

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

### 1. AMBITION

1.1. As part of the introduction to the 15 year Rossendale Community Strategy, the Chair of the Rossendale Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) wrote:-

1.2. ***“The vision - Rossendale Alive expresses our intent as a partnership to provide Rossendale with one seamless service. To create a Rossendale, which is full of opportunities: more prosperous, with vibrant communities, with a high quality local environment and streetscape, and where people experience better housing, health and education. There is a mood for change and a new ‘can do’ attitude in Rossendale. Rossendale is Alive with potential and its growing.”***

1.3. This narrative reflects the growing optimism that is evident across Rossendale and the desire for all partners including the Council to work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Borough and its communities. Key to this has been the embedding of the Community Strategy and the achievement of early successes across each of the following 8 strategic themes:-

- Community Safety – a place where people do not live in fear of crime. ***An early example of success is through the Crime & Disorder Partnership where we have seen a Borough wide reduction in Crime of 11.1% for the year April 04 to March 05 with a comparative 7% reduction for the period - April 05 to Oct 05.***
- Health – a place where vulnerable people are looked after and all residents can look forward to a long healthy life. ***The Council has worked in partnership with the Primary Care Trust to develop and implement one of the first operational LIFT centres in the Country providing high quality Health Care provision for local people.***
- Education – a place where people of all ages will be well educated and capable of providing business with the human resource to compete in highly competitive global markets. ***As an example of progress we will meet our target of 49 new full day care places for ages 0 – 5 which exceeds the target for the Children Centre Initiative by 10 places.***
- Environment – a place which has attractive rural settings, a fantastic street scene and is easily accessible for all. ***Established four Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams (NEAT) across the four principal towns of the Borough. Being able to respond to the needs of local people to improve their environment.***

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

- Housing – a place where people have a choice of high quality housing which is affordable for all. ***In just 14 months we have achieved a successful Stock Transfer ballot which has seen 82.5% of tenants who voted, voting 'yes'. This represents 51.5% of all tenants who were eligible to vote and means that Council homes are on course to transfer to Green Vale Homes next year who will spend around £40 million on a programme of repairs and improvements for tenants' homes in the first five years after transfer.***
  - Economy – a place where job prospects and wages are high and the cost of living is low. ***Through Master Planning we have engaged the private, public and voluntary sectors in activity such as an eco town and adrenalin gateway concepts together with progressing projects across major retail, a new bus station and a greater choice of town centre living accommodation.***
  - Community Network – a place where all opinions count and people respect and celebrate difference in gender, sexuality, race, culture and religion. ***In terms of developing social enterprise we have established a network of over 400 community and voluntary sector groups. In addition to this, we have changed from the 4<sup>th</sup> option of governance to a Cabinet and Leader model which makes Rossendale only one of two local authority authorities to have done so in the last two years. This makes for modern, accountable and transparent decision-making arrangements within the Council.***
  - Culture – a place which is a great place to live for people of all ages and is widely accepted as a major place to visit. ***Increased customer satisfaction, profitability and the number of leisure visits to facilities by 54,800 (12.4%) following the creation of Rossendale Leisure Trust.***
- 1.4. Rossendale Borough Council's contribution to the vision is defined by its overarching mission of 8 X 8 by 2008. This means that by 2008 the Council is determined to have 8 out of 10 customers satisfied with its services. In addition, the Council will seek to have 8 out of 10 of its corporate priority indicators meeting local targets and/or in the top quartile of performance by 2008.
- 1.5. Rossendale BC is ambitious for the borough and for itself. The Council is committed to securing improved services to local people, whether these are provided directly by the Council or by other agencies. The Council has recognised that delivering the vision for the borough means championing local people together with the borough of Rossendale itself. Work is taking place to move from a 'provider' to a 'commissioner' of services and developing an enhanced local governance role for Elected Members.

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

1.6. Similar to the LSP, the Council shares the five objectives of Environment, Housing, Economy, Community Network and Culture. In addition to this, the Council has three internal objectives which are Improvement, Customers and Partnerships. The following chart shows a visual representation of how the objectives of the Council are shared. It shows how the Vision and the Mission are supported by both the shared objectives of the LSP & Council. It also demonstrates those LSP objectives which are primarily the responsibility of other partner agencies such as the Police – Community Safety; LCC Social Services & Primary Care Trust – Health; Local Education Authority and Accrington & Rossendale College – Education.

### Vision and Mission - what matters to local people?

This chart shows a visual representation of how the objectives of the LSP and the Council are shared. It shows how the Mission and Vision are supported by both the shared objectives of the LSP & Council. It also demonstrates those LSP objectives which are primarily the responsibility of other partner organisations such as the Police – Community Safety; Social Services & Primary Care Trust – Health; Local Education Authority and Rossendale & Accrington College – Education



1.7. This collaborative approach to delivering on the needs of local people has resulted in the Council coming together with several partners on a number of key issues. For example the Council and the County Council are now working closely on Local Area Agreements and assessing the impacts of service delivery on both Young and Old People. In addition to this, and working beyond the natural boundaries of the Borough, the Council is a major contributor to the Transformational Agenda for East Lancashire as a part of the Elevate Housing Market Renewal process and the wider Northern Way.

1.8. To summarise, the Local Strategic Partnership has improved beyond all recognition over the last few years and it is a credit to all the various partners - including the Community Network of over 400 community and voluntary sector groups - that there is a clear long term vision for

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

the Borough. There is a collective understanding that there is still much work to do particularly in the areas of Health and Housing but the appetite to deliver is strong and this has been recognised by the Government Office North West (GONW) who have recently classified our LSP as “Amber/Green” which is a positive achievement from a non Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) locality.

### 2. PRIORITISATION & FOCUS

2.1. The Councils desire to deliver on the vision for the Borough is such that we believe our approach to partnership working is providing local government with an example of how to recover and make sustainable improvements in services to local people over a shorter time span than has been the case in past. An example of this is our approach to Housing Stock Transfer which following some indecision over a number of years, has seen the Council work with tenants over a 18 month period to select a preferred partner and achieve a positive ballot vote for Housing Stock Transfer.

2.2. The Housing Stock Transfer process represents a clear example of how the Councils ability to prioritise and remain focussed has improved. Key to driving through improvement activity such as Stock Transfer has been the ability of Elected Members to identify “what are” and “what are not” priorities. Over the last two years the Council has gone from having 33 priorities through to 8 key “Priorities for Improvement” which are as follows:-

**Finance & Risk Management** (Improvement)

**Member Development & Political Arrangements** (Community Network)

**Human Resources** (Improvement)

**Housing Stock Transfer** (Housing)

**Customer Services** (Customers)

**Revenues & Benefits** (Customers)

**Street Scene & Liveability** (Environment)

**Rawtenstall Town Centre** (Economy)

2.3. This work has also resulted in a clear articulation of activities that are to be delivered through either existing resources or greater external investment. For example, Spatial Development (Planning) was not a “Priority for Improvement” but targeted as an area requiring “greater external investment”. In 2005/06 the service achieved a significant increase in Planning Delivery Grant (a total allocation of £375k) which has enabled continued investment in improving the service and addressing some of the long standing issues that have affected service quality. As a part of the 2006/2007 business planning process, Elected Members will use feedback from Area Fora, Lancashire Locals, Customer Research and other consultation mechanisms to further refine the Councils priorities.

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

- 2.4. Prioritisation without the ability to remain focussed negates the effect of setting priorities. A crucial part of ensuring that the Council (has and) will continue to remain focussed has been the implementation of new permanent Corporate Governance Arrangements. Through collaboration with partners such as the Improvement & Development Agency (I&DeA) and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Elected Members have taken the lead in moving from 4<sup>th</sup> Option to a permanent Leader and Cabinet model with Cabinet Portfolios clearly focused on the Councils' priority areas, and two Overview and Scrutiny Committees covering the key areas of Policy and Performance.
- 2.5. As well as Corporate Governance there are a number of other changes that have been implemented to ensure both the Council and LSP remain focussed on delivery. For example, the LSP Executive regularly reviews the performance of its 8 corporate theme areas as a part of its monthly meeting process and this has been a major factor in the LSP classification as "Amber/Green" by GONW.
- 2.6. In terms of the Council, regular monitoring & reporting of the Council's 2005 – 2008 Corporate Improvement Plan ensures that a constant focus is maintained by Elected Members against the achievement of the Councils objectives and priorities. Progress reports against the goals and targets within the plan are reported to the Council's Cabinet & Improvement Board on a regular basis. Likewise, progress against the goals and targets of the Council's Business Plans are closely monitored with updates provided to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive by Heads of Service on a regular basis. Minutes of these update meetings are then made available via the Councils intranet.
- 2.7. Reports detailing the Council's performance against Key Performance Indicators (incorporating the basket of 8 x 8 by 2008 PI's) are presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and there is clear evidence that as a result of the Member Development programme, Elected Members are becoming much more confident in taking the lead in scrutinising and challenging the information relating to performance presented to them.
- 2.8. In summary, the Council has developed a track record in both "taking and sticking to tough decisions". This has resulted in better outcomes for the residents of Rossendale as is evidenced by the creation of the Highways Partnership and the Leisure Trust. This progress has also been endorsed by the former Minister for Local and Regional Government, Nick Raynsford who wrote: *"I have noted the progress made in Rossendale over the last three years, and that the pace of change is quickening. I know that progress has involved some very difficult meetings and decisions, yet am encouraged that the council has stuck to the task"*.

## 3. CAPACITY & INVESTMENT

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

- 3.1. Through the Corporate Mission of 8 x 8 by 2008, Elected Members have implemented substantive changes in Leisure, Housing, Highways, Revenues & Benefits, Organisational Structure, Corporate Governance, Master Planning, Accommodation, Local Strategic Partnership, Development Control, Finance and Customer Services et al. At the same time performance against the Best Value indicators, which form part of 8 x 8 by 2008, has improved by an index of 71% since 2000 albeit from a comparatively low starting base.
- 3.2. The Council has been able to progress this level of change through its innovative approach to capacity and investment. Capacity has always been an issue for the Council but our journey from being a provider of services to that of being a commissioner has provided us with an expertise and resource base which outweighs what you would typically expect from many Councils.
- 3.3. Against our Corporate Improvement Priority of **Rawtenstall Town Centre** (Economy) we have enlisted the support of the NWDA, Lancashire County Council, Ove Arup, GVA Grimleys, Urban Vision and LCDL to assist us in driving forward our master plan to regenerate the Boroughs major town centre. This has led to a growth in major retail investment along with the prospect of £100 million worth of major regenerative activity (subject to planning consent) in relation to the Valley Centre, Bocholt Way, New Hall Hey and a new Bus Station.
- 3.4. Also, across our priority of **Housing Stock Transfer** (Housing) we have worked with New Charter Housing (Tameside) and selected Pennine Housing 2000 as a preferred partner which has already added further capacity to Housing in terms of the repairs and maintenance service and will ensure that unlike other stock transfers our tenants will feel positive impacts from day one of the new landlord taking control of the housing stock. The ringing endorsement of 82.4% of our tenants demonstrates the Council's ability to engage with its customers.
- 3.5. Through the introduction of interim management from Enterprise PLC we have seen the development of our Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams and the implementation of robust improvement plans for the core functions of **Street Scene & Liveability** (Environment). In addition to this we have managed to get local communities involved in our improvement programme as evidenced in our recycling performance rates. For the Council, this kind of capacity building is probably the most important example of where we want to be in the future.
- 3.6. In relation to **Customer Services** (Customers) and **Revenues & Benefits** (Customers), we have worked closely with HACAS Chapman Hendy, Liverpool City Council and Liberata in terms of improving the capacity and sustainability of our services to customers. As a result,

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

we have seen continuous annual improvements in Benefits processing times resulting in an overall BFI service judgement from “Poor” to “Fair”. More importantly, through this level of partnership working we have become much clearer about how we go about developing sustainable and high levels of Customer Service which is crucial if we are to improve our customer satisfaction performance.

- 3.7. The commissioning approach to user led priorities has also enabled us to make significant progress against our enabling priorities such as **Finance & Risk Management** (Improvement), **Member Development & Political Arrangements** (Community Network) and **Human Resources** (Improvement).
- 3.8. In the case of **Member Development & Political Arrangements** (Community Network), with the assistance of the Improvement & Development Agency (I&DeA) a system of Personal Development Planning (PDP) for members has been introduced. All elected members have been offered a one-to-one Personal Development Plan interview during June, July and August. The take up has been encouraging and by the end of August 33 out of 36 members will have had an interview. This compares favourably to other authorities where the average take-up is below 50%.
- 3.9. The PDP's have been used to inform the Councils' member development programme, and we believe that this activity together with the other substantive member development work has been a primary driver behind the Council's ability to change and improve rapidly. Through I&DeA research, Members have indicated that they feel much more confident about their roles within the new Corporate Governance Arrangements and there is a growing understanding about their wider Community Leadership responsibilities as evidenced in their contribution to the town centre regeneration programme.
- 3.10. In relation to **Human Resources** (Improvement), the Council is almost one year on since it implemented its Organisational Review. At the time this involved the disestablishment of 37 senior posts (i.e., redeployment and/or redundancy) which represented a major change for the Council and not unexpectedly impacted on staff morale. As a part of this process and with the assistance of the North West Employers Organisation, we have been successful in recruiting a number of key people to boost the capacity of the Council. In particular, we have done well in recruiting key personnel across most of our “Priority for Improvement” areas.
- 3.11. As a part of bringing in new people we have developed an induction programme which has received good feedback from participants and we have had discussions through our Staff Morale Working Group (SMWG) about developing a similar programme for existing staff to make sure that we all share the agenda for the future. Indeed the SMWG, which was created after the Councils first ever

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

staff survey, has proved to be an effective mechanism for addressing staff morale. The group is made up of non trade union staff, trade union representatives and the CEO and has the primary remit of ensuring the implementation of the Staff Morale Action Plan which was developed through Overview & Scrutiny.

- 3.12. The Council has also responded to concerns expressed in the staff survey about Health and Safety by investing in moving a large proportion of staff into modern offices at Futures Park & Hurstwood Court. This decision also has the dual effect of supporting Bacup & Stacksteads regeneration activity through supporting the Futures Park project and the delivery of the Rawtenstall Town Centre priority.
- 3.13. The Council is committed to the ongoing development & effectiveness of the workforce as a part of its Human Resources Strategy. Over 80% of Council staff have participated in a Personal Development Interview during 2005. As well as providing clear targets for each member of staff this process also helps to demonstrate to staff how they fit into the 'bigger picture' by showing how what they do contributes to the overall objectives of the Service/Council. The Council has also made a significant investment in its staff as a part of its Training & Development Plan. Features of this include weekly day release for up to 12 staff to do the Certificate in Management Studies qualification as a part of building the management and leadership capacity of the Council.
- 3.14. The achievement of value for money is central to Rossendale's improvement journey and this is why our number one "Priority for Improvement" is **Finance & Risk Management** (Improvement). With the assistance of the Audit Commission the Council has embarked upon a process of Self Assessment across Financial Management and this had led to a range of positive changes such as improved financial monitoring and the development of a fit for purpose Medium Term Financial Strategy. This has provided a sound evidence base upon which Elected Members can continue to take difficult decisions in order to make the step change required in performance. In particular Elected Members have embarked upon the course of shifting the Council from being a provider of, at best, mediocre services, to a commissioner of services which represent good value to local taxpayers.
- 3.15. The Councils approach to financial management has led to a replenishment of reserves (£500,000) ahead of the regulatory targets set whilst at the same time underpinning substantive change (including implementation of a new Finance System) and continued improvement in overall performance. The key factors in making this a reality are as follows:
- Seeking to improve by constantly challenging the way we provide services;

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

- Self awareness;
- Preparedness to change;
- Decisive leadership through taking tough decisions and sticking to them.

3.16. In terms of the Gershon agenda the Council has already identified all but £43k of the combined year 1 and 2 requirement, and it is anticipated that the effect of the review activity currently underway will generate the balance. The Council accepts this is not enough and is looking to use the continual review of its activities and structures as the journey from provider to commissioner continues to identify further efficiencies. This forms a key element of the ongoing reviews of staffing structures and business processes throughout the organisation which have been initiated as the members of the new Management Team have joined the Council. The key message is that, as an organisation, we must get more for our money both in terms of volume and quality of service. Working with Members, senior managers will use key cost comparator data and performance data to identify areas for further attention using the commissioning process, while individual business plans will identify smaller scale areas for efficiency improvement.

3.17. In terms of risk management one of the major investments that the Council has made is its partnership arrangement with Lancashire County Council to manage and provide the Internal Audit support to the Council. This has led to the production and implementation of a risk based Audit Plan that is based around the Council's priorities for improvement. In addition to this, the Council has also approved a Risk Management Strategy which highlights how strategic and operational risks should be managed in the future. As we go through the current cycle of priority setting, finance and business planning for 2006/2007, our risk management process will transfer on to our Covalent Performance Management system ensuring that Elected Members can monitor on a real time basis how priorities are being progressed and how key risks managed.

3.18. Outside of the "Priority for Improvement" areas there are still issues of Capacity and Investment that still need to be addressed fully. An example of this is our approach to ICT, in particular our partnering relationship with Vivista. In spring 2005, recognising the ongoing cost-performance focus which is incumbent upon us and in the advent of substantial structural changes, the Council engaged Best Practice Group to carry out a Best Value review of the IT outsourcing agreement with Vivista.

3.19. The objective of the review was to examine the outsourcing contracts history and the service performance from a Best Value perspective and to assist in achieving a revised operating framework which suits both parties, meets or exceeds RBC's objectives, offers demonstrable best value while returning a fair gross profit margin to

## **SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005**

Vivista. This review will be reported to Overview & Scrutiny in the New Year and represents further evidence of the Council's commitment to its guiding principles of change through challenging the status quo.

### **4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1. The Performance Management Framework for the Council is built around eight objectives, five of which are shared with the LSP and three of which are internal to the Council. This framework is laid out in the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan which demonstrates the Council's 'Golden Thread' and highlights how the needs of local people will be met not only by the Council but by other key partners such as the Police, Primary Care Trust and County Council.
- 4.2. The Corporate Improvement Plan is the Council's primary strategic planning document and forms the backbone of the Council's Performance Management Framework it shows the Council's 3 year goals – a clear set of actions that show what local people can expect to get better and by when.
- 4.3. The Council has recognised the fundamental importance of having a robust Performance Management Framework (PMF) in place in order to monitor and improve its performance towards achieving Rossendale's corporate vision and objectives. Building upon the foundations laid during 2004 with the adoption of the Vision 'Rossendale Alive' and the contribution of the Council's Mission of 8 x 8 by 2008 the Council's PMF has been further developed within the Council during 2005.
- 4.4. A culture of performance management is becoming embedded throughout the Council as both national and local priorities are translated into action plans and cascaded down through the Community Strategy and Corporate Improvement Plan, with performance information being used to target areas for improvement, monitor achievement of improvement and take corrective action where necessary.
- 4.5. At the operational service level, the Council's Business Plans show the contribution that they will make to the corporate and community objectives and are used as a basis for setting the Personal Development Interviews with staff in each service area, thus demonstrating the Council's 'Golden Thread' and completing the cycle.
- 4.6. Performance against each of these plans is regularly monitored. The Corporate Improvement Plan is monitored by the Council's Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees with reports being produced to show exactly what has and has not been achieved and the requisite action planning that is required. To reinforce the importance of Performance Management, Council Business Plans are also discussed between the appropriate Head of Service, the Leader and

## **SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005**

the Chief Executive. The notes of these meetings are also made available on the intranet.

**4.7.** Like many Performance Management frameworks the “proof of the pudding” is in the ability to improve performance. In Rossendale we have a number of substantive examples of where performance is being enhanced as a result of our way of working. As an example, in our 2004 staff survey, staff morale was highlighted as a significant challenge for the authority. In consultation with staff, an action plan was developed through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and progress against this is monitored by the Staff Morale Working Group and is programmed to go back to Overview & Scrutiny. The success or otherwise of the action plan will be evidenced through the next staff survey which is due to be issued in January 2006. There are a number of other examples of this which include Sickness Absence, Development Control, Financial Monitoring and monitoring the progress of the Leisure Trust.

## **5. ACHIEVEMENT IN IMPROVEMENT and QUALITY OF SERVICE**

**5.1.** As a result of the Councils ability to prioritise, many of our improvement areas are linked to the Priorities for Improvement. The following represents a snapshot of key achievements together with an assessment of activity that is still to be achieved.

### **5.2. Finance & Risk Management (Improvement)**

**5.3.** We have achieved a stable financial base upon which to deliver the priorities for the Council by:-

- Improving the overall rates of Council Tax Collection which has assisted in helping to keep the Council Tax increase to 4.99% in line with Government guidelines for low single growth and the prerequisite of a balanced budget.
- Effective, Member led, financial monitoring which has led to us meeting our three year reserves target of £500k a year ahead of schedule. As a result of this activity we have also been able to create a Change Management Reserve of £323k for use in achieving the priorities of the Council during 2005/06 and beyond.
- The approval of a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This provides a key building block for the Council in terms of managing its finances and planning for the 2006/07 budget process and beyond.
- The adoption of a Risk Management Strategy which alongside with the MTFS provides a framework for managing those key strategic and operational risk that may impact on delivery.
- Progressing, as a part of our overall Performance Management Framework, with regular Financial Monitoring reports which update and/or provide recommendation for action to ensure that priorities are met.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005**

- Transferring the management of our Leisure facilities to a Trust we have generated cashable efficiencies of £50k whilst increasing visits to facilities by 54,800 (12.4%) and generating user satisfaction in excess of 80%.
- Managing other change activity such as Decriminalisation of Parking, Licensing and the Organisational Review within planned capital and revenue targets.

**5.4.** We will further improve the management of our financial resources through:-

- Investment in new financial systems due to be fully implemented by March 2006 and the appointment of 2 further professionally qualified staff.
- Delivery of a fit for purpose Asset Management Plan (AMP) and Capital Strategy by 31 March 2006.
- Approval of the Procurement Strategy which is due to be considered by Cabinet in December.
- Minimising, through the transfer agreement, the financial impact on the General Fund from Housing Stock Transfer together with a significant reduction in our long term debt.
- Development of a financial competency framework for members, managers and finance staff through developing a long term relationship with the Institute of Public Finance (IPF). This work will also ensure that we are maximising performance against the CIPFA Financial Management Model benchmarks.

**5.5. Member Development & Political Arrangements** (Community Network)

**5.6.** We have improved Elected Member leadership and retained focus on our priorities by:

- Becoming one of only two Councils since 2000 to move from the fourth option of corporate governance to the Leader and Cabinet model with a revised constitution.
- Further equipping Elected Members with the skills for now and the future by developing a comprehensive Member Development Strategy formulated on the back of Member Personal Development Plans (33 out of 36 Members).
- Increasing the participation of Elected Members in issues that expand the boundaries of core council service delivery but affect the lives of local people (e.g., Elevate Housing Market Renewal; Regional Economic Strategy and the Northern Way).
- Creating a platform for greater collaboration and partnership working through participation in the East Lancashire Leadership Development programme.
- Using the Overview & Scrutiny process to develop policy such as the Human Resources Strategy and improve performance across

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

areas such as Council staff morale; Development Control major applications and the Leisure Trust.

5.7. We will continue to strengthen Elected Member Leadership by:

- Implementing and reviewing the impact of the Member Development Strategy.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the new constitution together with measuring the impact of the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- Improving our approach to community consultation and engagement through greater participation through the Local Strategic Partnership and refining our approach to Area Fora and the County Council's Lancashire Local Forum.
- Continuing to work with partners such as the I&DeA in areas such as strengthening the co-leadership between Members and Officers.
- Ongoing review and development of the role of Overview and Scrutiny within a Cabinet system, including broadening the scope of scrutiny beyond the Council's own services.
- Developing with Elected Members Rossendale BC's approach to community leadership as we migrate from being a provider to commissioner of services.
- Providing a dedicated meeting space for Elected Members as a part of the Accommodation Strategy.

5.8. **Human Resources** (Improvement)

5.9. We have built capacity within the organisation to deliver improvements in performance through:-

- Successfully implementing and embedding the Organisational Review which has significantly enhanced capacity across the Council's key Priorities for Improvement.
- Revising our induction programme for new employees which has received positive feedback from participants in terms of understanding the objectives and priorities of the Council and how they can contribute
- Progressing the third annual cycle of Performance Development Reviews which has over 80% coverage for all staff and has led to better reinforcement of the Council's "Golden Thread".
- Implementing a Staff Morale Action Plan as a result of the 2004 staff survey. Features of this include moving staff to better accommodation at both Hurstwood Court and Futures Park together with developing the One Stop Shop and refurbishing the offices at Stubbylee.
- Creating the Staff Morale Working Group which consists of Trade Union and Non TU representation and is tasked with overseeing the delivery of the Staff Morale Action Plan.

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

- Improving communications through the Grapevine staff newsletter and ensuring consistent and regular team briefings across the Council to ensure corporate priority messages are communicated and provide a mechanism for two-way communication.
- Implementing our Training and Development Plan to build on the competencies and skills of staff with particular focus on management development, equalities and building on previous focus of customer service and IT. Features of this include an innovative Certificate in Management Studies programme aimed at building management capacity and meeting the succession planning needs of the Council.
- Embedding a range of comprehensive HR Policies and Procedures which enable effective performance management and re-enforces the 'Golden Thread'.
- Proactively supporting Heads of Service and Managers in embedding absence management procedures to improve productive time.

5.10. We will continue to deliver a culture which is one of continuous improvement and where the customer is the primary focus for staff by:-

- Ensuring that our Customer Service standards are embedded across the Council.
- Advancing with a Management Development programme to ensure that the Council has the appropriate skills and competencies available to manage its Commissioner/Community Leadership role.
- Measuring staff satisfaction in January 2006 to ensure progress against the Staff Morale Action Plan and make any adjustments as is necessary.
- Agreeing with the Trade Unions a plan for implementing Single Status and Job Evaluation as a part of the Councils workforce planning.
- Measuring the impact of our absence management work and adjusting our action planning accordingly.
- Implementing a new HR System to provide effective management information which will create further efficiencies to enable resources to be reallocated to priority areas.
- Implementing and delivering against the objectives of our Human Resources Strategy.

5.11. **Housing Stock Transfer** (Housing)

5.12. We have taken a major step towards delivering the Rossendale Standard for Social Housing Tenants and contributing to the overall Housing Strategy for the Borough by:-

- Achieving a successful Stock Transfer ballot which has seen 82.5% of tenants who voted, voting 'yes'. This represents 51.5% of all tenants who were eligible to vote and means that Council

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

homes are on course to transfer to Green Vale Homes next year who will spend around £40 million on a programme of repairs and improvements for tenants' homes in the first five years after transfer.

5.13. We will ensure that Green Vale Homes starts delivering on the Rossendale Standard by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 through:-

- Concluding the negotiations for the formulation of Green Vale Homes based upon the needs of tenants and without unnecessarily burdening the Council Tax payers of Rossendale.
- Developing a Strategic Housing Function which ensures that the Borough Wide Housing Strategy is delivered and is able to meet the Audit Commission assessment scheduled for December 2006.

5.14. **Customer Services** (Customers)

5.15. We have taken steps to put customers first and improve our customer satisfaction rating by:-

- Improving over 57% of our 2004/2005 performance indicators against the previous year.
- Consulting with local people, elected members and staff to produce a comprehensive Customer Services Strategy which has a capital investment programme of £800k.
- Developing a One Stop Shop for our customers which is dealing with RBC customer enquiries, complaints and compliments. This service will also manage or redirect customer contact on behalf of Lancashire County Council, Green Vale Homes and Rossendale Leisure Trust.
- Launching our new website which has opened a further access point for local people. To date there has been over 0.5 million hits since the new site was made available.
- Achieving increased customer satisfaction ratings across our Leisure facilities, Environmental Health and our Housing repairs service.
- Providing a better response to customers with Highways related issues through our partnership with Lancashire County Council.
- Achieving ISO 9001:2000 for our quality management system in Building Control to ensure consistency in quality of service to customers.
- Recruiting a Head of Customer Services & E-Government to oversee the implementation of the Customer Services Strategy.

5.16. We will continue to put our customers first and improve our customer satisfaction rating by:-

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

- Improving our performance against the 50% of performance indicators that still remain in the bottom quartile of performance.
- Reviewing the impact of our Customer Services Strategy through the Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- Measuring our overall Customer Satisfaction rating on an annual basis and using this information to influence our approach to Customer Services.
- Embedding “Our Customer Promise” which standardises our approach to customers in terms of enquiries, complaints and compliments.
- Improving on-line access to services and meeting our BVPI 157 target.
- Implementing the Virtual Telephone Contact Centre project with the County Council to ensure resolution of 80% of customer enquiries at first point of contact.
- Continuing with our Customer Services Training for front line staff as a part of our Council wide Training and Development Plan.
- Completing the re-building of Whitworth Civic Hall which will ensure that we are providing high quality One Stop Shop facilities on the East side of the Borough.

### 5.17. **Revenues & Benefits (Customers)**

5.18. We have improved our Housing Benefits and Council Tax services by:-

- Receiving an overall Benefits Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) assessment of “Fair” which has moved us from a previous 2003/2004 rating of “Poor”.
- Improving the number of days to process new claims for Benefits and change of circumstances.
- Successfully working with partners (i.e., Tameside Council, Liverpool City Council, BT, Liberata) to boost capacity and improve service delivery.
- Increasing the number of successful benefit prosecutions and publicising the results to deter future fraud.
- Achieving a 1.8% increase in Council tax collection which is amongst the highest rates of improvement nationally.

5.19. We will continue to improve our Housing Benefits and Council Tax services through:-

- Selecting a partner to deliver Housing Benefits, Council Tax and Customer Contact Services.
- Developing client side arrangements to ensure that the new partnership delivers.
- Investigating opportunities for pooling client side resources with Hyndburn and Burnley Borough Councils.

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

- Implementing the Benefits Service Operational Plan for 2005/2006 which has been approved by the Department for Work and Pensions.

### 5.20. Street Scene & Liveability (Environment)

5.21. We have provided high quality, value for money StreetScene services to local people by:-

- Contributing through the Crime & Disorder Partnership to a Borough wide reduction in Crime of 11.1% for the year April 04 to March 05 with a comparative 7% reduction for the period - April 05 to Oct 05
- Strengthening our Community Safety resource with the recruitment of a Community Safety officer to progress Anti-Social Behaviour activity and promote the positive impact of crime reduction work to the wider community.
- Carrying out enforcement action across duty of care, nuisance; provision of receptacles, pest control and public health.
- Utilising open space within Whitaker Park to develop a Community Funded Multi Use Games Area for young people in Borough.
- Achieving customer satisfaction ratings of 80% very satisfied in relation to inspections under food and health & safety and requests for service in relation to all aspects of Environmental Health.
- Introducing Alcohol Control Zones and implementing test purchasing for underage sales of alcohol.
- Achieving a 95% return rate on applications as a part of implementing the 2003 Licensing Act.
- Implementing decriminalised parking enforcement to ease parking congestion in Rawtenstall and other parts of the Borough.
- Increasing the level of recycling and composting as a percentage of household waste.
- Inspecting and removing all abandoned vehicles within 24 hours.
- Reducing the level of household waste collected per resident from a 2003/2004 figure of 393.34kg to a 2004/2005 outturn of 377.06kg.
- Reducing the average time to remove fly tipping down to 1.75 days
- Securing investment of £1.5m from Lancashire County Council to improve waste transfer and recycling facilities in Rossendale.
- Establishing four Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams (NEAT) across the four principal towns of the Borough.
- Achieving 3 national prizes for our Dog Warden Service and investing in a rapid response "Poop Scoop" machine for dog fouling.
- Implementing land drainage activity which has reduced the volume of calls during periods of rain and decreased the incidents of flooding to private property.
- Completing a base line assessment of frontline StreetScene services to inform the options appraisal process.

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

5.22. We will continue to provide high quality, value for money StreetScene services to local people by:-

- Completing the options appraisal process and obtaining Cabinet and Council approval for the way forward to improve services.
- Implementing the action plans that have been developed in response to the base line assessment of frontline StreetScene services.
- Embedding the internal Environmental Strategy for recycling and energy conservation.
- Supporting the Health agenda through the introduction of Smoke Free Rossendale.
- Ensuring that the Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams (N.E.A.T) become coterminous with the Police and other partners as a part of strengthening our approach to Neighbourhood working.
- Continuing to reduce our overall crime figures with renewed focus on reducing criminal damage and continuing to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Entering into the Lancashire Waste Partnership Agreement to introduce 6 materials for recycling from April 2006.
- Adopting and implementing a clear strategy for Car Parking Management across the Borough.
- Preparing for and successfully managing the Audit Commission StreetScene review in February 2006.

5.23. **Rawtenstall Town Centre** (Economy)

5.24. We have contributed to the Regeneration of Rawtenstall Town Centre by:-

- Consulting widely and capturing the views of local people and businesses as a part of the Master Planning process for the town centre.
- Agreeing a partnership with CNC Properties for the delivery of a £33.5 million Valley Centre scheme which subject to planning permission aims to provide 18 retail units; 95 residential units (20% affordable) and a multi-storey car park.
- Giving planning consent for the development of the new Asda Superstore which is due to open in Summer 2006.
- Giving planning consent for the existing Asda site on Bocholt Way to be developed for retail.
- Obtaining confirmation from the County Council on its commitment to a new £4m Bus Station investment in Rawtenstall.
- Improving our approach to processing major planning applications through agreeing interim arrangements with Urban Vision.

5.25. We will continue to progress the Regeneration of Rawtenstall Town Centre by:-

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

- Dealing with major planning applications for both the Valley Centre Scheme and the new Bus Station early in the New Year.
- Ensuring through our partnership with Urban Vision that all major planning applications across the District are processed for an officer recommendation within the statutory 13 week timeframe.
- Completing the consultation on the Rawtenstall Master Plan and submitting the approved option to the Government Office North West Planning Inspectorate for approval.

5.26. As discussed in section 2.0 and in more detail in the Corporate Improvement Plan, Elected Members have also identified those priorities that will be delivered through existing Council resources and those that will be delivered through greater levels of external resources. The following represents the key achievements across these areas whilst the 2005 – 2008 Corporate Improvement Plan highlights those substantive activities that still need to be progressed.

- Worked in partnership with the Primary Care Trust to develop and implement one of the first operational LIFT centres in the Country providing general Health Care and provision for additional Dentists to address the shortage in the Borough.
- Successfully delivered the 2004/05 HMR Programme (£1.1m) in Bacup, Stacksteads & Britannia resulting in quality of life improvements for local residents.
- Set up Equity release loan schemes for the over 60's to improve their homes and reduce the Council's financial commitments to Private Sector Renewal.
- Improved external communications through the launch of the Rossendale Alive Newsletter and increased pro-active media relations coverage as a result of investment in Communications.
- Set up the private landlord accreditation scheme, which involves working in partnership and more closely with the private rented sector to improve housing standards for people in Rossendale.
- Producing a 'Fit for Purpose' Housing Strategy for the Borough which was only one of a few across the North West which had been categorised as such by Government Office North West (GONW).

## 6. LEARNING

6.1. Rossendale BC has a strong commitment to, and interest, in the learning and development of its Elected Members and Officers and learning from the best practice that takes place in external organisations. This is demonstrated in many ways.

6.2. Formal learning opportunities are supported through the Member Development Strategy and Human Resources Strategy. Personal Development Plans have been developed for the majority of Councillors. A competency framework has been developed for staff and the performance appraisal process identifies development

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

requirements. Learning plans are produced. A significant commitment (demonstrated in time and resource allocation) has been made to development opportunities provided.

- 6.3. In addition, Overview and Scrutiny is a key element of the Council's continuous learning processes, as are team meetings and the Corporate Improvement Board meetings.
- 6.4. The Council's Senior Management Team (SMT) sessions are structured so as to take advantage of the learning opportunities and synergy that can arise from bringing a team of experienced managers together. Each Head of Service regularly leads an 'in-depth' session with their SMT colleagues concentrating on an area of strategic development which is of corporate significance to the Council.
- 6.5. Recent examples include: Customer Services; embedding a Performance Management Culture; developing the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's approach to Housing Stock Transfer. These sessions not only enable colleagues to gain an in-depth perspective of the subject but also to contribute their ideas and opinions towards the developing strategies and policies.
- 6.6. In addition to this the Council has worked with Audit Commission to facilitate an innovative programme of financial workshops with Members and Officers. This work has assisted in the development of shared understanding in terms of financial management and creating a culture where the management of risk is understood as an effective tool for improvement.
- 6.7. In terms of supporting learning, effective communication and knowledge management are essential. The Council is currently revising its Communication strategy but a number of key elements such as team briefings and the Grapevine newsletter have already been introduced. The Council's performance management system (Covalent) is being developed as a key knowledge management tool to ensure a resilient 'corporate memory' is in place.
- 6.8. A crucial element of the Council's improvement process has been to learn from other organisations – councils, other public sector organisations and the private sector. The Organisational Review introduced a number of officers with different experience and skills sets to the organisation which has contributed to the learning taking place within the organisation. This is reinforced by the Council's willingness to secure the necessary skills and knowledge for project delivery from the most appropriate place – rather than insisting on in-house provision. This open approach has led to the creation of 'virtual teams' strongly focused on project delivery but allowing for learning and skills development for Rossendale BC employees and Councillors.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005**

- 6.9. The Council is in the process of commissioning a learning review of its approach towards collaborative working and contractual partnership arrangements with external organisations in order to capture the experience, process, learning and benefits that have occurred for both the Council and its stakeholders.
- 6.10. The intended outcome of the review is to provide a mechanism through which to systematically identify and transfer the individual, group and organisational learning that has taken place in relation to partnership working and provide a basis through which to embed this learning throughout the Council, thus developing Council's capacity to perform the 'intelligent client function'.
- 6.11. Rossendale BC is increasingly taking a role within the sub-region (e.g., Elevate) and beyond. This affords valuable networking opportunities for both members and officers. The improvement journey has been supported by open dialogue around the current position and created a culture of challenge and continuous improvement essential to learning.
- 6.12. Furthermore, the Council has demonstrated progress in a number of important and challenging areas for local authorities in general. As a result the Council is increasingly being recognised as a place where others can learn from. Examples of this include: Housing Stock Transfer where we are providing advice to other authorities who are going through the options appraisal process. The Leisure Trust where we have provided advice to a neighbouring council and the Highways partnership where the approach adopted in Rossendale is now being rolled out across the whole of Lancashire.

## **7. FUTURE PLANS**

- 7.1. Section 5 together with the 2005 – 2008 Corporate Improvement Plan gives a clear indication as to what the Council needs to progress. Based upon what has been achieved to date and as a result of our performance management framework, the Council is confident that it can meet the targets which have been set by the people of Rossendale.
- 7.2. However, like all good Councils, we are embarking on the process of reassessing our priorities based upon what we have picked up from community engagement activity such as the LSP Assembly, LSP Community Cohesion event, Area Fora, Lancashire Locals and our annual Quality of Life Survey.

## SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005

7.3. As identified in our 2005 – 2008 Corporate Improvement Plan the Council has previously prioritised its activity under three headings:-

- Priorities for Improvement
- Priorities that will be delivered through Existing Resources
- Priorities that will be delivered through External Resources

7.4. This prioritisation framework will remain but through consultation with local people and businesses, Elected Members will be giving consideration to emerging priorities such as “Promoting the Borough” to support and encourage inward investment and job creation.

7.5. Equally, Elected Members will be making judgements around maintaining existing Priorities for Improvement such as “Housing Stock Transfer” and a future CPA rating under the new Audit Commission regime.

7.6. Most importantly for the Council and as a positive consequence of the Member Development programme, Elected Members are now giving consideration to prioritising activity which has previously been viewed as the responsibility of other agencies and outside the traditional direct provision role of a District Council. Examples of this are as follows:-

- Eco Town and Adrenalin Gateway Concepts as a part of the Pennine Lancashire Transformational Agenda
- Improved road links from East to West of the Borough
- Better rail links from Greater Manchester to Rawtenstall
- Every Child Matters
- Healthier Communities due to local need and as a requirement of the Governments PCT Spear Head and Local Area Agreement programmes
- Services to Older People
- Further reducing Crime through the joint recruitment of Police Community Safety Officers

7.7. This change in the perspective of Elected Members is also linked to the skill set that is emerging as the Council continues its journey towards being a Commissioner of services. We have witnessed this at first hand as Elected Members have championed the needs of local people in terms of winter Highways provision and the desire to maintain adequate Health facilities in the Borough.

7.8. These changes also have a significant impact on the Councils biggest issue which is the raising of customer satisfaction amongst residents. This will be a key component of any future CPA and represents a challenge that sits within a National context of growing dissatisfaction with Local Government.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT – NOVEMBER 2005**

7.9. The Council has set an ambitious target of having 8 out of 10 customers satisfied with its services by 2008. Whilst continuing improvement in services together with better management of reputation will be crucial components. The journey from provider to commissioner presents an opportunity for Elected Members to develop the Council as a Democratic Organisation which champions the needs of local people as opposed to its historic position of attempting to be both provider and champion at the same time.