

**Subject: Rossendale Environment
Strategy**

Status: For Publication

**Report to: Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

Date: 2 November 2006

Report of: Head of Service, Street Scene and Liveability

Portfolio

Holder: Portfolio Holder for Street Scene and Liveability

Key Decision:

Forward Plan *Relevant Box* General Exception Special Urgency "X" In

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To seek approval to commence consultation in relation to the development of an Environment Policy and Strategy for Rossendale Borough Council. These documents represent a starting point for the realisation of a leadership role for the Council in the implementation of a comprehensive and co-ordinated environmental management system covering the activities of the Council and those it influences.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report are linked to and support the following corporate priorities:

Delivery of the District Vision through the Council taking a positive leadership role in terms of improving and protecting the quality of the Borough's environment.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 Background

In 2005, the Government published the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy entitled "Securing the future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy". This described how the Government was leading activity towards achieving behavioural change in relation to the environment. The Strategy contained five guiding principles:-

- live within environmental limits
- ensure a strong, healthy and just society
- achieve and maintain a sustainable (growing) economy and
- promote good governance, all the time
- using sound science responsibly.

The Strategy promoted four key priority areas:-

- sustainable consumption and production
- climate change and energy
- natural resource protection and environmental enhancement, and
- sustainable communities.

4.2 The Local Government Association recently promoted a campaign under the banner of "Greening Communities". Three campaign messages were that:-

- local government is pivotal to improving our environment
- a more central role for local government on environmental issues is crucial to long-term environmental improvement and protection.
- There is an astonishing array of good practice and innovation, which proves the point that where Councils are taking a lead – the results are amazing.

The LGA campaign is about demonstrating the importance of Local Authority leadership on environmental issues – and about taking action.

4.3 Many other organisations and individuals want action to be taken or already have been taking action, some for many years. But this work can be fragmented, isolated, duplicated or uncoordinated and benefits could be obtained by bringing activity within one overall framework. Each of the areas of Environmental management involves many organisations and all the community. The Council has links with the relevant organisations e.g. through the Local Strategic Partnership and Elevate East Lancashire.

4.4 There are many issues which Rossendale cannot affect as decisions taken worldwide can affect our local environment. However, there are many actions that can be taken or encouraged locally that will enhance and protect our environment and, through that, affect the health of people in Rossendale both now and in the future.

4.5 Environmental issues are high on the agenda of an increasing proportion of the population. In addition, tackling local environmental issues has many beneficial impacts – often interrelated. By tackling them in isolation, opportunities for achieving synergistic effects may be missed. A joined-up strategic approach is needed to realise those opportunities and economics.

4.6 In the words of the ODPM (2004), “Local Authorities are in a unique position having a clear local democratic leadership role as the only body elected by and accountable to the whole community. Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements and powers of well-being give Local Authorities strong opportunities to lead action”.

4.7 The social, economic and environmental conditions in which people live affect a person’s standard of health. In order to improve health in Rossendale, and reduce health inequalities, the environmental issues need to be tackled.

4.8 Environment Policy

As a first step, an expression of commitment is required – the adoption of an Environment Policy. This would represent a statement of the aims and principles of the Council in relation to its overall environmental performance, including compliance with all relevant regulatory requirements and giving rise to the Council’s objectives and targets.

An Environmental Policy draws together all strands of environmental work across all departments and Services and acts as a cohesive document that will ensure corporate working towards the same outcomes under the same objectives.

The Policy would be a short document confirming the Authority’s commitment to delivering leadership both in relationship to its own activities and to the community as a whole.

The Policy is supportive of all strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy in the following ways:-

Community Safety – the Council works with partners and the community to protect and where possible enhance landscape quality and progress environmental initiatives. These include community projects thereby enhancing a sense of ownership, and a duty of care, potentially increasing the social responsibility of the individuals who live and work in, and resort to, Rossendale.

Health – A Policy will ensure a healthy environment both for this and for future generations. The Council would be committed to minimising any harmful effects of its operations and service delivery on the environment and will particularly protect vulnerable people.

Education – Environmental awareness and education underpins effective Environmental policy. The success of the Policy and its implementation relies on increasing environmental awareness amongst Council employees, residents and organisations relating to their impacts on the environment.

Environment – the Policy is of direct relevance to this priority.

Housing – the Policy would ensure action is taken to improve the physical condition of property, its energy efficiency and its impact on a neighbourhood and the environment in general.

Economy – the Policy would act in two ways. Firstly by reducing waste and unnecessary cost, a smaller proportion of income will be required, thereby increasing people’s and businesses’ disposable income. Secondly, the Policy

can act as a stimulant for innovation and development of new technology and for investment in environmentally beneficial equipment or facilities.

Community Network – the Policy would be developed and implemented through the community so that it meets the many and various needs of the whole community. Community effort, involvement and expertise would be essential to achieve effective implementation. Activity in connection with the Policy can be a significant force in developing community cohesion.

Culture – There is an interrelationship between caring for the environment and culture, which can be promoted to benefit both issues. There are many examples where development of environmental projects have been used in tackling social exclusion and isolation and in therapy and rehabilitation, thereby demonstrating a culture of caring.

5. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

5.1 No comments at this stage but it is recognised that the report referred to in 9.2 below will require financial appraisal.

6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

6.1 None

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

7.1 None

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 This report is the first stage in the consultation process and, subject to members' approval, a Consultation Action Plan will be developed and implemented.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 That Members approve the concept for the Environmental Policy and Strategy as a basis for discussion and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, both inside and outside the Council.

9.2 That a further report be presented to members before March 2007 with the results of consultation, making recommendations for further progress.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED

10.1 This document is the first step in the consultation process.

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Rossendale Borough Council Corporate Improvement Plan 2006-2009 A sustainable environment for Lancashire 2005-2010 Ambition Lancashire 2005-2025 Strategic vision for the future of Lancashire	Stubbylee Hall