

Rossendale Borough Council: Building Capacity to Deliver Excellence

Policy Statement

1. Introduction

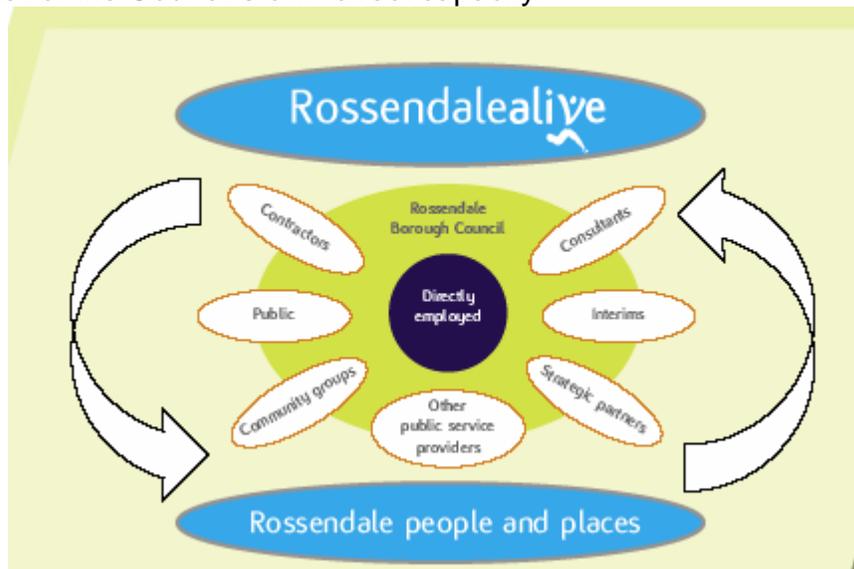
Rossendale Borough Council is a small Council with big ambitions. We recognise we do not have the capacity to deliver these ambitions on our own. Local councils have traditionally been the direct provider of a wide range of services but there are now opportunities to bring greater investment or capacity into the borough by providing these services in different ways.

But capacity building is not just about service delivery. Many of the issues facing communities today require them to take some responsibility as well as ownership of the actions. A good example is recycling – where we provide the infrastructure but need the involvement of local people in order to achieve success.

So capacity building includes developing diversity of service provision, as well as building the understanding and involvement of local people to ensure we co-produce the outcomes that matter for the borough.

Alongside this, we remain committed to the continuous improvement of those services and functions we provide directly – and we work in a range of ways to ensure learning, development and doing things better.

To capture and manage our diversity of provision we are developing our Capacity Building Model of Local Government. This is represented in figure 1 below, which reflects the range of ways in which we are increasing our operational capacity beyond that of the Council's own direct capacity.



2. The Capacity Building Approach

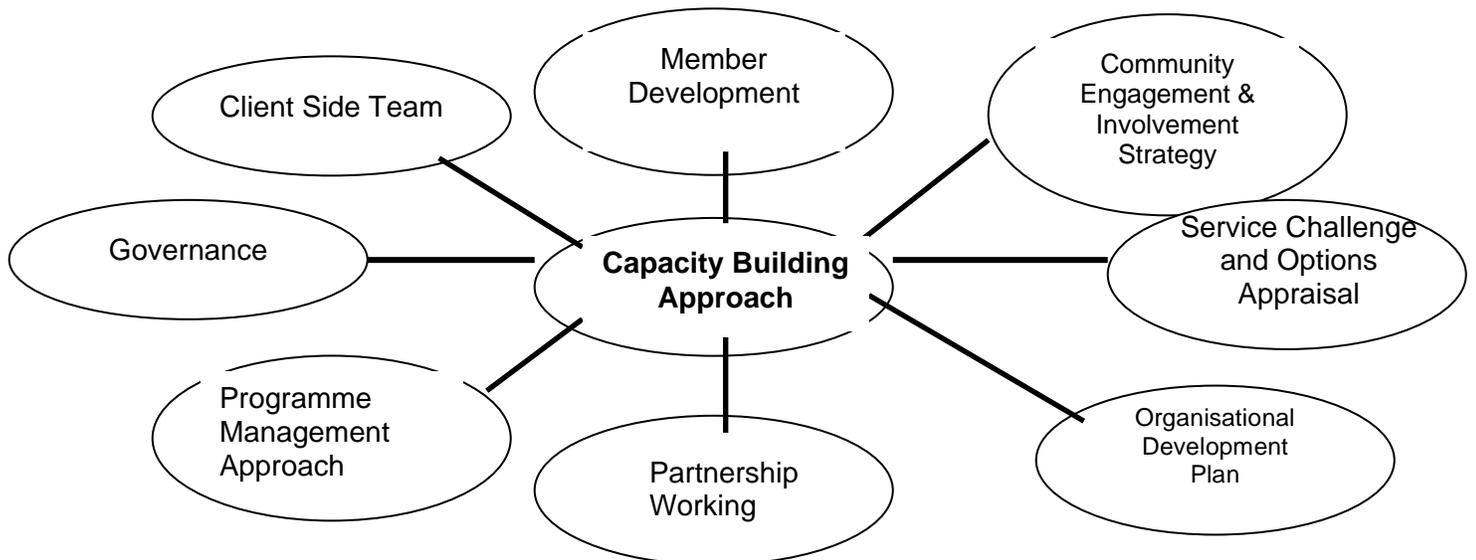
There are a number of elements which contribute to Rossendale Borough Council's Capacity Building Approach. These include mechanisms by which capacity is built within the Council and within the community in order that the objectives contained within the Community Strategy and Corporate Improvement Plan can be achieved.

The Capacity Building Approach is also about securing the form of service delivery which best meets the needs of the customers and communities we serve. The Local Government White paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' published in October 2006 states:

"The purpose and focus of partnership work is on making localities better places in which to live and work. Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements are outcome driven and focused. This will mean local authorities continuing to move away from a narrowly defined approach to service delivery towards a 'commissioning' role – being open to using the best possible ways of securing service outcomes"

There are no preconceptions in Rossendale Borough Council about the best way of delivering particular services. The current position means the Council is working with a range of providers to provide a flexible approach.

The main elements are shown below:



2.1 Member Development

The 2005 Progress Assessment published by the Audit Commission stated that political and officer leadership is now much improved and the Council is characterised by a much more positive approach. The Member Development Strategy aims at building on this to further improve the skills and effectiveness of Elected Members in the many roles they have within the Borough.

The main elements of our approach include:

- Induction for newly elected Councillors
- Individual interviews to identify training and development requirements
- Member Development Programme.

The 2006/07 programme of internally delivered sessions includes:

- Ethical governance
- Equality
- Community Leadership
- Performance Management
- Overview and Scrutiny
- Licensing
- Chairing Skills
- Corporate Improvement Programme and Progress Assessment
- Role of the Portfolio Holder
- The Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act
- Customer Focus/Client Side
- Communications/Media Training
- Street Scene
- HR Strategy/Job Evaluation
- LSP/Community Cohesion/Community engagement
- Budget 2007/08
- Corporate Plan/BVPI's/Performance
- Development Control
- Risk Management/Asset Management
- Member Development Priorities 2007/08

The Improvement and Development Agency work in partnership with Rossendale Borough Council to deliver a supporting programme of Member Development opportunities. In 2006/07 this is focused on:

- Effective overview and scrutiny in a partnership context
- Community Leadership – the role of the ward Councillor
- Partnership working
- Community Cohesion

To support this work the Council sought and received accreditation in terms of the North West member Development Charter. The Charter is a mark of best practice and quality and demonstrates that Rossendale is at the forefront of successful and innovative approaches within Elected Member Development.

2.2 Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy

We are committed to working with our communities to deliver real change in the Borough. There are some great examples of where this works well, but as part of our commitment to continuous improvement in 2005 we commissioned Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Ltd (REAL) to work in partnership to develop a Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy. This process included:

- Interviews with Community Groups
- Focus Groups for Elected members
- Focus Groups for Officers

The outcome of this work has been the agreement of core values and principles for working with our communities, together with a toolkit of ways of working.

2.3 Organisational Development Plan

The Organisational Development Plan supports the development of the Capacity Building approach. It addresses the need to have effective leadership, organisational flexibility and increased capacity to deliver improved services, create efficiency and consequently deliver better customer focus in front line services. The Plan identifies appropriate development opportunities in the following key priority areas:

- Developing the organisation
- Developing leadership capacity
- Developing the workforce skills and capacity

Rossendale Borough Council is committed to becoming an organisation that learns. This is defined as an organisation *“which learns and encourages learning amongst its staff, promoting the exchange of information between employees hence creating a more knowledgeable workforce.”* This commitment will enable the Council to develop into a flexible organisation where employees will accept and adapt to new ideas and changes delivering organisational improvement and improved customer satisfaction.

2.3 Partnership Working

Rossendale Borough Council is engaged in many different types of partnership which vary in size, scope and impact. A Policy Statement has been developed that sets out the process of ensuring we have the appropriate governance arrangements in place for the partnerships we are involved in, that they are contributing a valuable outcome and that they are effective.

During the 2006/07 financial year an audit all of our partnerships is being carried out to ensure they are fit for purpose and contributing to the delivery of our objectives and priorities.

2.4 Programme and Performance Management Approach

In Rossendale Borough Council effective programme management, underpinned by a rigorous approach to performance management, is seen as essential to building, maintaining and optimising capacity. It ensures that we remain focused on our priorities and have the required resources in place to achieve our objectives. Our programme management approach is led through the Corporate Programme Board and is underpinned by a number of elements:

- Project management
- Procurement
- Risk management
- Performance management
- Financial management

Our overall approach has been developed in partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency, and close working with the Audit Commission has contributed to our approach on procurement, risk and financial management.

The Council's Performance Management Framework enables all stakeholders to monitor the progress made towards the achievement of Rossendale's Corporate Vision and Mission by demonstrating the achievement of stated priorities, or by showing where performance is falling behind and is in need of review and improvement.

2.5 Service Assurance/Client Teams

Client side management skills are essential for ensuring the chosen mechanism delivers for the Council and the Borough. The Service Assurance Team and Client Team have been developed within Rossendale Borough Council to monitor service quality and performance.

These teams provide a core of expertise in the performance management of the Council's commercial partnership arrangements.

2.6 Service Challenge and Options Appraisal

Central to our approach of building capacity is regular challenge of our existing service delivery methods. In some instances the options appraisal exercise we carry out as part of this challenge results in the decision to deliver services in an alternative way. Rossendale Borough Council has a rigorous procurement methodology which supports this.

2.7 Governance

Effective management of services the Council provides, as well as the partnerships it plays a role in, need to be rooted in a strong system of governance with the principles of transparency and accountability at the core.

The governance framework is intended to ensure that the services we secure:

- meet the needs of the community
- exercise appropriate stewardship of public funds
- manage and mitigate risks

Rossendale Borough Council continues to develop its governance arrangements on a number of fronts, including:

- strengthening the Council's financial management and providing a sound financial base
- key strategic frameworks such as procurement and risk management
- performance management and scrutiny of service delivery.

3.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

Elements of our Capacity Building approach is delivered through a separate delivery mechanism – this policy statement sets out the overall context and direction for these.

The monitoring and evaluation arrangements are contained within these separate documents and integrated into Business Plans as part of the delivery infrastructure and monitored through the Council's Performance Management Framework.

An annual report on delivery of the overall structure will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny each year as part of reporting the Council's overall achievements.