

Subject: Revisions to the Corporate
Priorities

Status: For Publication

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny –
Policy Development Task Group

Date: 7 December 2006

Report of: Executive Director of Resources

Portfolio

Holder: Leader of the Council
Policy and Performance

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tick Box

Draft Policy Framework Document

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Response to Consultation

New Policy Initiative

Other (please state

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek members views on proposed revisions to the Corporate Priorities and endorse them as the consultation draft to be considered along side the budget options proposed by the Cabinet.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report are designed to provide greater focus to the Council's priorities and to deliver further improvements in the corporate planning process.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report. However, the strength and effectiveness of the corporate planning process is clearly central to supporting Councillors in maintaining focus on the most important issues. Clear, relevant priorities which accurately target the most significant areas are at the heart of an effective corporate planning

process. In the absence of such priorities and framework the Council risks losing focus and becoming a reactive rather than proactive organisation.

4. BACKGROUND/REASON FOR REPORT

4.1 Over a number of years the Council has been reducing and focusing its priorities as part of the ongoing improvement journey. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of priorities from over 30 to the following which are set out in the current Corporate Improvement Plan.

Corporate Improvement Priority	Corporate Objective
Embedding our customer promise	Customers
Delivering Regeneration across the Borough	Economy
Streetscene and Liveability Strategic Partnership	Environment
Revenues and Benefits Strategic Partnership	Partnerships
Promoting Rossendale	Economy
Enabled by:	
Financial Management	Improvement
Implementing the Member Development Strategy	Community Network
Implementing the Human Resources Strategy	Improvement
Priorities to be delivered by reinvesting existing resources	
Improving performance across the 8x8 by 2008 indicators	Improvement
Delivering on the District Vision	Partnerships
Equalities	Community Network
Priorities to be delivered by attracting additional external resources	
ELEVATE - Housing Market Renewal Initiative	Economy
Improving Leisure facilities in the Borough	Culture
Spatial Development and Building Control	Environment

4.2 The setting of priorities has enabled the Council to be very focused in achieving major change and improvement both in specific services and the delivery of major projects such as Stock Transfer. Members have also used the priority setting process to support the allocation of resources. It is also the case that over time the priorities have become more externally focused. It is true to say that setting and sticking to priorities has been central to the improvements that have taken place over the last few years.

4.3 The Council reviews its priorities each year to see whether they are still relevant or whether any can be said to have been significantly progressed to now be seen as mainstream activity. This review process sits alongside the budget process as part of the policy led budgeting process Rossendale Borough Council has in place. This report outlines changes in the priorities

which the Cabinet will be consulting on prior to making their final budget proposals to the Council.

5. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The first step in reviewing the corporate priorities is to consider whether the current priority framework is still the most relevant. In other words are these the areas where the Council should be focusing its attention. The present framework contains three levels of priority includes individual projects (e.g. Revenues and Benefits Partnership) and broader themes (e.g. embedding our customer promise). This framework has enabled the Council to progress the delivery of key projects and develop some longer term focus. However, the introduction of the Programme Management approach means the progress on projects is now managed in a more integrated way which allows for the corporate priorities to have a broader focus.

5.2 In considering our priorities it is important to maintain a focus on improving our own services and influencing others in a way which will lead to improvements in the overall quality of life for people in the Borough. Having considered this the Cabinet feels that it is right to refocus the corporate priorities and to only have one level of priorities. The Cabinet also feel that it is important to retain a focus on the three enabling priorities as if these basics are not in place the Council will be unable to achieve progress against the more outwardly focused priorities. The suggested priorities, together with the corporate objectives to which they relate, and the rationale for choosing them are given below:

- Delivering quality services to our customers (*Customers, Improvement*). *While the Council has made great strides in improving the overall consistency and quality of service to customers there is still a long way for us to go to match the best in local government and the private sector. This is an area which requires sustained focus over the longer term.*
- Delivering regeneration across the Borough (*Economy, Housing*) *Ensuring the delivery of various key projects will allow the potential of the Borough's economy to be realised. This will bring clear benefits to local people in terms of accessible employment opportunities and facilities.*
- Keeping our Borough clean and green (*Environment*) *The quality of Rossendale's environment is what sets it apart. The Council has a key role in what is known as "the stewardship of place". Continuing to improve the front line services which impact on people's perceptions of the Borough is critical to achieving some of our other priorities including securing inward investment.*
- Promoting Rossendale as a place to live and visit (*Economy*) *If we are to boost the local economy we want people to come to either live in Rossendale or visit the Borough. The first step in achieving this is for them to know that Rossendale exists, and what it has to offer.*

- Improving health and well being across the Borough (*Health, Housing*) *health inequalities exist in the borough and between the borough and other areas. These are related to lifestyle and other issues, such as housing standards, which reflect patterns of deprivation. Unless we begin to address these issues we will not be able to fully exploit the benefits accruing from achievement against other priorities such as regeneration.*

Enabled by:

- Strong financial management and the delivery of value for money services (*Improvement*) *It is clearly important that the Council continues to maintain a focus on restraining cost increase while improving service quality and that financial resources are focussed on delivering those things that members have decided are important.*
- Equipping members to fulfil their leadership role in the community (*Community Network*) *The Council as a whole has grasped the importance of member development as an engine within its improvement journey and this focus needs to be maintained in the next stages of the journey.*
- Maintaining a workforce with the skills to deliver the priorities for the Borough (*Improvement*) *The Council will continue to change in the coming years, both in the way in which services are delivered and managed and in the nature of its relationship with the community. It is important that our staff are quipped with the skills necessary to maintain the Council's progress within this changing environment.*

6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

- 6.1 Changes to Corporate Priorities must have a direct impact on the way the Council allocates its financial resources. As the report states the Council already has this process and methodology in place due to its approach to priority lead budgeting.

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 7.1 No specific comments.

8. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

- 8.1 No specific comments.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The annual opportunity to review the corporate priorities presents an opportunity for the Council to take stock and refocus. The suggested revisions to the corporate priorities are intended to reflect this and provide some simplification and greater focus in the corporate planning framework.

10. RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 The Task Group are asked to determine whether they wish to submit any comments on the revised priorities to the Cabinet.

11. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 11.1 Members of the Cabinet and Executive Team. This report represents the beginning of a consultation process which will parallel that on the budget options being considered by the Cabinet.

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Corporate Improvement Plan	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=979