

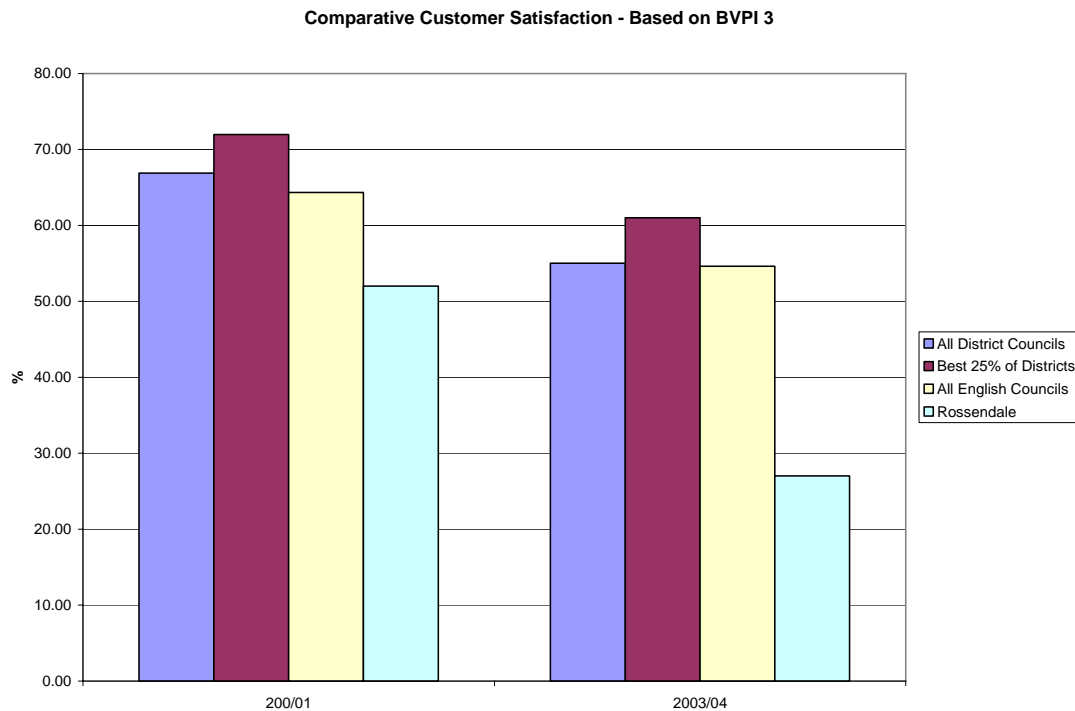
On a regular basis the Council reviews the things to which it wishes to devote its time, effort, and resources these are its priorities.

By achieving progress against the various priorities the Council will, ultimately, achieve the objectives which the Council has set itself most of which are shared with a range of other organisations through the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership.

But, why are the things to which we have chosen to devote time effort and resources important? This document aims to answer this question and therefore provides a key foundation within the Council's Corporate Planning Framework.

DELIVERY OF QUALITY SERVICES TO OUR CUSTOMERS

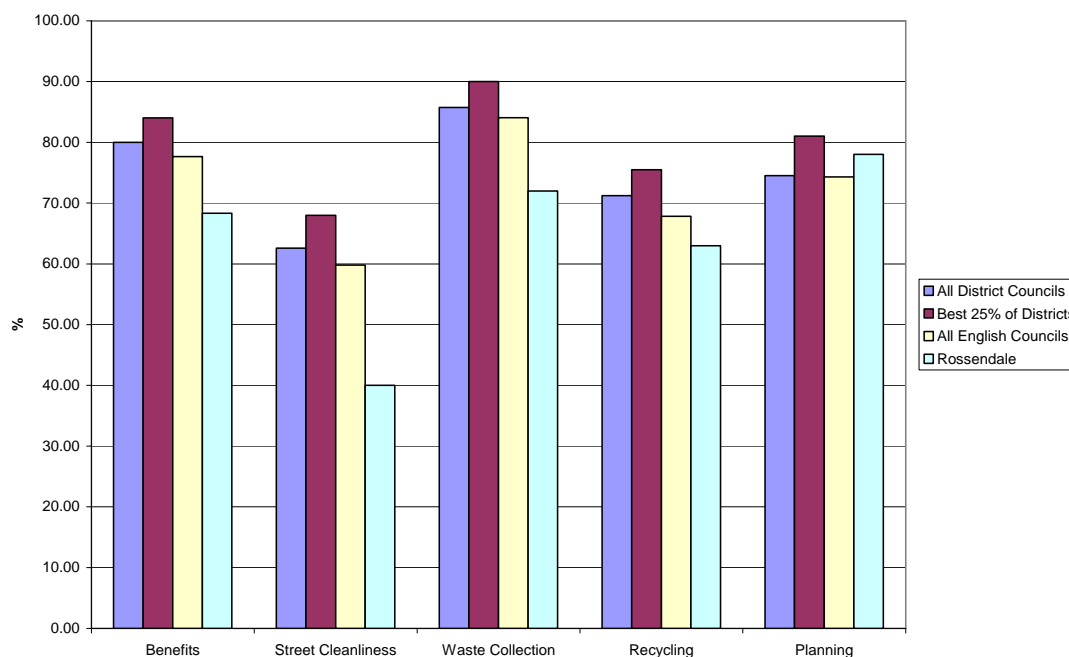
The graph below shows the level of overall satisfaction with the Council measured in the last two Audit Commission national surveys. Data from the latest survey carried out in 2006/07 is not yet available.



Rossendale is clearly not where we would want to be in terms of how well we are satisfying the people we serve, although more recent data do indicate that there has been some improvement.

We also know that satisfaction measures for specific services are good in some areas, but less good in others as shown below. Again the 2006/07 survey results are not available but improvement is expected in some areas.

Comparative Service Satisfaction (2003/04 BVPI Surveys)



We also know from feedback that we receive through councillors and the complaints procedure that while we are improving we need to be more consistent in the the standards of service we deliver.

In the Corporate Governance Inspection in 2002 and the subsequent CPA process in 2003 one of the critical issues highlighted by the inspectors was evidence of poor quality of service across a wide range of activities. This manifests itself in poor customer satisfaction. If the Council improves the quality of service experienced by customers it should over time improve Customer Satisfaction which is a good proxy for service quality. Thus we will be able to address one of the central issues raised in the CPA process but one which much more importantly impacts directly upon the quality of life for citizens.

DELIVERING REGENERATION ACROSS THE BOROUGH

Using the indices of Multiple Deprivation Rossendale is the 92nd most deprived of the 354 English Local Council areas and 3 of the 14 wards are in the 15% most deprived in England. At the more local level still of super output areas the picture is much worse.

Unemployment in Rossendale has consistently been below the national and regional averages. As at June 2006 this meant that 324 more people in Rossendale were working than if unemployment were at the national average.

However, nearly 27% of jobs in the Borough are in the manufacturing sector. This is 3,123 jobs more than if manufacturing represented the national average proportion of employment of 11.9%. In addition the number of manufacturing jobs in the Borough actually reduced by 36% between 1998 and 2004, reflecting the national decline in this sector.

This situation together with the Borough's industrial past has left a legacy of disused industrial buildings and traditional terraced housing associated with mills and factories. Many of these buildings have decayed over the years and need to be brought up to modern standards, including almost 10.5% of the houses in the Borough which are in need of substantial repair. As well as examples of decay, though, we also have a very high concentration of buildings of historic interest and in Bacup one of the best preserved mill towns in Britain.

Encouraging appropriate development and preserving the best of the Borough's history is extremely difficult at present because the local plan for the area is "time expired". This means that there is no framework to control development in the Borough and we need to concentrate on the new Local Development Framework to address this key gap.

Dependence on manufacturing jobs when the manufacturing sector is in universal decline is a serious risk for the local economy, similarly a poor built environment can deter potential inward investors. Therefore regeneration is important because;

- The council can help promote the types of investment which will go some way to addressing the structural issues in the local economy.
- The Council can work with others to ensure that the Borough's built environment is modernised and improved without losing the benefits of a rich heritage.
- Through its statutory planning powers the Council is in a position to intervene to protect the Borough and its people from the potentially negative effects of the unrestricted operation of the market in terms of development.

KEEPING OUR BOROUGH CLEAN AND GREEN

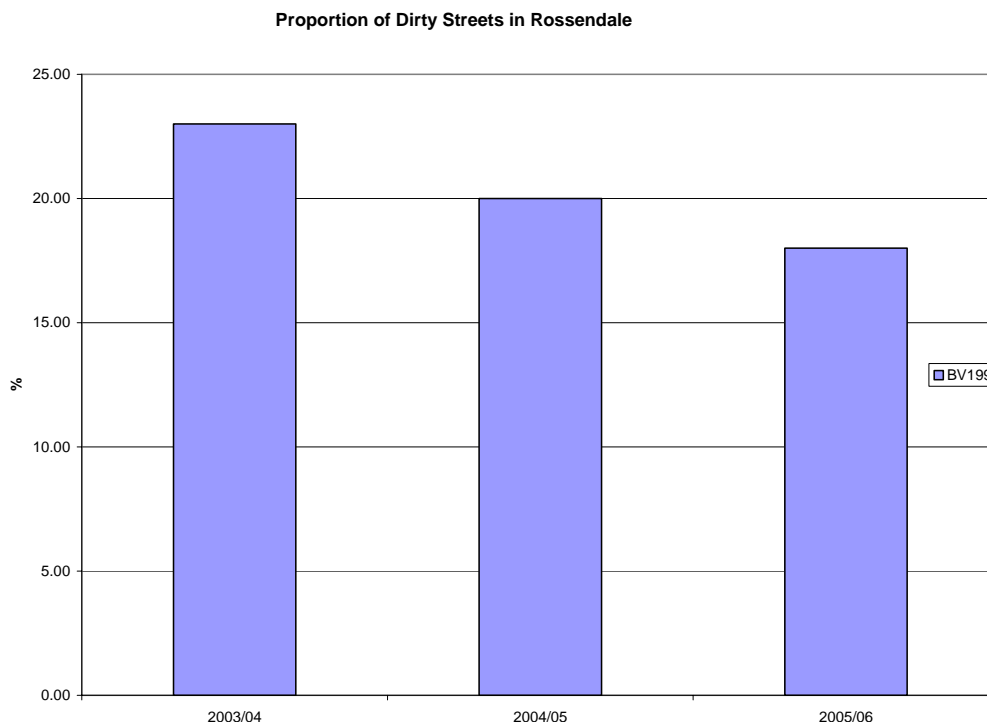
The quality of Rossendale's natural environment is what sets it apart.

However in the 2004 Community Safety Survey of the Feedback Citizen's Panel:

- 50.5% of respondents felt dog fouling was a very big or quite a big problem.
- 49.2% of respondents felt that rubbish and litter lying around were a very big or quite big problem.

Nationally the creation of clean and green neighbourhoods is a key element of one of the shared priorities between local and national government.

Clearly from our various surveys we know that cleanliness is important to local people. Over the last three years this has improved as shown below



However, the best Councils are achieving 8% or less dirty streets. Although this is only one aspect of a complex picture it is reflective of the wider issues. We know that we must do better both to help create neighbourhoods people can be proud of but also to address the impact which poor results in this area have on customer satisfaction.

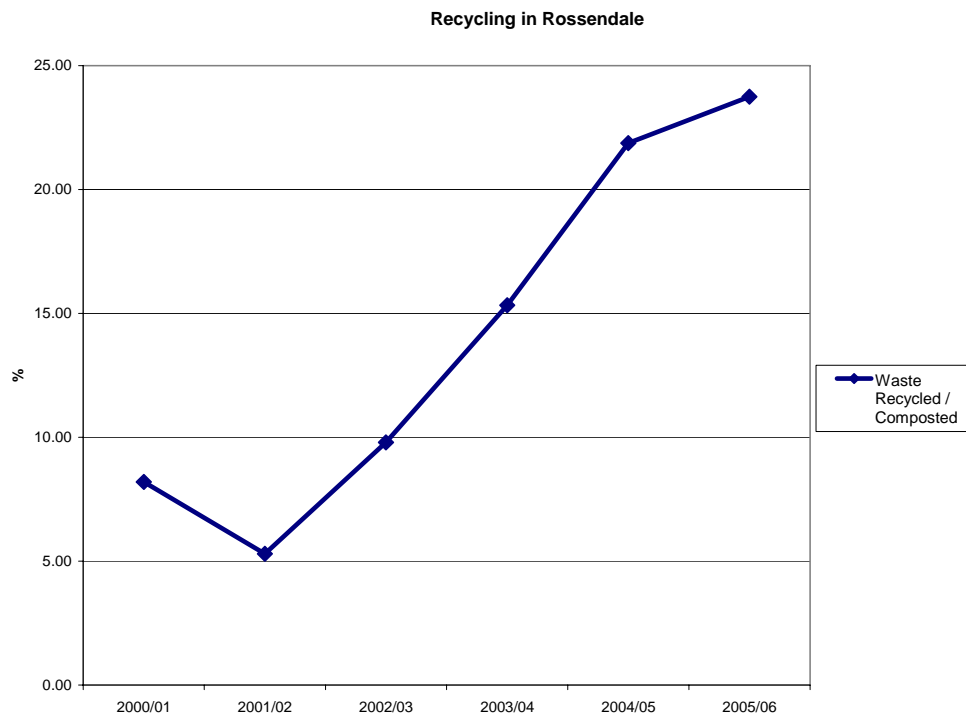
In terms of being green this comes in two parts

- The broader environmental agenda including issues such as recycling and climate change.

- The protection of the Borough's key environmental assets through appropriate control of development

Again these are key elements of the shared priorities for central and local government.

Working together with the Council the people of Rossendale have markedly improved the level of achievement in recycling in recent years.



But the best Councils are composting or recycling 36% of their waste and we know that the cost of disposing of waste through landfill will continue to rise.

In terms of protecting our environment we know our planning service has not performed particularly well in recent years, although it has succeeded in processing the bulk of less complex applications more quickly. In part this has been due to the fact that the local plan has expired. This means that the planners have not had a proper framework within which to make decisions. In the medium term this is an unsustainable position as it means that the Council will be unable to effectively use the powers at its disposal to protect one of the Borough's greatest assets.

Given all this it is important that the Council focuses on keeping the Borough clean and green as success here will impact on other priorities by creating attractive neighbourhoods where people can be encouraged to come to live and invest.

PROMOTING ROSSENDALE AS A PLACE TO LIVE AND VISIT

The regional economic strategy for the North West sees the region's "beautiful natural environment" as a key asset in sustaining a tourism industry worth £31m a year to the regional economy.

We know Rossendale is both well positioned geographically and well linked by the motorway network to the major growth areas of the regional economy represented by Greater Manchester and Central Lancashire City Regions. Given the high quality of the natural environment in Rossendale there is an opportunity for the Borough to act as a "playground" or green lung for these major centres. If we are successful this will increase the size of the local tourist economy reducing the risk posed by the Borough's dependence upon manufacturing. However, people will not come and visit the Borough and generate the income which will sustain local tourist business if they do not know that Rossendale exists, or what it has to offer.

Current population forecasts are for much slower growth than the national average increasing by about 4% over the next 25 years compared to 11% nationally. A growing population will be able to sustain both a stronger local economy and key local services, for example more people will mean more children which will reduce risks to the Borough's educational infrastructure through falling rolls.

Encouraging people to come and live in or visit Rossendale is important because:

- It will help to diversify the local economy.
- A growing population will sustain a larger economy and provide a more robust customer base for key services.

IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELL BEING ACROSS THE BOROUGH

Health in 3 of Rossendale's wards is amongst the worst 10% in the country while all 14 wards are in the worst 26% in England. For these reasons, among others, the Borough has been designated as a Health Spearhead area which means that some specific resources are available to the Council, and also that the local NHS working with partners such as the Council has specific outcome targets to meet.

This poor health is reflected in a range of factors for example.

- 1,400 more people in Rossendale have long term limiting illnesses than the national average.
- 1,342 people of working age have long term limiting illnesses the national average.
- A man in Rossendale is likely to die two years earlier than elsewhere and a woman, while living about 5 years longer than a man is likely to die a year earlier than elsewhere in the Country.
- Circulatory disease mortality rates are more than 30 points above the national average.
- Infant mortality is 2 points above the national average.
- At 21.5% the prevalence of binge drinking is 1% greater than the national average which has an impact on both community safety issues such as alcohol related crime and the demand for health resources.
- The prevalence of smoking is nearly 1% greater than the national average, and deaths from smoking in the Borough are much higher than the national average.

Not all of the factors which contribute to these serious health problems are medical. They include

- Relatively poor housing standards.
- Relatively poor levels of basic fitness reflected in relatively low participation in sporting and active leisure activities.

It is also the case that the incidence of poor health in the Borough is not uniform, for example there is a difference in life expectancy of 3.5 years between the poorest and the most affluent areas of the Borough.

While it is important that people who are ill are treated it is also important that action is taken to prevent people from suffering ill health in the future.

The issues of health and the associated lack of well being are important because.

- They place an increased demand on certain services such as assisted refuse collection.
- They contribute to locking people into a low income benefit dependent economy.
- They mean that fewer people are able to contribute fully to the cost of local services.

TOOLS TO DELIVER

The Council has identified 3 priorities which are described as “enablers”.

- Strong financial management and the delivery of value for money services.
- Equipping councillors to fulfil their leadership role in the community.
- Effective human resource management and maintaining a workforce with the skills to deliver the priorities.

These priorities are internally focussed on how the Council operates and are called “enablers” because by paying proper attention to these areas we will be more likely to be able to deliver improvement in the five outward focussed areas. But, why pick on these three areas in particular?

Put simply the answer to this is because they represent the three resources which we cannot do without. All other forms of resource such as buildings, vehicles or computer systems flow from these three.

- Managing money properly is clearly important because it is not the Council's money, but the community's, and we need to demonstrate that every pound is spent effectively on addressing the things local people feel are important.
- Councillors are a critical resource. As our community's leaders they do not just make policy decisions in relation to the Council's services, the fact that they are elected gives them the ability to speak up for the people of Rossendale. If Councillors have the right skills and support they will be able to ensure that the views of the local community are heard in the right places.
- Delivery of all the Council's services depends on people from refuse collectors and gardeners to planners, accountants and lawyers whether they are directly employed by the Council or not. The outward facing priorities we have identified mean that over time we are looking for big changes in our services and the way they work both with other organisations and local people. This will place new demands on our staff and we need to help them understand and adjust to them.