.

We are very excited by the future economic opportunities for the Borough and are confident that, by working together, we can address the economic challenges that we face. I very much hope that this strategy can play its part in providing a catalyst for delivery on our priority actions. I therefore would encourage you to give this strategy you full consideration and support and I look forward to working with you to ensure that Rossendale can be a place where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from growing prosperity.

Cllr W Challinor
Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

Purpose

This Economic Strategy has been prepared to provide a framework for action by Rossendale Borough Council and its partners in delivering local, regional and national priorities for the sustainable and appropriate growth of economic prosperity in Rossendale Borough.

It has been developed within the context of national and regional priorities articulated within such documents as the Regional Economic Strategy, the Northern Way Growth Strategy, the Lancashire Economic Strategy and the Transformational agenda for Pennine Lancashire, with the aim of ensuring that these priorities are interpreted and delivered at a local level. Equally the Strategy aims to articulate local priorities and actions so that they can, where appropriate, be used to influence national and regional policy.

It is important to recognise that this is the strategy of Rossendale Borough Council. As such it sits under the Rossendale Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy of the Local Strategic Partnership and will also look to help deliver the Borough Council's Corporate Plan. At the same time it is important also to recognise the inter-relationship between the Borough's economy and other key policy areas, for example the health and well-being of its local communities, the housing offer that is available and the environmental quality provided by the borough.

As an agreed strategy that has obtained the approval of the Borough Council, and the endorsement of the Rossendale Partnership Regeneration Board, this strategy will:

- Provide a framework for action which will be set out in a subsequent three year rolling action plan
- Ensure that national and regional priorities are appropriately interpreted and delivered at a local level as well as put across local priorities and actions so that they can, where appropriate, influence national and regional policy.
- Set the context for prioritising investment
- Fulfill an important role in communicating the importance of the economy in delivering other agendas in the Borough and the need to account for potential economic impact when decisions are made.
- To inform and be informed by other plans and strategies e.g. LDF
- Be outward as well as inward looking – Rossendale has been very successful at looking within itself to address the issues and opportunities that it has faced. However increasing globalisation means that we must now also look to outside our own boundaries and communities if we are to address the economic issues and opportunities of the future.

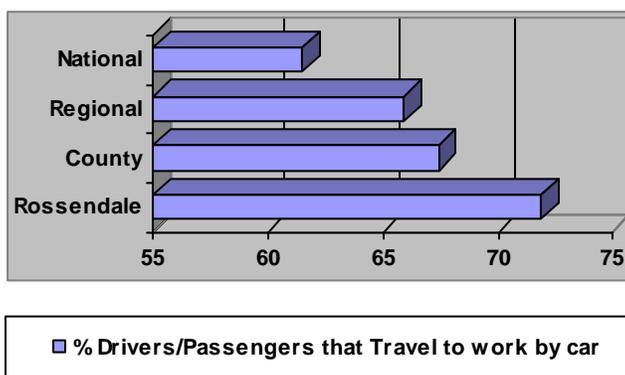
Overview of Rossendale's Economy

Rossendale's location at the gateway between Lancashire and the Greater Manchester conurbation has made it increasingly popular with commuters. This popularity is increased by the semi-rural setting and attractive environment that the Borough enjoys.

One impact of this is the high levels of out-commuting with around a half of the Borough's working residents travelling outside of the Borough to work and a net work migration figure of nearly 7,000 (i.e. 7,000 more people travel out of the Borough to work than travel in). This level of work loss represents an increase of 43% over the 1991 - 2001 decade and is the largest change experienced by any district within Lancashire.

The situation has been exacerbated by a decline in the number of jobs located in the Borough with 5.2% of jobs lost in the Borough over the period 1998-2005. This is against a national and regional trend of increasing job numbers. The result is that the Borough has the lowest job density (number of jobs within the district against working age population) of any district in Lancashire with only 0.64 jobs for every person of working age in the Borough.

Whilst it will always be appropriate for Rossendale to look to maximise the economic opportunities presented by its neighbours there are a number of real risks attached to this continuing move towards greater out-commuting. Not least of these is that high levels of out-commuting raises serious sustainability concerns both in respect of direct environmental sustainability as well as wider social and economic sustainability. The proportion of people from Rossendale that travel to work by car (as a driver or passenger) at 71.9% is significantly higher than the county (67.4%), regional (65.9%) and national averages (61.5%). This may be due in-part to the specific transport and accessibility issues that the Borough faces, for example the lack of a commuter train service to Manchester.



The growing reliance on employment outside of the borough is also creating some real economic disparities within the Borough. In very general terms there is an obvious divide in the economic fortunes of the west and east of the Borough. Whilst the west of the Borough continues to benefit from its relatively good transport connections, particularly to the sub-regions major road networks, the eastern end of the Borough has issues of accessibility due in no small part to the Borough's 'valley' geography. The impact of this is to reduce the capability of residents in these areas to benefit from the economic opportunities that are available both within and outside of the Borough.

With significant differences in the income between those that live in the Borough but work elsewhere and those that both live and work in the borough. Whilst resident wage levels are at £10.68 per hour are above the regional average of £10.62, employee based wage levels at £8.33 are significantly below the regional average (£10.54) as well as being 22% below the resident-based average wage.

Whilst the healthy wage levels for residents in the Borough is encouraging there is the danger that those people that work outside of the Borough will spend a good proportion of their income outside of the Borough and the Valley's economy may not therefore get the full value of consumer spend by its own residents. A consequence is that some of the Borough's main commercial centres are struggling to remain viable, particularly those whose general economic position is weak. This is clearly demonstrated in Bacup where 43% of floorspace within the town centre is currently unoccupied. In comparison Rawtenstall, the borough's main shopping centre, has very few empty commercial properties (with the exception of the Valley Centre which is being emptied ahead of its redevelopment). This is despite consistently high (poor) retail yields within the town centre which at more than 10% far exceed those achieved in other larger centres in the area, e.g. Accrington (8.0%), Blackburn (7.0%), Burnley (7.25%) and Bury (6.75%). The centre is however currently attracting a good level of private sector interest. Significant planned investment in the proposed New Valley Centre, New Hall Hey and various other sites around the town centre, if brought to fruition, could assist in transforming Rawtenstall into a much more vibrant and vital centre.

Vital and vibrant town centres are seen as an important element, not just of sustainable communities, but of a robust economy with a strong tourism and visitor sector. The borough recognises that it does not maximise the potential economic value of its beautiful countryside, rich heritage and good connectivity which together should make Rossendale an ideal place to visit. However Rossendale's visitor economy is only valued at around £65m per annum and has been falling over recent years.

The borough already has the lowest number of tourist accommodation bed spaces of any district within the North West region and does not have any official camping and caravan sites. It also has the lowest number of employees in tourism related businesses of any district in Lancashire. The potential of the visitor economy to contribute to the Borough's economic performance has been recognised through the Rossendale Regeneration Board who have prioritised it within their current objectives and who are pursuing the Adrenaline Gateway as the key driver for building the Borough's visitor destination credentials. The Borough's ability to address other weaknesses within its economy are somewhat hampered by a number of factors that are extremely difficult to overcome.

Rossendale's development, including the development of its economy, has been largely dictated by its geography and natural resources. With a ribbon of settlements lying in the valley of the River Irwell, the borough's setting; the ready availability of water and its damp air made the area an ideal location for a strong textile and subsequent footwear industry. Unfortunately the economic restructuring that has taken place over the last forty years has seen the loss of such manufacturing to the Far East and Eastern Europe and Rossendale like its other near neighbours has had to endure a continued decline in manufacturing jobs over this period. Despite the continuing losses in manufacturing employment the Borough is largely poorly represented in those sectors that are currently identified as high growth.

Whilst this would suggest that we need to look to attract more high growth, better paid jobs into the Borough there may potentially be a short term skills gap. This is because the Borough's more traditional industries are in sectors requiring lower level skills with lower numbers of professional and managerial posts. The likely outcome is that people with these types of skills therefore have to travel outside of the Borough to work. GCSE results would suggest that the future in respect of skill levels in the borough is promising with increasing attainment levels that are now above the national and regional averages. The critical issue will be in retaining the borough's young talent within the area. This continues to prove difficult without a dedicated further education facility in the Borough or a higher educational facility in the Pennine Lancashire area.

Rossendale's opportunity to recover from the restructuring of its economy has not been helped by the geography that had once served it so well. A lack of any large flat sites, problems of communication and access through the valley, an increasingly outdated stock of industrial premises and issues of land contamination associated with its industrial past have all had a direct impact on the borough's ability to offer modern industry what it requires. The Borough has consistently had one of the highest vacancy rates within its commercial and industrial stock of any district in Lancashire and currently has a vacancy level of 15% which is 50% more than the regional average of 10% and two thirds more than the national average.

Since 1974 the borough has lost over 437,000 sq m of its factory floorspace and the current stock of 514,000 sq m is only 54% of what it was then. Increases in other types of floorspace, most notably office space which has increased almost five fold from 14,000 sq m in 1974 to 66,000 sq m in 2006, have not been able to fully offset the losses within the factory stock with the result that the borough's stock of employment floorspace has reduced by 20% over the period.

More recently the situation has been further exacerbated by growing land values and pressures from other higher value land uses, particularly residential, which has resulted in a substantial degree of land banking that is further limiting the availability of land for employment uses.

The lack of larger employment sites that are both commercially viable and deliverable seriously impacts on the ability of the borough to attract any significant inward investment and consequently the Borough has become very reliant on the growth of its existing businesses and on the creation of new local businesses for the generation of new employment opportunities. Most areas can point to one or two very large employers that account for a significant proportion of the jobs in the area and which also feed supply chains of smaller businesses. Whilst Rossendale has a proportion of large companies that is not dissimilar to that nationally (0.3% of the borough's businesses employ more than 200 people against a national figure of 0.4%) these companies account for only 13.9% of the workforce whilst nationally they account for almost a third of all employees.

A lack of any very large employers is potentially one of the factors that have led to a very enterprising culture within the borough as demonstrated by high levels of new business formation. Over the period 2002-06 the borough's stock of VAT registered businesses increased by 8.5%, outperforming the County (5.2%), the region (5.8%) and the UK as a whole (4.8%). The number of VAT registered businesses in the borough at 44 per 10,000 population is higher than the numbers at a regional (32) and national (37) level and is the second highest proportion of any district in Lancashire. The entrepreneurial spirit of the Borough was recently recognised when the Borough was named as the North West's 2007 Enterprise Capital.

Assets, Challenges and Opportunities

- Location at the gateway between Greater Manchester and Pennine Lancashire and good communication links to the west of the valley
- An attractive physical environment – whilst this has helped attract commuters from Greater Manchester its full potential isn't being maximised.
- Natural and built heritage
- Innovation and enterprise – large number of home grown successful business people and businesses – need to give them the reasons and the tools to sustain their investment in the Borough.
- Social enterprise - history of the community successfully identifying and meeting their needs.
- A good local arts and culture base.

Key Challenges

- Addressing the disparity between the east and west of the Borough to ensure that the gap is narrowed
- Striking the balance between out-commuting and indigenous employment opportunities
- Addressing the skills agenda without a further or higher educational main site in the Borough.
- Find innovative solutions to transport issues within the Borough.
- Securing a sufficient mix of sites and premises that can meet the needs of current and futures businesses. Over-coming the 'funding gap' in the Borough
- Achieving a simple and effective network for delivery at a local, sub-regional and regional level and ensuring that RBC plays its role in all these forums.
- Reducing vacancy levels in commercial property and refurbishing floorspace to meet the needs of modern business.

Opportunities

- Exploit the position of Rossendale within the region
- Embrace the regional and sub-regional agendas so that their benefits to Rossendale can be maximised.
- Deliver the two town centre Local Development Framework in Rawtenstall and Bacup.
- The potential of the Adrenaline Gateway concept to deliver a nationally important facility into the area that could have direct and indirect economic benefits across the sub region and region.
- Maximise the resources that are already committed to the borough through existing programmes such as the Sustainable Economic Development Programme.
- Recognise the potential of the arts as an economic driver particularly in attracting more people and visitors to the Borough.
- Provide an alternative, semi-rural, business location with different locational advantages from more commercially developed areas of the city region.

Policy Context

Rossendale Borough Council's Corporate Plan

The Borough Council's over-arching strategic framework includes the eight objectives of the Community Strategy – community safety, environment, community network, health, housing, culture, education and the economy as well as three additional objectives that reflect the council's focus on being well run, fit for purpose and committed to continual improvement. It has been the intention in this strategy to reflect a commitment to these objectives through how we work to address our economic priorities.

The importance that the Borough Council places on taking forward its economy is highlighted through the Corporate Plan 2007-10. 'Delivering regeneration across the Borough' to help achieve a thriving local economy, well performing town centres and a well balanced housing market, is one of six priorities set out in the current plan. A further priority looks at 'Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit' with the aims of a thriving visitor economy and higher levels of satisfaction with Rossendale as a place to live.

Rossendale Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy

Strategy highlights the interconnectivity between its three key themes of people, places and prosperity.

The Rossendale Partnership's aim is to improve the quality of life for everyone that lives, works in, or visits Rossendale. Through the Sustainable Community Strategy it acknowledges that people are our greatest assets in our ambition to achieve this aim. We therefore need to develop and sustain a local environment where all people feel able to work towards reaching their full potential. We also need to make Rossendale a place where everyone feels that they matter and where people get on together regardless of their background and beliefs.

Rossendale as a place is defined by its beautiful moorland countryside and the small towns and settlements located along its length. It is a place that is easily accessible to many millions of people living in the North West. The Sustainable Community Strategy recognises that this is part of the unique attraction of Rossendale which gives us opportunities to create new prosperity. It also recognises however that we have a duty to future generations to ensure that we in maximising these opportunities we need to do so in a way that is sensitive and maintains or even improves our natural environment and resources.

Finally the Strategy recognises that in some ways Rossendale is already a relatively prosperous place, thanks mainly to its attractiveness as a place to live and its connectivity with Manchester. These attributes have brought many highly skilled and reasonably well-paid people into the Valley. This prosperity is not however felt throughout the valley and therefore sustaining and balancing our economy so that all can benefit both now and in the future is a priority for the Rossendale Partnership.

Whilst this economic strategy has taken much of its lead from the prosperity theme, key aspects of the people and place agendas have also influenced the objectives and planned outcomes of this strategy. By the same token the delivery of this strategy should also support and influence the wider delivery of the full Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Development Plan for Rossendale.

The planning framework for Rossendale is provided by the statutory Development Plan. This is to ensure that planning decisions on proposals for development or change of use are not arbitrary but are informed by national government policy and local considerations. The Development Plan for Rossendale comprises two key documents: the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RSS), which is produced by regional planning body, currently the North West Regional Assembly; and the Local Development Framework for Rossendale, which is prepared by this Council, in its capacity as the local planning authority for the Borough of Rossendale.

The North West Plan (the Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England) is expected to be issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in autumn 2008, when it will replace the existing RSS (formerly known as RPG 13). Until then it is referred to as the emerging RSS.

The North West Plan (i.e. the emerging RSS) is intended to contribute to a step change in the quality and impact of development and investment in the region, delivering sustainable outcomes and steering development to the most sustainable locations. The RSS has four key themes which are:

- Working in the North West: achieving a sustainable economy
- Living in the North West: ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Transport in the North West: connecting people and places
- Enjoying and managing the North West: environmental enhancement and protection.

At the more local level Rossendale Borough Council is preparing the Local Development Framework (LDF), which will replace the existing Rossendale District Local Plan, adopted in 1995. The LDF comprises a suite of documents, all known as local development documents. Some of these documents establish the project plan for the LDF and its associated monitoring to ensure that policies are being effective. Other documents set out planning policies. These include the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). Area Action Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents are also being prepared which are intended to deliver regeneration within the Borough and are discussed later in this Strategy as appropriate.

In preparing the Local Development Framework local planning authorities must take account of the principles and characteristics of other relevant strategies. In particular, the LDF should be a key component in the delivery of the community strategy setting out its spatial aspects where appropriate and providing a long term spatial vision. Local development documents should express those elements of the community strategy that relate to the development and use of land. In addition government guidance specifically notes that LDFs should take account of urban and rural regeneration strategies, and local and regional economic strategies.

Economic Development Strategy

An Economic Strategy for the Pennine Lancashire area is currently in development with proposals for a draft to be ready by the summer. Ahead of this the partners involved in regeneration within the area have been working towards a transformational agenda that was set down through the work done by Livesey Wilson and their report 'Dreaming of Pennine Lancashire' which was commissioned to bring fresh thinking into how culture, sport and the creative industries could change people's thinking and make a significant local impact. The Adrenaline Gateway is a part of this

transformational agenda. It is likely however that the Integrated Economic Strategy will need to support the delivery of this transformational agenda within the context of a wider framework for action to address the fundamental challenges within the area's economy including low wages, lower skills levels, high levels of worklessness and low GVA.

Lancashire economic Strategy

The Lancashire Economic Strategy puts forward four priorities to help achieve its core vision of moving the Lancashire economy up the value chain. It places a particular emphasis on exploiting the competitive advantage of existing sectors and businesses within the county whilst also ensuring that Lancashire supports the growth of sectors and businesses in the other City Regions. The four priorities which are defined to address the economic challenges facing the sub-region are:

- Higher value activity and investment
- Investing in people
- Employment generation & entrepreneurship
- Investment in quality of place

Regional Economic Strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy acknowledges the region is not contributing its full potential to the UK economy despite an improved performance since the 1980s and 1990s when it underwent major economic restructuring. The strategy looks to build on the region's assets and to tackle areas of underperformance in order to achieve a 'dynamic, sustainable international economy which competes on the basis of knowledge, advanced technology and an excellent quality of life for all'. The strategy aims to increase GVA in order to reduce the productivity gap between the North West and the rest of the country and looks to increasing productivity, growing the market and growing the size and capability of the workforce, underpinned by conditions for sustainable growth to achieve this.

The Northern Way and The City Region Development Plan

The Northern Way seeks to transform the economy of the North of England in order to bridge the £30 billion output gap between the North and the average for England. As a strategy it specifically focuses on tackling those issues that are important for the whole of the North and which cannot be tackled by one region alone.

The Central Lancashire City Region Development Programme is explicitly concerned with how Central Lancashire is addressing and delivering a new way of working against the vision and investment priorities of the Northern Way.

Vision

The Strategy aims to support and contribute to the economic vision of the Rossendale Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy, which is that:

‘ by 2020 Rossendale will have a balanced economy that has a rich and vibrant visitor economy based on the environmentally sensitive utilisation of our natural assets.’

Linked to this the Rossendale Partnership through its Regeneration Board has developed four key outcomes:

1. Every adult and child will have the opportunity to achieve their potential in education and employment – being able to access the right level of training and higher education for their own fulfilment.
2. We will have doubled the size of our visitor economy by transforming our activity-based leisure, cultural and retail offer. We will also have encouraged the further development of our increasingly vibrant business services sector.
3. We will have created opportunities for people from all parts of Rossendale to benefit from the Borough's prosperity, decreasing benefits dependency in the Eastern wards of the borough from 20% of the working adult population to 15%.
4. We will have created opportunities to encourage a shift in transport modes towards sustainable and active travel. We will also seek to further improve transport connectivity between the east and west of Rossendale and to our moorland.

How do we achieve this vision?

The Local Strategic Partnership has developed a number of actions for implementation over the next three years that will move the Borough towards the economic vision highlighted in the Community Strategy. These include:

Develop a leisure and culture sector that has real economic impact.

- Adrenaline Gateway
- Development plan for arts/heritage/cultural economy.

Town Centre Regeneration.

- Valley Centre Rawtenstall redeveloped.
- Bacup Renaissance plan developed with and approved by community.
- Pilot public transport infrastructure project delivered.
- Haslingden Renaissance plan developed with and approved by community

Economic Inclusion.

- Enhanced economic development/business support resources available in Rossendale.
- Improved access to/take-up of a balanced portfolio of employment opportunities.
- Improved transport connectivity between East and West Rossendale.
- Improved access to/take-up of a balanced portfolio of adult learning opportunities.

Marketing Rossendale both internally and externally as a place to invest.

- Public and private sector investment attracted into the borough to realise the Regeneration Board's priorities.
- Improved perceptions of Rossendale as a place where residents can spend their money.
- Improved perceptions of Rossendale as a place to visit and spend money.
- Improved perceptions of Rossendale as a vibrant economy with a highly skilled workforce that is an excellent inward investment location for knowledge based businesses.
- Complete the BBS (Brighter Business Solutions) study

Improve the supply, range and quality of commercial property.

- Develop commercial property that will encourage the inward investment of higher value employee jobs.
- Develop property availability for a wider range of users

The Borough Council is committed to working with and through the LSP to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy. The council will therefore, wherever possible and appropriate, work to ensure that it plays its part in delivering against the actions set out above, particularly where the action supports the objectives and priority outcomes of the Borough Council's own corporate plan as outlined below:

Corporate Priority 2 – Delivering Regeneration Across the Borough

- Outcome 2.1 Thriving local economy
- Outcome 2.2 Well performing town centres
- Outcome 2.3 Well balanced housing market

Corporate Priority 4 – Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit

- Outcome 4.1 More people satisfied with Rossendale as a place to live
- Outcome 4.2 Thriving visitor economy
- Outcome 4.3 Improved awareness and understanding of the Council and its achievements

The Borough Council has therefore developed and agreed the following intentions as those that can best support the outcomes identified by the LSP and its own corporate priorities as set out in the corporate plan:

- Achieving a more sustainable mix of employment sectors in the Borough with a greater representation in growth sectors and in sectors where the Borough's potential is not currently being maximised.
- This will include supporting the development of higher value high-growth business by ensuring that Rossendale can offer more of what they need including access to the right premises in the right location with a local workforce that has the right skills,
- Maximise the spend value of the area's residents and businesses, ensuring that as much spend as possible is kept local.
- Achieve maximum value from the Borough's assets for the benefit of the Borough and its residents and to build the economic value of these assets for the Borough
- Establish Rossendale as an integral part of the sub-region and region and work collaboratively with our partners at these levels to help strengthen capacity to deliver effective and efficient economic development and regeneration services.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIONS

To work towards achieving the Borough's economic vision this strategy identifies 16 strategic objectives that have been grouped within 4 key themes.

- **Ensuring Appropriate Infrastructure Provision**
- **Building sustainable businesses.**
- **Attracting people, businesses and visitors to the Borough.**
- **Improving economic prosperity for everyone.**

These themes represent the areas where we feel we need to target resources and take action if we are to significantly impact on the challenges facing the economy whilst maximising the assets at our disposal and the opportunities that present themselves. The identification of these themes has taken into account the requirement to ensure strategic fit with the other relevant local, sub-regional and regional priorities as identified earlier within this strategy.

Ensuring Appropriate Infrastructure Provision

Providing the right infrastructure to support the Borough's current and future economic needs is probably one of the most significant challenges that we face. The lack of any large employment sites inhibits our ability to attract inward investment on any significant scale and has the potential to reduce the opportunity for existing businesses to fulfill their expansion plans. Because of the Borough's topography major improvements to the transport links between the east and west of the Borough are unlikely. It is important however that we work with the existing infrastructure to ensure that, at the very least, it can be used more effectively and efficiently to connect people to the jobs that are available either within or outside the Borough.

We will therefore aim to:

- **Ensure that the Borough has the right number of the right sort of sites and premises available to support the growth of existing businesses as well as to attract businesses into the Borough – this should include protecting our existing employment sites, identifying new sites and preparing land for development by the private sector.**

The economic profile of the Borough highlights this as one of the most significant current constraints on the Borough's ability to respond to its economic restructuring. Because suitable land is at a premium within Rossendale it is all the more important that we work very hard to ensure that appropriate employment sites are not only protected but that wherever possible proactive support is offered to ensure that these are brought forward. In addition to this however we also need to ensure that when pro-actively bringing sites forward we do so in a way that ensures that they make an appropriate and positive contribution to our economic objectives. This may in some instances require us to be very restrictive in terms of the businesses that we want to encourage onto certain sites and to accept that this could cause delays in the development of some sites.

- **Address local transport and accessibility issues within the Borough, particular the transport links along the valley and look at more sustainable ways of connecting people with employment and learning opportunities outside of the borough.**

Transport linkages to learning or employment opportunities outside of the Borough could be supported by the improvement of public transport links between the Borough and

major centres. The Borough Council will therefore continue to work with Lancashire County Council and Rossendale Transport on the development of a new bus interchange in Rawtenstall and is supportive of plans for a feasibility study into the development a rail link between Rawtenstall and Manchester. The natural topography of the Borough presents its own challenges in respect of the internal transport infrastructure which are likely to require innovative approaches if they are to be overcome. We will therefore continue to work with our colleagues at Lancashire County Council to look at how the Borough's most acute accessibility needs can be addressed. The main A681 corridor from Rawtenstall to Bacup remains a particular concern and a barrier to private investment at the eastern end of the valley. New traffic management arrangements in the centre of Waterfoot have considerably assisted traffic flow and reduced journey times. The County Council through its local transport plan will continue to look at addressing other localised 'hotspots and consider alternative traffic management arrangements, for example trying to reduce usage by large goods vehicles at times of peak traffic flow.

Building Sustainable Businesses

Rossendale has a strong small and medium sized business base that continues to grow at an encouraging rate. Jobs within the Borough have however been declining, reflecting structural changes in the economy, resulting in on-going large scale job losses within some of the larger companies. We need to ensure that the Borough can provide the right conditions in which its existing businesses and new businesses can, not only grow, but flourish. This is not only about providing the right physical conditions – the right premises in the right locations at the right price – but also about ensuring that there is a skilled, motivated and available workforce, appropriate infrastructure and accessibility to appropriate networks and support.

We will therefore aim to

- **Develop and maintain ways of communicating with and building relationships with local business.**

The high numbers of small and medium sized enterprises in the Borough, the lack of large employers with local supply chains and the lack of any formal sector support groups for key local industries adds to the challenge building and maintaining contacts between public sector agencies and local businesses. Local business networks are an important source of advice and support for local small businesses. The Borough Council will continue to provide business support through partners. The Borough Council will use this as a mechanism to better understand the views of businesses. The Borough Council is also looking at ways of better understanding the business community and its needs and aspirations in order to develop, deliver or influence business support opportunities that are being generated at a local, sub-regional, regional or national level.

- **Identify and support local companies that are important to the current and future economy of the borough.**

As part of the wider work identified above we will continue to work to build close working relationships with local companies that offer the Borough significant future opportunities. These opportunities could be in a number of areas including direct employment, supply chain development, technological advances, workforce development, industry standards, etc. Whilst our ability to respond to the needs of businesses can sometimes be constrained by the relatively limited resources available within the public sector locally to provide business support packages we will continue to work with our partners at the regional and sub-regional levels, including the NWDA, Lancashire Economic Partnership, LCDL and our neighbouring authorities in Pennine Lancashire, to maximise the

assistance and support that can be offered.

- **Work with partners to ensure that existing and potential local businesses have easy access to the highest quality business support services.**

The framework for public sector intervention in supporting businesses through advice and guidance continues to be the subject of continuous change and uncertainty. The Business Support Simplification Agenda is however seeking to ensure that the mechanisms for accessing this framework and for understanding the range of support available becomes easier and more transparent for those businesses that wish to access services. Rossendale Borough Council does not, and will not, provide direct advice services to local businesses but is committed to working through its partners to ensure that appropriate levels of advice and guidance are available locally within the context of the package of products agreed through the Business Simplification process. The Borough Council will continue to refer local small and medium enterprises to Business Link where appropriate, as the agreed first point of contact for all general business support enquiries. The Borough Council will also continue to provide direct support to business support organisations to enable them to continue to provide enterprise and business start-up facilitation service and will maintain a relationship with A4e as the NWDA's contracted business start-up service providers.

- **Maximise the potential benefit of external grants and resources to Rossendale's business community.**

Whilst the lack of external funding available within the Borough continues to constrain the amount of direct assistance that can be offered to local businesses the Borough Council will continue to work with its partners, in particular NWDA and Lancashire County Developments, to ensure that wherever possible any potential sources or grant, loan or equity finance are maximised to support the retention and growth of local businesses. The Borough Council's role will be primarily in respect of promotion, signposting and assisting with the application process where applicable. It is also important to recognise the potential value to businesses of more general business support which could indirectly be many times greater than any direct financial assistance. As such the Borough Council will look to actively promote any scheme that could provide local businesses with opportunities to further their skills and knowledge in a way that will directly benefit the business e.g. through improved efficiency, reduced costs, product development or a larger market share.

Attracting people, businesses and visitors to the Borough

The Borough is endowed with a number of advantages that add to its quality of place. These include a high quality natural environment, a locational advantage in respect of links to major areas of population, a rich heritage reflected in the quality of some of its buildings and neighbourhoods and a strong sense of community. It is important that the opportunities that these provide are not lost. We must therefore translate these advantages into something that people will want to be a part of, as either a visitor, a business, an investor or as a resident and we must then do better at getting the message across about what this Borough has to offer.

We will therefore aim to:

- **Improve the visitor and tourism offer in the borough and thereby increase the contribution of this important, and growing, sector to the Borough's economy.**

The Borough Council will continue to work with its partners within Rossendale Partnership's Tourism Steering Group to support the implementation of the Tourism Marketing Action Plan. This work will build on the significant progress made over the last

two years to put in place the infrastructure that will provide the foundations on which we now hope to be able to build an increasingly vibrant tourism sector in the Borough. Key areas that are currently being delivered against include improving the quality and accessibility of tourism information, increasing and improving the accommodation stock within the Borough, making linkages with wider sub-regional marketing and promotional campaign (particularly those being driven by the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board) and building on an embryonic events programme that can underpin a more cohesive and consistent offer. Much of this will be underpinned by a philosophy of building on our natural assets and in particular on better utilising our outdoor offer as our unique selling point.

– **Take forward the development of the Adrenaline Gateway concept as a major contributor to the Borough's economic future.**

The Adrenaline Gateway represents the Borough's biggest and best opportunity to put itself on the map as a visitor and tourism destination and as such is identified as one of a small number of key transformational projects for Pennine Lancashire that will play a crucial role in improving economic opportunities, raising aspirations and turning around perceptions of the area. The Adrenaline Gateway proposes to collectively improve, add to, re-brand and market a number of already nationally renowned adrenaline sports facilities in the Pennine Lancashire area in order to deliver one of the largest, strongest and more diverse adrenaline sports offers in the UK. A robust feasibility study is now being translated into positive action with work underway to begin the development of a network of mountain bike trails and deliver a compelling brand that can quickly establish itself within the marketplace. The potential of the Adrenaline Gateway to contribute toward the achievement of a number of the objectives in this strategy and in the wider Sustainable Community Strategy has positioned this as the number one project for the Rossendale Regeneration Board.

– **Deliver the key elements of the town centre Local Development Framework for Rawtenstall and Bacup & Stacksteads and develop town centre regeneration proposals for Haslingden.**

It is recognised that healthy and vibrant town centres are important to the local area not just as economic drivers in their own right but as providers of services at the heart of their communities. Often town centres provide a window into the economic fortunes of the wider area and at the moment Rossendale's key centres show very clear signs of having to address some serious challenges. It is unlikely that any of the centres will be able to regenerate themselves without some intervention from the public sector. At the very least this will be in respect of ensuring that the appropriate planning framework exists to ensure that redevelopment and regeneration is undertaken in a way that is consistent with the current and future needs of the borough's communities. Activity in Rawtenstall over the next three years will focus on the re-development of the Valley Centre and the surrounding area. In Bacup proposals are being developed to secure support to address some of the fundamental issues within the town's infrastructure. These include proposals to secure employment-related uses for currently under-occupied or unoccupied floorspace, critical maintenance and improvement work on the town centre infrastructure, regeneration of key buildings and significant upgrading of public spaces including the proposal to create a new town square. The need for a regeneration plan to address the issues facing Haslingden town centre has been identified and the Borough Council has therefore committed to lead on the preparation of draft proposals during the period of this strategy.

- **Protect and enhance the Borough’s natural and built environment in support of delivering the wider aims of enhancing the borough’s attractiveness as a place to live, work, visit and invest.**

The Borough’s natural environment and setting are considered some of its strongest assets, yet the potential value of these to the area’s economy are only now being fully recognised. It is important however that in our pursuit of maximising the economic value of these assets we do not in anyway put them in jeopardy. This message fits very well with wider regional and sub-region approaches that recognise the importance of ‘quality of life’ factors on people’s decisions about where they may choose to live, work or investment. Indeed the whole Central Lancashire City Region Development Plan is underpinned by the notion of the area as a ‘City with room to breathe’. There is also a strong correlation between a well cared for environment and prosperity and the Council is therefore keen to ensure that it does all it can to ensure that our towns, villages and open spaces are well maintained and attractive.

- **Pursue a marketing strategy for the Borough aimed at current and potential residents, businesses and visitors that compliments the other marketing initiatives being taken forward at a sub-regional and regional level.**

The importance of image, perception and self-confidence has been highlighted as underpinning the whole Pennine Lancashire regeneration agenda. It is as a direct result of work commissioned by Elevate on a strategy for ‘Transforming Pennine Lancashire’ that the area’s re-branding has begun. Rossendale, as part of Pennine Lancashire, needs to fully embrace this move towards challenging existing perceptions of the area through an improved image that fully recognises the area as a very special place with an offer to rival anywhere else. It is also important that Rossendale looks at its own unique selling points within the Pennine Lancashire offer and uses this to both support the wider offer and undertake more localised marketing and promotional campaigns. In addition the Borough Council will also continue to support the wider promotional and marketing activity of the Lancashire Economic Partnership, particularly through its ‘Make it Lancashire’ campaign.

Improving Economic Prosperity for Everyone

There is a marked contrast between the fortunes of the different communities in Rossendale. Furthermore the gap between the prosperity levels of the different communities is widening. Parts of the Borough, particularly around Bacup and Haslingden, do not connect with the prosperity around them or benefit from it. The Borough is unlikely to move forward in improving its overall economic position without addressing these disparities between the economic fortunes of its different communities. In addressing economic inequality it is important to recognise the inter-relationship with a range of other issues including poor health, unfit housing and crime levels and the need therefore to tackle disadvantage in the round.

We will therefore aim to:

- **Encourage a better mix of housing quality and quantity throughout the valley**
Rossendale has a wide range of housing types throughout the Borough and the Council recognises that good quality housing has a positive impact on the health, wellbeing and economic activity of local residents. Good design and environmental standards are important aspects required of any new development and contribute to the provision of high quality housing for Rossendale’s workforce. It is also important to ensure the availability of choice in the housing market is maintained, including choice of tenure, location and property type. In order to achieve this, the Council has introduced robust planning policies to guide the provision of new housing in the Borough and Affordable

Housing Strategy has been developed which seeks to ensure that residents have access to housing appropriate to their income and needs. The Council also continues to work closely with a range of Registered Social Landlords to provide both well managed social housing and to develop low cost home ownership solutions for local people

– **Work with and influence training and education providers to deliver an appropriate skills agenda for Rossendale.**

Accrington and Rossendale College is the main deliverer of further education in the area. The Borough Council will therefore continue to work with the College to ensure that any potential barriers for local people to access further education provision are minimised. In particular the Council is keen to ensure that the closure of the college site in Rawtenstall does not impact on the potential access to further education for the Borough's residents. The council will work with the college on identifying, and bringing forward, opportunities for increasing local delivery options, particularly in the east of the Borough where accessibility issues are recognised as an impediment to people undertaking further education. Particular attention will also be placed on developing appropriate responses to emerging education and training agendas including the new vocational diplomas and the extended schools initiative.

– **Address the barriers that prevent those people that are disadvantaged in anyway from accessing the labour market either through employment or self-employment**

Because of the particular economic characteristics of the Borough small businesses and self employment are, and will remain, an important part of the Borough's economy. The Borough Council will therefore continue to support projects that help promote self employment and small business generation as employment options and which provide direct facilitation and support to existing and potential small businesses. In particular the Council will continue to look to ensure that support is directed at a grassroots level and at activities which address the gaps that exist within mainstream business support services. The enterprise agenda can be supported by activity to raise employability and key skills particularly where such activity look to address personal development for those facing disadvantage and/or particular barriers to employment. This could include for example supporting motivation and confidence building activity. Increasingly key characteristics of entrepreneurship e.g. initiative, creativity, flexibility, problem solving, tenacity, are becoming requirements of every job and as such these are characteristics that we should look to encourage across the Borough's workforce and potential workforce including amongst our young people. Allied to this is the need for local businesses to value the development of their workforce and the Borough Council will work with partners to look at how this can be addressed? As a major local employer the Borough Council will also look at its own recruitment and staff development policies to ensure that it sets an appropriate standard for other employers to follow.

– **Maximise the opportunities for local people of investment in the area through employment or other related opportunities**

If the Borough is to experience the full benefit of any local employment opportunities that are created then local people must be able to access these opportunities. The Borough Council is therefore working with its colleagues across Pennine Lancashire to develop and deliver a progression model that will provide a flexible menu of support designed to move people towards sustainable employment. The five step model includes engagement and outreach, diagnostics, learning and development, employer links and sustaining employment. This sort of model has been tested in other areas alongside Employment Charters which encourage employers to look locally for their workforce (and where appropriate from potentially disadvantaged groups) and to invest in local recruitment and

retention of staff. Addressing worklessness continues to be a priority at a national, regional, and sub-regional level and is a key element in the Lancashire Local Area Agreement. Through the LAA the various partners are particularly seeking to address the lack of public sector apprenticeships and to test out new approaches to local recruitment e.g. work trials and Rossendale Borough Council supports these initiatives.

- **Recognise, develop and support the social enterprise sector in the borough including facilitating the involvement of the social enterprise sector in the provision of public sector services in the Borough**

The third sector has developed, delivered, supported and secured a number of important resources that have been instrumental in putting the Borough at the leading edge in a number of important regeneration-related areas, for example community enterprise, enterprise facilitation and developing social capital. Whilst the Borough Council has recognised the strength of the Borough's third sector its engagement with the sector has lacked a degree of coordination and strong policy direction. At the same time national government policy is increasingly acknowledging the potential role that the third sector can play in the provision of local services. It strongly advocates that the involvement of the third sector is not only encouraged but actively sought in order that public services can better meet the diverse needs of individuals and communities as well as deliver value for money and efficiency. The Borough Council will therefore continue to develop its relationship with the third sector and, through its Regeneration Service, will look at ways in which this relationship can be strengthened in order to deliver long term benefits to the Borough's communities.

Key Principles

In delivering against the strategic objectives set out above the Borough Council will ensure that it takes into account the key principles of sustainable development, equality of opportunity and delivery through partnership. In undertaking any activity the Council will make reference to these principles to ensure that the Borough Council continues to fulfill its obligations to ensuring that wider social and environmental benefits are achieved.

Sustainable Development

A widely-used and accepted international definition of sustainable development is: *'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'*

There is a growing realisation that the current model of development is not sustainable and that we are increasingly living beyond our means and placing an increasing burden on the planet. Our consumption of resources and the stress we are placing on our fragile environmental systems cannot go on forever. The implications of not addressing these issues economically and socially, as well as environmentally, could be catastrophic and it is important therefore that we ensure that sustainability is built into our thinking, our policies and our actions.

The policies set out in this strategy have therefore been developed with reference to the UK's five agreed principles of sustainable development:

- living within environmental limits
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- achieving a sustainable economy
- using sound science responsibly
- promoting good governance.

By taking account of these principles in the development of our policies and actions we would thereby aim to ensure that in delivering a future for Rossendale's economy we do so in a way that ensures a strong, healthy and just society without exceeding our environmental limits.

Critical to the success of the strategy in respect of addressing the wider issues of sustainability will be the ability of the council and its partners to influence the levels of out-commuting. It is widely accepted that the Borough should look to halt the continuing increase in the levels of out-commuting and seek instead to increase local employment opportunities of a quality that will attract people to them. As a consequence the strategy emphasises the need to protect existing employment sites, where these are felt to meet the needs of modern business, and to identify new employment sites that can meet the borough's future employment needs. Work is on-going as a part of the preparation of the Local Development Framework to make a full and proper assessment of the borough's likely employment land requirements over the next 10-15 years.

Equality of Opportunity

Regeneration is about reviving and improving areas and creating opportunities for economic growth and social cohesion. These opportunities will only have an impact however if everyone has the chance to benefit.

Groups do not feel that it will have a direct impact on them in terms of improving their chances of a better quality of life. It is important therefore that we deliver economic and social benefits for all communities. Ultimately we want to ensure that everyone can collectively work to improve the economic prospects of the Borough and share in the benefits created by the Borough's economic growth.

An equality impact assessment has therefore been undertaken on this strategy and the policies contain within it to ensure that wherever possible they positively promote equality of opportunity rather than negatively impact on them in any way.

The issues around equality of opportunity are pertinent to Rossendale where there are very obvious economic disparities between different communities. A key underpinning driver within this strategy is therefore to close the gap between the better off and more disadvantaged communities in the Borough. Increasing opportunity and people's ability to respond to such opportunity therefore lies at the heart of many of the Borough's economic priority and actions.

Delivering in Partnership

If it is accepted that the borough cannot, and should not, look to address its economic challenges on its own then the Borough Council has a strong advocacy and leadership role to play in the regional and sub-regional arenas. Whilst economic opportunities may present themselves from both Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire, the Borough's administrative ties are firmly with Lancashire. This, together with the range of issues shared with our neighbours in Pennine Lancashire, make Lancashire the most appropriate stage on which to pursue the Borough's economic priorities at the sub-regional level. The Borough Council will therefore continue to be a proactive partner within PLLACE and, together with its partners, will continue to explore the potential benefits of the proposed City Development Company for Pennine Lancashire as a mechanism for delivering the area's transformational action plan. At a Lancashire level the Borough Council will look to continue its active involvement in the economic block of the Local Area Agreement and will continue to support the Lancashire Economic Partnership in providing a strategic policy, lobbying and advocacy role for the county at the regional level.

Partnering arrangements are also delivering direct capacity within the Borough's economic development and regeneration services. A joint delivery approach between the County and Borough Councils has significantly added to the resources available within the regeneration service to deliver the Borough's economic agenda. The initial three year commitment ends in 2009 however we would look at ensuring that this productive partnership and innovative way of combining the resources available at a county level with delivery at a local level will continue.

Rossendale has a strong social capital base. This is built on local communities that have good, active social networks and a history of looking within themselves, as communities, to address the issues they have faced. This strength within the community is one of the reasons why the Borough has a thriving Local Strategic Partnership. This social capital is a real asset to the Borough and its potential to contribute towards the delivery of the aims and objectives of this strategy cannot be under-estimated and mustn't be ignored. The Borough Council will therefore look at how it can build and improve its working relationships with the third sector in the borough so that jointly we can maximise the opportunities.

Delivering the Strategy

How will we know that we are making progress?

The Borough Council is a key partner in a number of initiatives and partnerships that are already recording their performance. We will therefore look to contribute towards the achievement and recording of the outcomes and targets of these wider initiatives wherever possible and appropriate. These will include those of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement for Lancashire. An Action Plan will be produced to sit alongside this strategy as the delivery mechanism for the strategy and will include the full list of economic-related indicators and targets that the Borough Council as a member of these wider Partnerships is working towards. It will also cross reference these to the objectives set out in this strategy. It is important to recognise however that a number of the targets, particularly those within the Local Area Agreement, are not collected at district level in a way that is statistically valid. Where necessary these have therefore been excluded and replaced where relevant by a more appropriate target. It is also probable that a number of indicators and targets will also be included that are not within either the Local Area Agreement or the Sustainable Community Strategy but which support the objectives of this strategy.

To support delivery of the targets it is the intention to transfer them into the annual Regeneration Service business plans and to report on them through the Borough Council's own performance and review mechanisms.

Resources for Delivery

The Borough Council Regeneration Service will be responsible for leading on the implementation of the strategy and for ensuring that other service areas within the Council, and other external partners, are actively involved where appropriate in delivery. The Borough Council's own staff resources have been supplemented by additional support from Lancashire County Developments and by a new project officer post supported by the North West Development Agency. These additional resources will be in place for the duration of the strategy.

The recently published Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration strongly suggests that economic development is best delivered at the level of functional economic areas. Pennine Lancashire had already recognised the benefits of cross-authority working on shared issues and had set up management arrangements to support the delivery of economic related activities with the inception of PLLACE (Pennine Lancashire Leaders and Chief Executives Group). These Pennine Lancashire arrangements continue to be strengthened and formalised and work is being undertaken on the development of a Multi-Area Agreement which will provide collective targets and performance indicators for the delivery of shared priorities.

Discussions are continuing around the potential formation of a City Development Company for Pennine Lancashire. The role of the company will be to deliver the transformational elements of individual district's economic strategies alongside Pennine Lancashire-wide activities such as the Housing Market Renewal Programme and programmes to address worklessness. Rossendale Borough Council will continue to be involved in these discussions.

The amount of direct regeneration delivery in the Borough continues to be hampered by the lack of external regeneration resources available and maximising the resources that are available to support this strategy is therefore a key under-pinning priority. We will therefore endeavour to get maximum value out of those resources that are currently available and will ensure that we are

in the best possible position to access any new resources that may become available in the future to support our objectives.

The Sustainable Economic Development Programme which is providing £4.5m of NWDA resource over the next three years continues to represent the single biggest opportunity for the public sector to directly act on the objectives within this strategy. In particular it will help in the delivery of good quality sites and premises and more viable and vital town centres. Other opportunities that the Borough Council will continue to monitor include the new European Programme and LABGI (Local Authority Business Growth Initiative) which has already delivered £700,000 to the Borough Council in support of economic development activity.

The Borough Council's approach to delivering services has continued to adapt and mature in response to the particular challenges and opportunities faced both by the Borough and the Council. As a result the capacity-building model of local governance was agreed by Cabinet in November 2006. This model acknowledges the important role that can, and has been, played by our partners including those in the third sector. A central theme of the model is working in different ways with our partners to increase our own operational capacity and to give the Borough a better chance of achieving its ambitious objectives. The third sector are identified as a critical element of that capacity building model and opportunities exist to develop and deliver formal and informal partnerships and relationships to secure the very best outcome for the communities of Rossendale.

Corporate Commitment To Delivering The Strategy

The wider role played by other service areas on the delivery of the Borough's economic vision is recognised and appreciated. It is proposed to establish a small working group of relevant officers from across the authority to work on the development of the action plan for the strategy. The strategy itself has taken into account other important policy documents within the Council including, for example, the Borough's Environment Strategy, the Borough's Housing Strategy and the Crime and Disorder Strategy.

Whilst direct resources for economic development are somewhat constrained, the Borough Council does have responsibility for a range of statutory powers and obligations that both directly and indirectly impact on the Borough's business community. We will continue to examine how we deliver these to ensure that they support our local businesses within the context of our wider social, environmental and economic responsibilities.

The importance of the Local Development Framework in providing the spatial context within which this strategy will be implemented is recognised and we will need to ensure that proposals are both developed and delivered in a way that not only complies with but reinforces its key policies.

The developing role for local authorities as community leaders means however that, in addressing economic need, we must go much further than looking at service provision. We also have an obligation to assess and understand the needs of the Borough and develop priorities and actions that will make best use of available resources to address these needs. This strategy represents a critical step in meeting this obligation.

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If you would like a summary of this information in large print, on audio cassette or language other than English, please let us know and we will be happy to arrange it

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اگر آپ کو ان معلومات کا خلاصہ بڑے حروف میں، آڈیو کیسٹ پر، یا انگریزی کے علاوہ کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہے تو برائے
مہربانی ہمیں بتائیں، ہم بخوشی آپ کے لیے اس کا انتظام کریں گے۔

برائے مہربانی 01706 217777 پر ٹیلیفون کریں یا پھر کمیونٹی کیشن سیکشن سے اس پتہ پر رابطہ قائم کریں:

Communications Section, Town Centres, Rawtenstall, BB4 7LZ

آپانی যদি এই لیفلےٹسٹیر سار سٹفےپ بڈ ہرکفر ہاپای، اڈیو کپاسےٹے اٹھوا ہڈرےڈی
ڈاڈا انڈا کوان ڈاٹھای پےتے ڈان ڈاٹھلے انڈرڈھ کرے آمادہرکے ڈانالے آمرا اڈاڈھ ڈھشی
ڈنہ ڈار ڈاڈھڈھ کرے۔

انڈرڈھ کرے 01706 217777 ای ڈاٹھارے اٹھوا کامیڈنیکیشن سیکشن، ڈاڈن سڈنڈار
اڈس، رڈےڈٹل ڈی.ڈی.8 ۹ اڈل.ڈےڈ. ای ڈیکانای ڈاڈاڈاڈا کرے۔