

Rossendale Borough Council

Self Assessment February 2007

Setting The Scene

Since the first **Comprehensive Performance Assessment** report in 2004 we have transformed the way we work as a Council and the services we deliver.

Key successes include:

- Securing the 'Yes' vote from tenants and transferring our housing stock to Greenvale Homes
- Reducing crime levels by 17% in 2005/06, as well as x% in 2004/05 making us the best performing Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in Lancashire.
- Completing our partnering arrangements with Capita for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Care services.
- Improving recycling rates from 15.3% in 2003/04 to 23.3% in 2005/06 and on target for 27.5% in 2006/07.
- Improving our BFI Inspection rating from 'poor' to 'fair' through improvements such as reduction in speed of processing new claims from 61.47 days in 2003/04 to 39.5 days in 2005/06.
- Achieving 'green' status for our Local Strategic Partnership
- Improving the cleanliness of land and highways from index of 23 in 2003/04 to 18 in 2005/06. On target to reach 14 in 2006/07.
- 64% of staff feel they have enough information to do their job properly – and increase of 35% from 2004/05.

Other areas of focus during the last 12 months and going forward for the next three years include regenerating the borough. The Council is working in partnership with CNC to bring forward a £33.5m redevelopment for Rawtenstall Town Centre. A new bus station is the goal of joint working between Rossendale Borough Council, Rossendale Transport Limited and Lancashire County Council. Central to regeneration is the need for a replacement to the time-expired Local Plan. **The Local Development Framework will be submitted in ?** We are continuing our focus on improving both services to our customers and value for money.

As part of this we are developing our partnering arrangements from a strong base (including Capita, Rossendale Leisure Trust, Rossendale Transport Limited, Urban Vision and Greenvale Homes). We are improving our working with Lancashire County Council through the enhanced two-tier working process and are an active participant in the development and implementation of our **Lancashire Local Area Agreement**. We are also working with Whitworth Town Council through our recently agreed joint Charter. We are a pilot for improved three-tier working within the Local Area Agreement process.

Rossendale – The Borough

We are one of the six boroughs that make up East Lancashire. As well as our Lancashire neighbours, we border with Rochdale and Bury in Greater Manchester and Calderdale in Yorkshire. We are uniquely placed to exploit the potential of both Manchester and Preston City Regions – both the M65 and A56 go through the borough (**map**). We are working with the East Lancashire authorities to raise the profile and aspirations of the area through the **Transforming Pennine Lancashire** agenda.

ELLCHEX (East Lancashire Leaders and Chief Executives) provide the focus for this work. The Housing Market Renewal area (Elevate) provides a strong core of activity. Rossendale Borough Council performs consistently well in delivering our element of this programme which is based in Bacup, Stacksteads and Britannia.

We have a population of just under 66,000 (**a x% increase from 1991**) with 3.5% from a minority ethnic background. **More info here on hard to reach groups**. The borough is a mix of urban and rural areas, resulting in a population density of 470 people per square kilometre. This is much less than neighbouring areas, for example Bury and Rochdale to the south have three times the density and Burnley, Blackburn and Pendle to the north and west are twice as densely populated. **Age profile of our population**.

Our environment is a strong part of our identity. The development of Rossendale has been heavily influenced by its geography and

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its natural resources. The narrow urban valley of the River Irwell, running between the Pennine uplands, means fabulous scenery but limited accessible sites for housing and employment. The borough has a strong industrial past – the legacy of which is apparent today in many of our buildings. English Heritage described Bacup as one of the best examples of a preserved mill town in the country. We have over 260 listed buildings and 8 conservation areas.

It is also apparent in our strong manufacturing base – which still employs over a quarter of the borough's workforce. Our proximity to major employment centres is highlighted by the fact that x% of people commute out of the borough to work. Economic activity in Rossendale is nearly 20 per cent lower than the national average of 74.7% (ONS Dec 2004). Households wholly retired from work account for almost a fifth of all households. Permanently sick or disabled households account for just 4.8% of all households, which is lower than the national average of 5.5%. Unemployment in Rossendale at 3.2% is significantly lower than nationally at 4.7%, but some wage rates are low.

Rossendale has a total of 29,574 residential properties of which there are 28,068 households residing within these (HMR & Strategy Property Database as of October 2004). The housing tenure split is skewed towards owner occupation, with 19,494 (72%) of households owning their own home, compared to 2,768 (10%) private rented sector, 750 (3%) RSL rented and 4,099 (15%) Council rented. There are only three houses in multiple occupations, two of which fall within the licensing regime.

Although parts of the borough are well-connected there are no rail links for passenger trains from our towns. The East Lancashire Railway is for light rail. Our geography limits our transport infrastructure with pressure on our road network.

The 2004 [Index of Deprivation](#) shows that Rossendale ranks as the 92nd most deprived borough in the country. We have six Super Output Areas (SOAs) that fall within the worst 25% in the country. This affects 15.6% of our population. In particular, there is a high

degree of health deprivation across the borough. Life expectancy is below the national average (2 years below for men and over one year below for women). According to the 2001 Census, 20.3% of people are suffering from a limiting long term illness.

Rossendale – The Council

Rossendale Borough Council has 36 councillors. The political composition is 24 Conservative, 10 Labour and 2 Independent. We have adopted a [Leader and Cabinet model](#) with 8 [Portfolio Holders](#).. We employ approximately 200 staff and manages a [gross revenue budget](#) of [£9.8 million](#) in 2006/07.

Our Journey

In this Self-Assessment we are setting out the highlights from our improvement journey so far – as well as some of the challenges we are now tackling.

The 2004 CPA Report recognised improvements since the 2002 Corporate Governance Inspection (when the Council was found to be 'one of the worst performing district councils in the country) but still judged us to be Poor, stating:

QUOTE

"...the limitations in terms of people, skills, experience, systems and resources are of such significance as to seriously hinder the pace of improvement"

CPA 2004

We characterise the first phase of our journey as the recovery phase. This involved tackling a stagnant structure that reflected an absence of human resource management; weak performance management; poor customer focus; and a mixed picture of service delivery. Council decision-making was still through committee structures. This phase centred on a largely internal agenda which was reflected in the priorities we set ourselves ([link to 2003/04 and 2004/05 priorities](#)). This phase also saw us beginning a number of major projects focused on transforming our service delivery infrastructure. These were seen as central to the second phase of our journey-improvement.

Quote

"We have been able to change because people accepted they needed to...they let go of how it was so could move on..."

Member of staff

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Through this phase we have built on the significant progress made since 2003 on making sure systems, processes and skills are fit for purpose in the Council. This has included building the Human Resources infrastructure and ensuring a stable financial base. Significant investment has been made in skills development for staff and Councillors with strong support from the I&DeA and Audit Commission. The Improvement Board has been central to our recovery and improvement

Award

Human Resources received Investors in People status in 2006

A lot has been achieved. We have established a track record and built our confidence for the next phase of our journey. This will be characterised by sustained improvements in performance and customer satisfaction. It will also focus on fulfilling our place-shaping role through community leadership and neighbourhood working.

1. Ambition for the community Introduction

Rossendale Borough Council is a small council with big ambitions – both for itself and the communities it serves. This means at the same time as delivering a challenging improvement agenda for ourselves we have also been developing and delivering on a significant agenda for our borough. We are proud by how far we have come in Rossendale, and are committed to tackling the challenges that still face us.

1.1 Our ambitions are clear and challenging

Rossendale – A Cracking Place to Live!

This is the stated vision of the Rossendale Partnership – the Local Strategic Partnership for Rossendale, formed in 2007 with the support of Rossendale Borough Council. It means we have listened to what local people have told us and set out what we want for the future. **Rossendale Alive** - our Community Strategy (2005-2020) translates our ambitions into action through eight

strategic objectives and associated Theme Groups:

- **Community Safety**

We want people living, visiting and working in the Borough to feel safe. The **Rossendale Crime and Disorder Partnership** is currently the best performing in Lancashire in terms of reducing crime and disorder with a 17% reduction last year alone.

- **Environment**

We want to make the most of our fantastic natural environment and industrial heritage by ensuring we care for it at the same time as developing the Borough as a tourist destination. Major schemes such as the Adrenalin Gateway and the Transforming Pennine Lancashire programme are central to this. Service improvements by the council are having a big impact on the appearance of the borough.

Award

Winner of Kennel Club most effective local government campaign award 2007

- **Housing**

We want a good mix of quality housing in safe, clean neighbourhoods. We are working in the Bacup and Stacksteads area through the Elevate Programme to improve housing and the environment and have transferred our housing stock to **GreenVale Homes** in order to maximise investment.

- **Economy**

We want people to work and shop within the Borough. We are driving the project to secure a new shopping centre for Rawtenstall as part of a wider regeneration programme for the town and the Borough as a whole.

- **Education**

- **Culture**

- **Community Network**

Our Network has over 600 members! We invest in community and voluntary groups X% of our revenue budget. Our Compact was signed in ???

As a strongly performing partnership our LSP is well placed to take this agenda forward. It involves a broad range of organisations (**LSP Membership**) through its Executive, Thematic Partnerships and the Community Network. Each Theme Group has developed its own three-year **Delivery Plan** with clear,

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performance managed targets and desired outcomes. The Delivery Plans that underpin the Strategy are reviewed and updated regularly to maintain their focus and ensure delivery of real change. Supporting the Delivery Plans is the developing framework of key strategies, such as **Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, Environment Strategy, Community Involvement and Engagement Strategy**. A Regeneration Strategy is to be produced this year, building from the Regeneration Programme Board.

The dialogue and relationship between ambitions and plans for Rossendale and those for East Lancashire, Lancashire and the wider region is improving. We are an active partner in the development and delivery of the Lancashire **Local Area Agreement** (LAA) and are also working across East Lancashire exploring the development of a Multi-Area Agreement.

Regularly review and evaluation of our plans and strategies allows us to evolve our approach as we continually develop a more comprehensive understanding of the context in which we are working.

Quote

Strategic Housing Quote if finalised in time

Audit Commission February 2007

The Council and the Rossendale Partnership are working hard to share the Vision and ambitions with communities and partners. We have developed a **shared brand**. We use a wide variety of tools and techniques as set out in our **Communication Strategy** including **Rossendale Alive Newsletter** which highlights decisions and achievements on a quarterly basis. There are LSP web-pages within the Council's award winning web-site and the Community Strategy is widely available in paper and CD format.. The Corporate Improvement Plan is also available.

A series of high profile events, including hosting the National Jogathon; the 'K for Kids Festival and an annual melee, run by Rossendale's Leisure Trust help promote

what we are doing. **LSP Assembly events** afford the opportunity of involving a wider group of people in the work of the LSP and promote achievements, share learning and develop our ideas. Assemblies have focused on issues such as Children and Young People, Older People and Neighbourhood Working.

Communication with staff and Members is also improved through the intranet, team briefings, **Members Bulletins** and **Staff Newsletters**. The Chief Executive delivers 'Welcome to Rossendale Alive' for all staff to introduce them to the Council's agenda and regular Management Forums provide the opportunity for wider discussion.

The learning achieved throughout this progress is now being taken forward into the development of Sustainable Community Strategy for Rossendale which will be produced for autumn 2007 and translated into more local action through four Neighbourhood Plans as well as the Theme Groups Delivery Plans – providing geographic and thematic focused actions . **(BVPP summary and statement of accounts?)**

1.2 Our ambitions are based on a shared understanding among the Council and partner organisations of local needs

In the past we were an inward looking authority that took limited notice of the views of local people. But growing confidence in our community leadership role as well as our focus on customers has led to strengthened commitment to learn from our communities. We are also working with them to build their capacity to be involved in achieving the desired outcomes for the borough. We commissioned the development of a **Community Involvement and Engagement Strategy and Toolkit** from the community themselves. The process provided valuable learning and challenge, identified current good practice and signalled a commitment by the Council to really enter into a dialogue with communities.

We're one of five authorities in the East Lancashire e Consultation Partnership, and we've worked jointly through this to undertake a number of surveys, including the statutory Best Value Survey. Over the last 2 years more

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than 1000 people have taken part in consultation activity through Rossendale's Council's "Feedb@ck panel", which has x members and was reviewed and refreshed in (month) 2006. Our approach to consultation feedback - "You Said: We Did" shows people what we've achieved as a result of what they tell us. For example You Said: Dog Fouling was a problem, We have: invested in a 'pooper scooper' machine and increased our enforcement action.

Of course, consultation and engagement on their own are not enough – we're also improving our use of social, economic and geographic information develop a better picture of our neighbourhoods and the differences between them. We have the evidence base in place for the Local Development Framework. We have developed the **Rossendale Profile** and **Ward Profiles**. These, together with the findings from consultation activity inform our priorities. The Council's Forward Planning Event in November 2006 (to which key partners were invited) considered this evidence as the starting point for reviewing the Council's corporate priorities (**Corporate Priorities Report**). We tested these priorities through the Resident's Survey as well as the **budget consultation process**. We have some good examples of evidence based policy in place (such as the fit for purpose **Housing Strategy, Local Development Framework, Open Spaces Review** and **SmokeFree Rossendale Initiative**) and these set the standard for future work.

Our Community Cohesion Working Group evolved from consultation through the Rossendale Partnership exploring the issues surrounding this topic. The Action Plan will be delivered through this group. Rossendale Borough Council is also part of East Lancashire Together, (Community Cohesion Pathfinder) to focus on community cohesion. The Council's Diversity approach enables users to engage in debate about our services and policies.

Engagement is about people - Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams (NEAT teams) work across the borough to provide a highly responsive, hands on, multi-agency problem solving approach for a full range of

environmental issues from fly tipping to cleaning up graffiti. These teams were highlighted as an example of good practice by communities in the work developing the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy.

We carry out an annual **staff survey** and a Staff Morale Working Group was set up following the 2005 survey. The Action Plan developed by this group has now been delivered.

Improvement

30% of staff feel valued (rising to 72% if include 'sometimes feel valued') compared to just 7% in 2004/05

The staff suggestion scheme **MAGIC** (Making a Good Idea Count) allows staff to feed in ideas, as does the '**askCarolyn**' scheme which came directly from an idea from an employee. Customer feedback is proactively sought and we are working with the Local Government Ombudsman as a 'critical friend' is improving our approach to complaint management.

1.3 Community Leadership and Effective partnership working.

Over the last three years the Council has developed a strong track record of working closely with a range of partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors to champion the needs of Rossendale and improve outcomes for local people. We take an active role in the **Rossendale Lancashire Local** and have been proactive in developing the Enhanced Two Tier Working submission to DCLG.

The Council's **Community Leadership Policy Statement**, which was informed through the **I&DeA Community Leadership Fitness Check** shows that, in Rossendale, Community Leadership is taken forward under three main themes, set out below:

- Leading by Example
Level 2 of The Equality Standard
Embedding strong corporate and ethical governance
- Developing Skills and Capacity
£243k investment in community and voluntary sector
North West Charter for Member Development

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- Strong Links Between the Council and the Community
Electoral turnout
Mini- Mayor

Overview and Scrutiny, and full Council is increasingly effective in terms of community leadership. Examples include:

- Considering the six health reorganisations facing the Borough
- Input into Fire Service consultation
- Contribution to discussions on Childrens Trusts arrangements across Lancashire.
- Signing the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and a joint meeting with Rossendale's Climate Change Group.
- Post Office closure consultations

Quote

Members were speaking very positively and enthusiastically about scrutiny, and able to readily identify examples of scrutiny work they had done – some of which had successfully engaged the community and influenced policy and decision-making.

IDeA Facilitator

Joint working with the Police has led to reduced crime –in particular **a significant drop in the number of burglaries, robberies and vehicle crimes taking place.** The Council supports this work through investment in three Police Community Support Officers (2006/07 budget allocation).

The Council established four Area Forums and is now building on these in developing its approach to Neighbourhood Engagement. This includes developing the relationship between Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council through a charter. The Neighbourhood agenda builds on the very successful neighbourhood policing work in place in the borough.

Improving Service Delivery through Partnerships

Working in partnership is essential achieving our vision in a sustainable way. It is at the heart of our **Capacity Building Approach**. Changing traditional patterns of service delivery requires Councillors to take some difficult decisions as well as ensure effective change management processes are in place.

A significant example of this is the successful conclusion of the Council's Housing Stock Transfer process at the end of March 2006 that has already resulted in improvements to 90% of the homes and will see an investment programme of £40m through a planned repair and improvement programme over the next six years. One of the reasons we believe that the Council was able to achieve this over such a short period, is the experience gained from the establishment of the Leisure Trust 12 months earlier, a further success which **increased visitor numbers and customer satisfaction.**

In September 2006, following the completion of a formal tendering exercise, the council awarded Capita **an xm, x year contract, to run the Council's revenue and benefit** and customer contact service through the One Stop Shop which will improve customer service and response times.

In Rossendale, in recognition of the strong track record of successfully developing and delivering these outcomes, the Government Office of the North West recently awarded a 'Green' rating to our LSP ([link to report](#)) - only the second in the Northwest. This is a significant achievement for us – signalling as it does a change from an inward looking authority which only engaged with wider community issues on a reactive basis and who's partnership working was principally on an ad-hoc basis in the absence of a wider context and clear priorities to provide focus.

Quote

"The Partnership comes across as one which is well structured, well led and where good communication exists between Theme Groups and the Executive...There is good performance in many areas and those areas needing further improvement...have clearly defined improvement points and ownership from the relevant agency/theme group."

We also deliver services in partnership with other authorities. Our Pest Control service is a public public partnership with Bury MBC and Rochdale MBC saving us £10,000 a year with improved levels of performance.

Whilst the Council has achieved a wide range of positive outcomes we have also recognised we need to rationalise and formalise our

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approach towards the wide range of partners we are currently engaged with. We have recently adopted a **Partnership Working Policy Statement** and this, together with the implementation of the associated action plan, shows how we will achieve this. The Portfolio Holder for Community and Partnership takes the lead in ensuring the appropriate governance arrangements are in place for our partnerships.

Rossendale Council's Culture and Values

We have achieved cultural change within the Council and set out our own values in relation to the key behaviours expected of staff, of Councillors and the Council as a whole. These are expressed through our five key competencies: *Listening & Communicating; Loyalty; Management of Performance, Celebration of Success; and Customers Matter*. Organisational development work with managers during 2006 and early 2007 has focused on developing understanding and abilities in relation to these competencies.

Improvement

Almost 80% of staff feel the Council emphasises the importance of the customer. (58.5% in 2005)

2. Our Priorities within the ambitions for Rossendale

In the first CPA prioritisation was identified as weak. There was a lack of clarity for staff, Councillors and partners about the agenda to be delivered. Financial planning remained mainly historical, with no mechanisms or clear priorities on which to make spending decisions

The 2006 Progress Assessment found that priorities had:

- Reduced from 33 in 2003 to 8 in 2005
- Broad cross-party ownership and co-operation
- Been effectively shared with staff who understood and supported what the Council was trying to do
- Better focus as a result of revised governance arrangements

Quote

The Council has demonstrated its ability to stay focused on priority areas despite a number of significant projects, for example on the transfer of its housing stock and the regeneration of Rawtenstall town centre.

Progress Assessment 2006

This reflects the fact that Councillors and employees have pulled together under a strong and stable political leadership to identify, communicate and deliver a clearly laid out, resourced, planned and prioritised agenda, underpinned by :

- A good understanding of the internal and external influences which drive and influence the Council's direction
- A better understanding of the social, demographic and economic issues across the Borough
- Increased use of community consultation and engagement to identify Community priorities
- A planned programme of activities that demonstrate clear outcomes expressed through the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan and supported by 9 Service Business Plans
- Clarity about the financing and resourcing of priorities from internal or external investment sources
- Mainstreaming of funding to address cross-cutting issues, for example equalities, community safety and health

The Council is a key partner in the effective delivery of the Vision contained in the Community Strategy and ensures that in achieving its own improvement agenda it is also making substantial contributions to the wider agenda for the Borough. We share five of the strategic objectives of the Rossendale Partnership (Environment, Housing, Economy, Community Network and Culture). In addition, we have three objectives that reflect our focus on becoming an organisation that is fit for purpose – these are Customers, Improvement and Partnerships.

These are shown in the chart below - demonstrating how the Vision is supported by both the shared objectives of the LSP and Council. It also demonstrates those LSP objectives that were seen primarily as the responsibility of other partner agencies. This position is now changing as the Council develops a more externally focused agenda, more in keeping with our role as community leaders.

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Insert Chart Showing the Council's Objectives

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The Council's Priorities

Key to the Council's ongoing improvement journey has been the ability of Elected Members to identify "what are" and "what are not" priorities. The Council now has a clear process in place whereby Members, in consultation with key stakeholders, annually reviews the Council's priorities to ensure that the Council's resources and business plans are focused on delivering the things that really matter to the well-being of Rossendale residents.

The Council's **Corporate Improvement Plan** sets out the outcomes it intends to deliver against each of the Council's stated objectives and priorities and also shows how these contributions link to the Community Strategy as well as the LAA.

The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan for 2006 – 2009 was developed in conjunction with Members, managers and other key stakeholders following the agreement of the Council's priorities in February 2006. This process ensured that the cross-cutting implications for all the service areas of the Council were identified and enabled the links to be drawn across all areas of Council activity through the Council's service Business Plans. This approach also enabled responsibilities and realistic deadlines to be identified and assigned in relation to the capacity of the Council to effectively deliver the programme.

The CIP Action Plan was structured in terms of chronology of actions, rather than the Corporate Priorities- in order to keep the momentum going. It also reflected the project based nature of the Plan.

Quote

Rossendale is capable of effectively implementing its own plans, which suggests that service improvement plans can also be delivered effectively.

Strategic Housing Inspection

The Plan for 2007-2010 is now being developed. It is structured around the new three year priorities. These reflect our transition from an internally focused council working to ensure it is fit for purpose, to a more confident, externally focused organisation which is undertaking its place

shaping role and overall stewardship of the borough. They are:

- **Embedding the Customer Promise**
- **Regenerating Rossendale**
- **Delivering Quality Services to Our Customers**
- **Keeping Our Borough Clean and Green**
- **Promoting Rossendale as a Place to Live and Visit**
- **Improving Health and Well-Being Across the Borough**

These are supported by three enabling priorities:

- **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**

Directing Resources Towards Priorities

The Council's budget for 2006/07 was set within the boundaries defined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, the summer of 2006 saw a series of **Policy and Budget Review Panels** taking place. The Council's Leader and Portfolio Holders examined in detail each element of the revenue and capital budgets of the relevant service, together with information detailing the levels of performance being achieved and the volumes of activity. This allowed Councillors to evaluate spending in line with the Council's priorities and to recommend for consideration changes in resource levels, or policies for particular services. This work has also resulted in a clear articulation of activities that are not priorities for investment but are to be delivered through either existing resources or greater external investment.

To include quotes from Use of Resources?

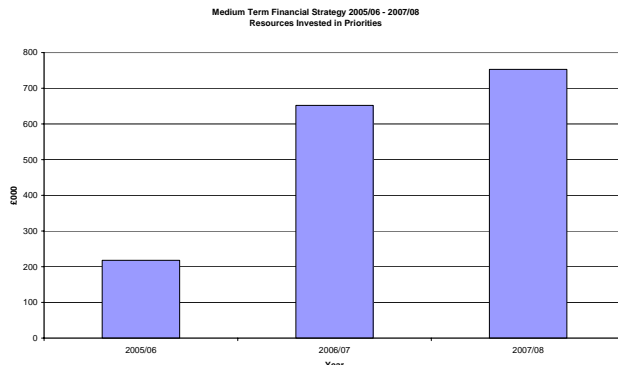
Improvement

Investment in line with priorities:

- **Community Safety – £35,000 for 3 PCSOs**
- **Promoting the borough– £36,000 in 2006/07**
- **Customer Services – £100,000 for the One Stop Shop**

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In total, over the last three budgets such processes have resulted in £1.6m being directed into the Council's priority areas, as shown below.



In addition to the revenue budget, the **Capital Strategy** and **Asset Management Plan** allocate capital resources in line with priorities. Our **Risk Management** approach is focused on identifying and mitigating potential risks to achieving the priorities. The Council's **Human Resources Strategy** and **Organisational Development Plan** are aligned with the Corporate Priorities, ensuring we develop our capacity appropriately. Our Partnership Evaluation and Register enables us to review the contribution partnership working is making to delivery of priorities.

The Council's Business and Team Plans

Supporting the delivery of the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan are our nine **Business Plans** – one for each Service area. They are three years, with an annual review and roll forward. First drafts of the plan are prepared in January, within the context of the Council's budget preparation process

The relevant Portfolio Holder and staff are involved throughout the development of the plan and encouraged to contribute their ideas as well as input into the setting of targets and deadlines within the plan in order to gain their commitment and ownership. A workshop is held for the full senior management team to share the content of draft Business Plans, to ensure peer review as well as cross fertilisation of plans and ensuring a shared delivery agenda.

Following these processes, and in light of the decisions made by the Policy Review Panels a final Business Plan setting out:

- Delivery target for the next three years
- Contribution to corporate objectives
- Contribution to Lancashire's Local Area Agreement
- Contribution to Rossendale's Community Strategy.

Underneath these sit a range of 'Team Plans', developed by the individuals or teams that are tasked with carrying out a specific project, and which show how activities within the Business Plans will be completed.

The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan and Business Plans are routinely monitored by managers, members, staff and partners, to check whether the stated actions contained within them are being achieved, using a 'RAG' (red, amber, green) reporting style, from reports generated using the Council's Covalent System. This method helps the Council to maintain focus by concentrating on those areas that are currently falling short of achieving their targets and by asking what actions are being taken by those responsible achieving the target to get back on track.

As evidence of the Council maintaining focus on what it had set out to achieve, the 2004/5 plan contained 45 targets for action, 33 of these were effectively completed and the others were given revised completion dates. Challenging projects have been delivered within very tight timescales through the focus, commitment and enthusiasm of Members, officers and partners.

3. Capacity

Clear accountability and decision making to support service delivery and continuous improvement

The first Corporate Performance Assessment found capacity to be a significant weakness.

Quote

...the limitations in terms of people, skills, experience, systems and resources are of such significance as to seriously hinder the pace of improvement. There is no management development or training framework in place to begin to address these issues in a more systematic manner and these limitations have not been quantified or analysed and reflected in plans and ambitions.

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We have made great strides from such a low starting point. A transformation has taken place as Members have demonstrated a strong commitment to, and desire to benefit from both individual and organisational development. More than 90% of Councillors undertook a one-to-one, development review that led to an individual action plan and training in place.

Award

North West Charter for Member Development
2006

In total, during 2005/06 the Council's 36 Members undertook a total of 865 hours of development activity. Members are now committed to an on-going programme of development through the **Member Development Strategy**, developed by Members themselves, that sets out a clear set of priorities to be addressed together with a clear programme of development opportunities with an annual review process built into it.

In October 2005, following consultation with local people, Rossendale Borough Council adopted the formal **Cabinet Model** to streamline its decision-making processes and to support this model a new constitution was put in place. This is now being revised. Portfolio Holders are supported by Lead Members and **Portfolio** and **Lead Member Role Descriptions** are now in place.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is recognised as an effective part of the decision-making process. Overview and Scrutiny challenges Portfolio Holders and officers. An example includes a review of performance against **BVPI 8 which resulted in a jump in performance from xx% invoices in processed to xx% in** . A number of policy reviews have been conducted, such as **car parking**, that have then been considered by Cabinet in agreeing its policy.

Decision making is supported by Council's Forward Plan which is integrated with the decisions laid out in the Council's Corporate Improvement and Business Plans, is updated monthly.

As a result of these improvements Rossendale Council now benefits from a

strong and stable political leadership, with decision making structures that are clear and transparent, enabling timely, effective and accountable decision making processes to take place.

Quote

Political and officer leadership is much improved and the Council is now characterised by a more positive approach

Progress Assessment 2006

Improving Corporate Governance

Following a review by the Council's internal audit service to look at compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Corporate Governance Framework in March 2006 the Council adopted a **Code of Corporate Governance**. This shows how the Council is applying the principles of corporate governance for each dimension of the Council's business.

?? Comments from UoR?? Still to be added - Ethical Standards – training by Audit Commission and addition of new elements

Through the adoption and implementation of a **Risk Management Strategy** the Council is embedding risk management in its processes, structures and culture, enabling the Council to make the most of opportunities and make better decisions based on more complete information. This strong corporate approach is reflected in the way in which the Council uses data generated through the risk management process to prioritise its capital investment programme. For example, resources have been allocated to address the state of car park surfaces and paths in parks that generate an insurance risk. This investment programme as well as targeting risk areas targets service improvement and invest to save type activities that impact positively on the revenue budget:

- The buying out of leases for wheelie bins and the provision of capital resources for future purchases has reduced revenue costs **(how much?)**.
- Better procurement of vehicles has reduced revenue costs by a net £60k after including additional vehicles in the contract. This has provided vehicles fit for Rossendale's geography

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- Investment in parks and play areas while reducing the likelihood of insurance claims also contributes positively to the delivery of the play and open spaces strategies (how much?).
- Investment in the Council's ICT infrastructure results in a net revenue saving of £49k and puts in place tools that address the risk issues raised by both the Council's own assessment and by regulators in their review. This investment provides a platform for further efficiency savings and further improvement in the way in which services are enabled.

Improvement
Increased E-government enabled interactions from 36% in 2003/04 to 100% in 2005/06.

Risk management also identify those things that will either prevent delivery of plans or divert focus from those plans. The use of Covalent allows the Council to tie risk management clearly into the performance management system with risks linked not just to business plan deliverables but also to performance indicators where they might have an impact.

The Council's strategic risk register is contained within the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan, with operational risks contained within each of the Council's Business Plans, ensuring that all risks are owned and managed and systematically monitored, reviewed and up-dated through the Council's Covalent Performance System.

Regular meetings take place between Portfolio Holders and the relevant Heads of Service. The purpose of these meetings is to review the progress being made in relation to the achievement of the actions and targets contained within the Business Plan and to review operational risks and discuss any new developments or areas of concern. These meetings are also replicated with Shadow Portfolio Holders.

[Developing our capacity effectively to achieve change and deliver our ambitions and priorities](#)

We recognise we'll never have the capacity to deliver our ambitions alone and need to continue to collaborate effectively with

partners to deliver the Rossendale Alive vision. To capture and manage our diversity of provision we are developing our **Capacity Building Approach**. This is represented in figure 2 below, and reflects the range of ways in which we are increasing our operational capacity beyond that of the Council's own direct capacity.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

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.

[Organisational Development](#)

Given the scale of changes that Rossendale has faced and continues to face, there is a strong need to continue to develop the skills and competencies of Members, Managers and Officers. Our aim is to develop their full potential to enable them to effectively champion the needs of our community and deliver better services to our customers. Much has been done throughout since 2004 to strengthen the Council's capacity by ensuring we have the right leadership, effective organisational structures and people with the right skills and competencies to deliver improvement and transformation. This will continue through 2006/2007.

During 2004 the Council completed a major organisational review, which included the successful appointment of several new management posts to increase the skills and capacity of the Council in priority areas. A new **organisational structure** was implemented that resulted in a focus away from transactional activity to front line customer services. We continually review our structure as the shape of the organisation changes.

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Our **Organisational Development Plan** is focused on the transformation of the Council to achieve real and lasting change by developing the organisation, building leadership capacity, developing the skills and capacity of the workforce. It also identifies some key projects to address some of the challenges in relation to recruitment and retention of staff. This is just one of element of the delivery mechanism in relation to the **Human Resources Strategy**, in addition to the **Workforce Plan**, the **Equality Strategy** and the **Human Resources Business Plan**.

Quote

At a corporate level the Council takes diversity issues seriously and has appropriately resourced the area. An equalities group has been recently established, chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and a lead Councillor for equality has been appointed... Companies seeking contracts with the Council must have diversity strategies before being considered for council contracts. Diversity is an integral part of the Councils business planning and a detailed action plan covering several areas such as community cohesion is in place to improve the council's performance in the area up to 2008.

Audit Commission February 2007

As part of building the management and leadership of the Council significant investment has been made in training over the last three years. This has included mandatory training in the Council's priority areas of improving customer focus and developing its approach towards equality and diversity issues, alongside several other key priority programmes including:

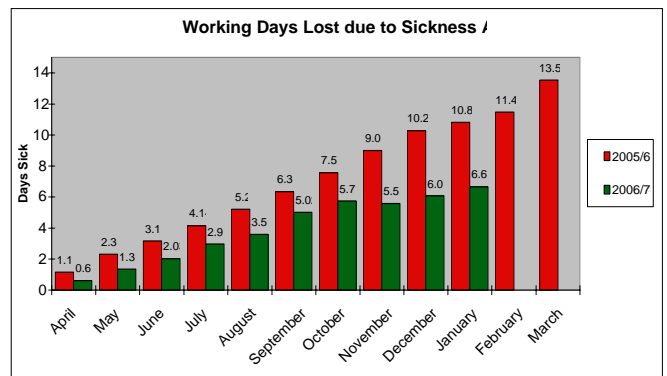
- Health and Safety
- Financial and Risk Management
- Absence Management
- procurement system (Radius)

The Council senior management team have also participated in the ODPM and East Lancashire Leadership programmes; and x staff have completed the Certificate in Management Studies and the ILM introductory certificate in First Line Management.

The Council have agreed a significant budget for organisational development in order to continue to develop the skills and capacity of

employees. The Training Budget for 2006/07 is £107k - almost 1% of the total Council budget and an increase per head from £344 in 2005/06 to £382 in 2006/07. The Housing Inspection highlighted that this compares well against an average local government spend of £216 per employee;. The Council has also committed to the achievement of Investors in People by March 2007, following the achievement of the award by The Human Resources Team in December 2005.

Our **Reward and Recognition Strategy** is aimed at making sure that people feel valued for their contribution. Rossendale Borough Council also tackles poor performance and attendance issues. The chart below shows how successful we have been in tackling this during 2006/07.



Our Financial Capacity

Rossendale has a history as a relatively high tax and high spend council. The Council has been very aware of this history in setting its financial boundaries going forward and set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy a series of rules by which it will manage its finances. Central to these is a commitment to keep council tax increases at 3% or less from 2006/07 onwards. This has been delivered and is intended over time to bring Rossendale's element of the Council Tax closer to the average.

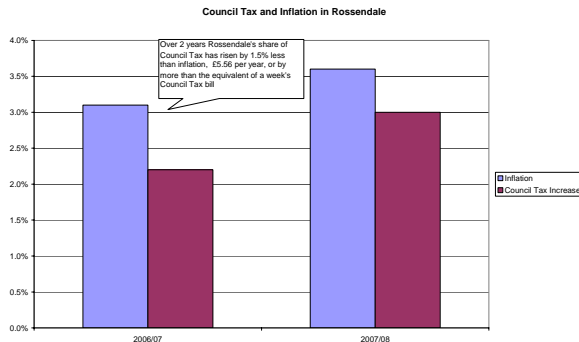
In order to achieve this, and the 2005/06 budget which met the Government's capping criteria the Council has delivered the following cashable efficiencies (as counted in the Annual Efficiency Statement)

	Actual	Gershon Target

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	£000	£000
2005/06	447	315
2006/07	660	630
2007/08	967	945

This has delivered Council Tax increases below the rate of inflation as measured by RPI for 2006/07 and 2007/08 amounting to a real terms reduction in Council Tax of 1.5%.



At the same time as taking tough decisions on Council Tax the Council has rebuilt its general reserves from nil to in excess of £500k. These achievements and the redirection of resources into key priorities have been facilitated by a strong corporate approach to the budget process and the delivery of key projects such as the Housing Stock Transfer which by allowing the Council to clear its long term external debt has resulted in a revenue saving of £0.25m which has been ploughed back into services.

Procurement is an area which has seen considerable development on a number of levels:

- Procurement Strategy and dedicated post in place.
- e procurement solution in place with the new financial systems
- partner in the award winning East Lancashire e Partnership's procurement work stream with cashable savings of £80k already identified.
- major OJEU process completed to secure a strategic partner for the delivery of revenues benefits and customer services.

The contract with Capita for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services demonstrates clearly the increased focus on

value for money that the Council is achieving. This contract, as well as providing for the delivery of step change in performance means:

- Costs at a headline level £190k less than the previous arrangements.
- access to a telephone call centre until 7pm each night, an extra two hours per day. To deliver this in house would have required additional resources amounting to a minimum £15k.
- includes the cost of maintaining the Council's switchboard, corporate software licences and other costs outside the original cost envelope within the contract price, generating a further saving to the Council of about £60k.
- the contract provides full ICT disaster recovery for the Council's key customer facing applications within the contract price, which would otherwise cost £20k.
- Office accommodation with an estimated minimum capital value of £0.5m has been freed up, and IT replacement costs of approximately £15k every 3 years have been avoided.
- Delivers a document imaging system at a fixed price within the capital resources which the Council has made available for the project.

ICT and E Government

This focus on securing value is also reflected in the work on delivering the Council's ICT Strategy.

In the past our ICT provision has been a barrier to progress. During 2006 a complete review of the Council's existing IT systems and contract was undertaken. Council then considered a fully costed and planned series of proposals to address the acknowledged deficiencies in current ICT provision. The recommendations were adopted as part of the Council's overall **ICT Strategy** in November 2006 and implementation of the strategy has commenced **Customer Access Strategy**

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Programme Management – Programme Board.

Securing external capacity – Regeneration Board and Delivery Team £450k over 3 years

Performance Management

4.1 Driving continuous improvement through our approach to performance management approach

The Corporate Governance Inspection in 2002 concluded that Rossendale Council had a very weak approach to managing its performance; was lacking in an underlying performance management framework for the Council:

Quote

- Service plans do not exist,
 - The Council struggles to collect performance information
 - Senior managers do not recognise the need for performance management systems
 - Middle managers and staff do not have targets or objectives.
 - Member scrutiny of service performance has been ineffective,
 - performance has continued to deteriorate for several years, for example, in rent collection
- CGI 2002

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council in 2004 acknowledged that improvement had taken place, but still found the Council's overall approach to performance management to be weak.

Determined to overcome this weakness, performance management became one of the Council's highest priorities and resources were allocated to support improvement. The Council has since made substantial progress in this area - supported by The Audit Commission and the Improvement and Development Agency - working with Members, managers, staff and partners to develop their understanding and ability to apply and use effective Performance Management techniques.

Clear governance structures have been put in place and widely communicated, and all

stakeholders are fully aware that effective performance management is part of the core role. The adoption of the Council's **Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan** in February 2007, developed in full consultation with stakeholders, supports this commitment and shows how the Council's plans to continually improve its approach to performance management.

A culture of performance management is becoming embedded throughout the Council as priorities are cascaded down through the Community and Corporate Planning infrastructure. Our Business and Team Plans are used as a basis for setting individual staff targets through the annual Performance Development Appraisal process.

During 2005/06, x% of the Council's staff participated in the PDP process, focused on ensuring that all staff have clear annual targets and objectives, and have a good understanding of how their efforts as individuals and as part of a team, contribute towards the wider achievement of the Council's corporate priorities.

Improvement

74% of staff feel their line manager shows them respect and consideration.
64% of staff know their annual objectives – an improvement from X% in 2005.

This approach demonstrates that the Council now has a robust and transparent performance management framework in place that clearly shows what the Council is striving to achieve, with the achievement of performance at each level of the framework being routinely monitored, communicated and acted upon. (How has this achieved improvements??)

The Council's investment and on-going commitment to the implementation of the 'Covalent' Performance System has been instrumental in improving the Council's approach to performance management and ensures a robust Corporate Memory associated with performance information. At the same time the Council re-enforced its commitment to data quality by introducing procedures to review the reliability and

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accuracy of BVPI's and associated Audit Trails.

Building on this success, during 2006 the use of the Covalent System has been extended to cover each level of the Council's performance management framework, including the Corporate Improvement Plan, service area Business Plans, and the Council's Risk Register. The use of Covalent has been extended to cover the performance management of key partnerships and to assist in the monitoring of the Council's approach to Programme Management.

The success of this is evidenced through the Council's much improved approach to the regular reporting and communication of performance information; through the Council's use of performance information to prioritise and manage the achievement of the improvement of Council services; and, the Council's ability to return a full set of accurate and reliable outturns for BVPI's in the Council's Best Value Performance Plan over the last two years, with no BVPI's being given a 'qualified' status by the Audit Commission.

During this period training was provided to Members and, as a result Member confidence in using and challenging information can be seen to have substantially increased. Reviews have included:

- improving sickness absence,
- creditor payments
- disabled access to buildings.

At the same time specific roles for Members, Managers and Partners in scrutinising and challenging the performance of each level of the Council's Performance Management Framework have been agreed and implemented.

Programme Management

A Programme Board has been established to monitor the achievements and progress made in delivering each element of the Council's overall programme, made up of the Council's and the Rossendale Partnership delivery plans and Regeneration Board work programme.

Performance Information is now routinely used by the Council as a key management

tool to help prioritise, manage and monitor the achievement of service improvement through the Council's budget allocation, corporate, business and team planning processes. Over the last three years the Council has taken a deliberate and planned approach in targeting its resources towards improving those services with the poorest levels of performance, low customer satisfaction; and, where it was felt that improvement would have the greatest impact on the highest number of customers.

Key successes include:

- Regeneration and Planning,
- Housing,
- Street Scene & Liveability functions
- Customer Services,

This planned and prioritised approach can be seen to have demonstrated steady improvement within each of these service areas. - need some examples

In relation to BVPI's that are not achieving their stated targets, reports are now routinely produced by the relevant officers, detailing what actions will be taken to improve performance. **Examples?** A further benefit of this approach has been to map out who is responsible for delivering each element of the programme, and ensuring that all key partners are aware of what is being done by each of the delivery partners.

At the same time the Council has developed a strong track record in its willingness to open itself up to both internal and external evaluation of service delivery and to learn from both the public and private sector, using the opportunities provided through such 'challenges' to improve service delivery. There are many examples of the Council successfully using this approach to improve services, one of which is provided by through our improved approach to Customer Services and Access. The Council has worked with the Consultant's Chapman & Handy, Tameside and Liverpool Council's, and the private sector company, Liberata, in relation to the delivery of improved customer services, prior to the Council's contract for Revenue & Benefits being awarded to Capita PLC in November 2006. (Can we add something here on work with LCC for the Call Centre?)

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(Place overall BVPI Improvement Graph following release of final quartile figures in February)

(Still need to include something on the 'use of complaints' & any evidence of benchmarking and using performance information with partners to improve services)

6. Achievement

What level of quality has the Council with its partners achieved in relation to its services, priority areas and impact on local quality of life?

Over the last three years the Council has transformed the way in which engages with and provides services to the local community. This has been achieved by Members and Managers of the Council, working closely with both the local community and key partners to establish a clear strategic direction for the future of the Borough and pull together in order to achieve it. But we recognise there is still a lot to do, both within the Council, to deliver our priority areas and the impact on quality of life. Some of our major achievements are set out below:

Strategic Objectives:

Community Safety

- Our Crime and Disorder Strategy shows highest performance in the County in terms of crime reduction, with the 3 year attainment targets in reducing crime have been achieved in a year (from – to figures) and at Dec. 2006 the BCS Comparator Crime figure was down 17% on the same period last year.
- criminal damage reduced by 24.5% over what period is this compared to the same period last year through targeted operations with key partners around anti social behaviour and criminal damage at key 'hot spot' times.
- 9.2% reduction in burglary between December 2005 and December 06. These reductions in part can be attributed to target hardening project to reduce repeat victimization.
- Focused action taken in response to issues. For example, youth related anti social behaviour complaints in the Staghills area of the Borough led, after months of hard work and a multi agency partnership approach, to the opening of Staghills Youth Shelter in August 2006. This area is used by the young people and is far enough away from the residential area so as not to cause nuisance, but is near enough so help can be summoned if needed. (Has there been a reduction in complaints)
- Operation Streetwise 2006 was another enormous success with approximately 900 Year 6 pupils attending the event. This partnership delivers advice to the young people before they move on to secondary school, including information on personal safety, the consequences of anti social behaviour, alcohol issues, bullying and environmental issues.
- The five East Lancashire district CDRP's have joined together to produce an Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy which is due to be launched in April 2007.
- The third Outdoor Alcohol Control Zone in the Borough came into force February 2007 in Bacup, in direct response to complaints from residents and businesses. An Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy will be launched in April 2007.
- New lighting will be finalised in March 2007 around the multi use games area in Victoria Park, Haslingden. Young people complained that they were unable to use the park in the evenings and winter time because there was no lighting. Now 'timed' lighting on the park and new lighting columns on the footpath leading to the park have been introduced. Do we have any quotes from the young people?
- In July 2004, £70,000 was secured from Lancashire County Council's Street Lighting Reducing Crime and Fear of Crime Local Transport Plan Allocation 2004/05. This enabled the upgrade of street lighting on the Pennine Estate in Bacup Do we have any evidence people feel safer?

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Health

- Performance against BVPI 166, a general measure of the Environmental Health service increased from 38.8% in March 2005 to 88.8% in March 2006 and are on target to achieve more than 90% in March 2007.
- The Council has joined the Communities for Health Initiative– and we are developing a ‘healthy workplace’ project through money allocated as a result of the ‘spearhead’ status for the borough.
- The council has funded two ‘Hit Teams’ and a Sharps Squad to deal immediately with refuse and sharps needles and drug paraphernalia – (introduced when how many ‘picked up needles etc’)
- Environmental Health was restructured in April 2006 to reflect the new public health agenda and the need to prioritise services to improve health and reduce health inequalities. Recent initiatives include work in relation to healthy eating, a healthy workplace scheme, energy efficiency and promotions concerning dermatitis, working at heights and manual handling. **(INTENDED OUTCOMES)**
- The Environmental Health Service is now participating in 3 theme groups of the Local Strategic Partnership. By work with the Health, Housing and Environment Group members, we are developing a range of activities where working together will achieve more significant outcomes than can be achieved separately. **(examples of achievement)**
- Customer satisfaction and comment scheme shows x% **(satisfaction figures)** – **any service changes as a result?**
- Smokefree Rossendale strategy has been produced and confirmed by Cabinet which sets out actions to ensure effective implementation and compliance.
- Inter-Authority auditing of food and health & safety services during 2006 revealed more than satisfactory achievement **(figures)**
- Benchmarking scores have improved from March 2005 to March 2006 when measured using the Hampshire and Isle of Wight matrix **(figures and what for?)**
- Significant reduction in teenage conception rates and the rate is now equal to the Lancashire average **(figures – from – to)**
- The Extended Schools Programme & Healthy Eating Strategy – **achievements**
- We have entered into a Public, Public Partnership for Pest Control Services Bury and Rochdale Councils providing a considerably improved level of service, whilst saving £10,000 per annum.
- The joint consultations on health has resulted in a shared vision of a health campus. RBC are part of the steering group with the Community Network and other partners to develop a community hospital in Rossendale.
- Reward and Recognition Strategy in place for Rossendale Borough Council **and means...**

Education

- 49 new childcare places achieved (**where-to do what?**)
- 3 Children Centres developed. RBC on the board of one and part of influencing policy and direction.
- Extended schools programme is being piloted across the Borough using joint working approach.
- Virtual schools programme in place for vulnerable children supported by RBC through Groundwork (**that achieving**)
- We have worked in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire and Bolton Metro to deliver the Postgraduate

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Diploma in Management Studies for existing managers and those who had completed the Certificate in Management Studies. Two members of staff from two different service areas are currently undertaking this course.

- The Council has supported eighteen employees to study for the Institute of Leadership Management Certificate.
- Greengage facilitated a culture change programme over 3 days aimed at Senior and Middle Managers. A total of 16 middle and Senior managers completed the course.

Shared Strategic and Corporate Objectives: Environment

- The Environment Inspection in 2006 assessed the Council as providing a fair service, with promising prospects for improvement

Quote

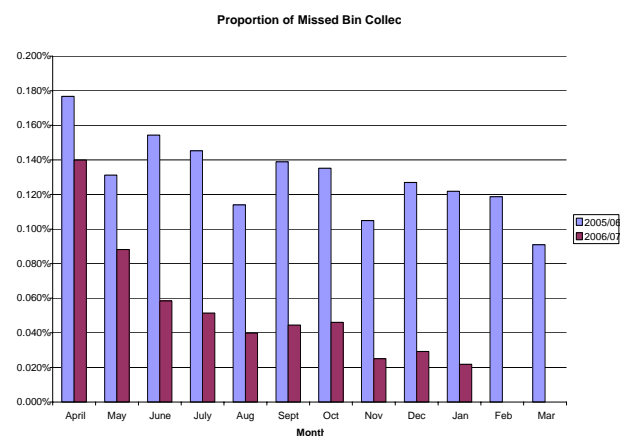
The Council recognises that it has rich environmental assets, and rightly makes managing the environment a high priority. Some imaginative and exciting ideas are emerging, aided by an unusually self-reliant and entrepreneurial community voice. There is also an improvement in the quality of the natural environment, open spaces and the built environment. The Council is open to ideas, brings in a range of partners and is moving towards a clearer corporate definition and exploitation of the borough's 'brand', in which the environment is likely to play a significant part."

Audit Commission February 2006

- The Council's NEAT teams have been able to increase the number of enforcement actions from without having to rely on costly legal action
- The Council is providing local leadership with the creation of an Environmental Strategy incorporating climate change and has signed up to the Nottingham Climate Change Charter. Public consultation on the strategy is currently under way to be followed by detailed preparation of plans and targets in order to implement the strategy.
- **Within this objective, StreetScene and Liveability has been identified as a**

corporate priority. In order to deliver this, a fundamental review of the service area has been undertaken in partnership with Enterprise Service Improvement Plans have been produced and implemented for the service area as preparation for partnership. These have included:

- New technology is increasing cost-effectiveness and increasing customer satisfaction. Our fully digitised collection rounds and satellite tracking of vehicles has reduced missed bins from 193 bins per 100,000 in 2004/05 to current levels (54 in 2006/07).



- Procurement of new waste fleet resulting in equivalent of £100,000 savings per annum on previous lease contract, three staff redeployed and a capital receipt of £80,000, and 2 additional Road sweepers purchased through savings in vehicle procurement
- Implemented of sweeping routes from October – increased frequency on all roads and footpaths & BVPI 199 on target to reduce BVPI 199 from 18% in 2005/06 to 14% in 2006/07.
- Purchase of Litter Master to assist with increase in the dog fouling complaints. Modification of dog bin emptying to improve frequency (drop in complaints figures?)
- Survey of all litter bins in the borough, growth bid of £100,000 over five years for replacement and we have revised litterbins emptying

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- Joint working practices with refuse collection and street cleansing leading to service efficiencies and improved recycling. Improvements include street cleansing rounds amended to include parks and open spaces. Improved green waste recycling with majority of green waste now processed and used as mulch.
- The introduction of Town Centre Care takers providing a complete town centre maintenance service including Grounds maintenance, toilet cleansing and litter picking.
- Same day collection for seven separate recycled materials – glass, cans, plastics, textiles, paper, cardboard and garden waste, BVPI's showing above average performance
- The adoption of the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 has resulted in increased enforcement action for Litter, Flyposting and Graffiti and Fixed Penalty Notices have been introduced (Provide figures)
- The Council works with Groundwork, Civic Pride and other organisations on projects such as cleaning up of the river banks in the Valley and development of multi-user games areas across the borough

Housing

Housing Stock Transfer was a corporate priority for 2005/06 and was achieved when our Housing Stock transferred to Green Vale in March 2006, releasing £40m investment to improve tenants' homes by installing new kitchens, bathrooms and other improvements.

Case Study

Paper collections: In October 2006 we a piloted a scheme for higher capacity 140litre grey wheeled bins for the collection of paper and card. The trial targeted 1500 properties (approx 5% households) - almost 70% of those targeted joined the scheme. This has meant an increase in paper tonnages of almost 20% going from an average of 455.46 per quarter so far this year to 521.12 for the last 3 months. We are currently distributing another 1,000 to other parts of the Borough.

- The successful introduction of 'NEAT' & 'Hit Squads to address environmental issues in conjunction with local communities (Recycling figures)
- A fast track removal of abandoned vehicles has also been introduced which means that we are removing, 100% of problem vehicles within 24 hour. The fast track removal of cars have reduced the number of reports of abandoned cars by approximately two-thirds between Sept 2005 and April 2006 from 39 per month to 13 per month.

Improvement

101 properties/pieces of land selected for direct action and prosecution in the first 6 months of our Section 215 Enforcement Project - 26% of owners complied with our letters/notices (amounting to approx £100,000 - £120,000 of improvements). A prosecution is scheduled for March 2007.

Quote

We lived in a terraced house which was depressingly in need of refurbishment, and moved into a static caravan in July last year. We had been on the council list for nearly 4 years. You came to our rescue and offered us a choice....and we moved in October. You even did the kitchen for us before we moved because of my husband's bad health....

Greenvale Homes Tenant

The development of a strategic infrastructure for Housing has also been a priority for the Council, together with ensuring the skills and capacity is in place to deliver it. Key outcomes have been:

- i) Fit for Purpose Housing Strategy, with Housing Needs Assessment completed and incorporated into Housing Strategy, setting the strategic approach for addressing housing need issues in the Borough up until 2008, when it will be reviewed.

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ii) Affordable Housing Strategy which has managed to attract £670,000 of Housing Corporation funding to build 20 New Build flats in Rossendale.

iii) Improved homelessness service developed in partnership with Greenvale homes and a revised Homelessness Strategy and relaunch of Rossendale Homelessness Forum. In addition accommodation for the M3 Project was provided in partnership with Ashiana Housing Association (the M3 project provides supported lodgings for young homeless people).

A detailed Strategic Housing Improvement Plan was developed and implemented, supported by £60,000 invested in services to strengthen the Strategic Housing function.

As a result, the Strategic Housing area of the service was assessed as Fair with Promising Prospects for Improvement by the Audit Commission in December 2006.

Achievements of the Strategic Housing Team during 2006/2007 also include:

- 14 properties were included in a Group Repair scheme **is this part of Elevate, if so, include below**
- 12 commercial properties were included in a shop front improvement programme
- 57 households received disabled facilities grants with works managed by the Housing Renewal Team as an Agency Service **(additional £75,000 Disabled Facilities Grant awarded in October 2006 means xx more schemes)**
- A draft Affordable Warmth Strategy was developed
- Accredited Landlord Scheme to improve conditions in the private rental sector, and successfully implemented a Nominations Agreement Policy with all RSL's to reduce the levels of homelessness and alleviate the pressures on the Housing Register in June 2006.
- The Landlords Forum met on 3 occasions during 2006/2007 (average attendance @ 30 landlords) with the meetings focussing on training and information
- Developed and updated the Empty Homes Policy to target more work towards the reduction of empty homes in the Borough **(results/figures) and from 2004/05 to present**

84 empty homes returned into use (figures since original inspection)

- Successfully managed to be included in the HMR Pathfinder Scheme as part of Elevate East Lancashire which has brought more than £5m into the Borough to date. The Council has undertaken face-lifts to 114 stone-built terraced houses, and has brought back an unoccupied former mill, into use as high-quality apartments. (Ask for Elevate Case Study). 100% Elevate resources (£1.8m) were spent and all target outputs achieved (128 properties refurbished)

• Economy

Within this objective, the regeneration of Rossendale (and Rawtenstall Town Centre in particular) has been identified as a corporate priority.

Working in partnership with Rawtenstall town centre's shopping precinct owners CNC Ltd to bring forward a £33.5m scheme for the redevelopment and enlargement of the "Valley Centre" shopping centre. including participating in a design review of the development by CABE, the Commission for Architecture in the Built Environment. A consultation exercise was then undertaken of the revised design. A detailed planning application for the scheme will be submitted to the Council by CNC in March 2007

The service continued to work with the Bacup and Stackstead's SRB partnership in the delivery of the final year of it's six year programme. **Total budget?**

Futures Park Development – details?

Capacity to develop a Regeneration Team for the council – arrangement with LCDL and NWDA

The Council has become resourceful about using partnerships, consultancies and agreements with voluntary organisations to gain added value. For example, it is using volunteers from the local Civic Trust to complete heritage character assessments, and it is using a planning policy consultant to train planning policy staff on the job."

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Within this objective, the Council identified 'Promoting Rossendale' as a corporate priority in 2006.

The Panopticon (Halo) is bringing £540,000 of regeneration funding to the borough. The Northern Way programme has picked Halo as one of six major landmark projects for the 'Marketing the North to the World' programme. A major national and international media campaign will support their investment.

Transforming Pennine Lancashire

The main building blocks of the Local Development Framework have been put in place following consultation

Britannia Gateway Improvements, delivering

- The scheme includes environmental improvements along Rochdale road opposite Britannia school and on other adjacent sites. Physical improvements include signage, landscaping and public art installations and incorporate community consultation with Britannia residents groups and school.

Gordon Street Play Area Improvements: - ELEVATE / SRB funding has seen a £52,000 investment in increased play facilities and open spaces improvements

Spring Terrace – Development of community garden and safe play space together with provision of bin storage areas for recycling

- **Bankfield Street** – provision of bin storage areas and extra parking facilities together with improved drainage and streetworks.
- The NEAT Teams are also involved in urban regeneration through the Elevate funding program. The partners in this programme are Elevate, Greenvale housing, Groundwork, Planning department, Private Sector Housing, Housing market renewal and Refuse collection / Street Cleansing.
- Major review of Economy theme group steered by RBC to ensure the group becomes a regeneration board, overseeing the strategic regeneration of the Borough.

- Tourism partnership with Brighter Business Solution to achieve increased marketing and materials to promote Rossendale at value for money.
- Economic inclusion pushed up the agenda for all partners with RBC funding three local credit unions and developed partnership between these and CAB to ensure joint agendas and ability to draw down additional funding including lottery.
- RBC also support Peer to encourage and develop community and social enterprises – **achievements ?**
- **Community Network**
- Successfully managed the rebuild of Whitwoth Civic Hall – Result: a new state of the art community centre for the people of Rossendale and one which has the ability to be self financing in the medium term such that its costs do not unduly impact on Council tax requirements.
- **Outcomes of Living and Working in East Lancashire survey showing the strength of Rossendale for this area.**
- The Leader of the Council has prepared an options paper on modernising the role of Full Council which includes a focus on full Council's community leadership role
- The Community Network, has grown from strength to strength, membership now at over 600 & Delivered a successful Community Conference with over 70 organisation exhibiting and over 250 people in attendance
- Overview and Scrutiny exercising Community leadership role, recent examples include the reviews of litter bins, bus shelters and car parking together with an outward looking focus on services provided by other organisations such as the review of Lancashire County Council's highways function.
- Raising the profile of Elected Members in the community through distribution of "Your Councillors" booklet

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- Councillor's using 'Community Leadership' resulted in a the prevention of the closure of Haslingden Fire Station
- The establishment of Rossendale's first Mini-Mayor (a Year 6 pupil) resulting in positive press and engaging young people in the democratic process, through participation in various civic events
- Engaging with young people by hosting a question time event at Haslingden High School during Local Democracy Week.
- Rossendale Crescent: - Improvements to a play area which include: - Secured by design, Planting, Improvements to paths and fencing. The project was completed in July 2005. In total the project cost £25,489.
- Stubblelee Skatepark Improvements:- The project concentrates on the Stubblelee Skate Park and Tennis Court area designs have been worked up by 7 young people
- Stacksteads Recreation Ground:- Multi agency (RBC, Groundwork, LCC and Police) Youth Provision programme and with the support of Stacksteads Riverside Park Group. The project includes a Spacelift urban design project involving young people in design and community consultation processes. Spacelift is delivered through CABE Design East Lancashire working in partnership with Elevate. Total Project Value of £185,000 with significant match funding for the project secured from Barclays Spaces for Sports (via Groundwork UK), Sport England, SRB, LEF, LSSRP and potentially CABE.
- Community Inclusion is high on the agenda of the NEAT Teams this is achieved by the NEAT Managers and NEAT Officers attending local forums, PACT (Police and Community together)
- **Culture**
- The LSP's Sports Alliance was chosen as a pilot for the roll out of Sport England's Sport and Physical Activity Alliances in the North West
- The K Festival was the first children's arts festival in the North of England to receive Arts Council funding & demonstrates effective partnership via the LSP's Arts Alliance to deliver a regionally significant event
- Volunteers from the local Civic Trust to complete heritage character assessments, and it is using a planning policy consultant to train planning policy staff on the job.
- Youth Provision Strategy delivering improved services for young people with 5 Multi-Use Play Areas, 3 skate parks and youth shelters being provided
- Acted on findings from the results of the Open Space Audit and commissioned the Open Space Strategy involving multi-agency working to enable a joined up approach to opens provision for the next 12 years.
- Play Strategy written and at consultation stage using innovative consultation techniques, to produce a strategy for the growth and support of sport in the borough the strategy is linked across the strategic objectives of national sporting bodies,
- Sites identified in the Play Strategy as priority improvements in anticipation of application for additional sources of funding from external agencies such as the Big Lottery Fund.
- Rossendale Borough Council priorities for 2006/07:

Partnerships – increasing our capacity Customers – to deliver through effective partnerships

- The LSP's Community Strategy Delivery Plan received a green rating from the NWDA in 2006
- Benefits Service improved from it's 'poor' judgement and is now rated as 'Fair' & compliant with BFI Standards resulting in

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customer needs being more effectively met. Achieved through joint working with Department of Work and Pensions.

- The Lancashire Partnership's Local Area Agreement – the Council was a pilot for the performance management of the LAA and has built in the LAA targets and identified outcomes into its corporate & business planning process
- Rossendale Leisure Trust which has seen increased attendance with 54,000 extra visits, including out of school activities and holiday clubs, with increased customer satisfaction (fig) there are real plans to improve facilities with prudential borrow
- Transfer of Highways to LCC in 2004 to improve the Borough's roads resulting in an increase in customer satisfaction (from-to)

Customers – “Customers First”- being responsive and proactive to meet the needs of our customers

A Corporate Priority within the Customer Services objective related to Revenues and benefits performance – a key customer facing service. Contract with Capita to deliver improved Revenues, Benefits and Customer Contact Service – current achievement – much more detail needed on this. Timescale for achievement, outcome, initial performance

x% Increase in Customer Satisfaction from 2003/04 to 2006/07. This is against the national trend of reducing satisfaction with local government – but at 37% there is much we still want to do. Our own annual survey in 2005 showed 62.5% satisfaction with the Council.

Rossendale have developed an award winning web site which is currently ranked as the best web site in Lancashire, and in the top 15% of local government web sites by Site Morse. Contact via the web has increased significantly over the past 12 months with the web site receiving over 3,312,444 hits in 2006. Also a number of new services have been made available over the web site they include:

- Making online planning applications.

- An on online corporate library.
- Making payments online for council Tax, NNDR, Housing benefits.
- A full A-Z is provided for all the service areas.
- The web site also provides links to the Lancashire County Council web site and other key partners such as Greenvale Homes.
- Checking Council Tax payments made.
- Applying for Rossendale jobs.
- Also a new Rossendale Intranet has been developed and was implemented in December 2006. The new Intranet training will be rolled out by February 2007.

In addition Rossendale have developed a fully integrated extranet for the LSP and also Tourism (An extranet is a private network that uses the public telecommunication system to securely share part of the Council's business's information or operations with suppliers, vendors, partners, customers, or other businesses).

The One Stop Shop was opened in December 2005 and includes access to Language Line and loop and 'Minicom' systems. Since its opening in December 2005 there have been over 26000 (29,500) customers and in the quarter July - September 2006 95.2% (96.3%) of respondents said they were extremely satisfied or satisfied with their experience of using the One Stop Shop. Opening hours appears to suit the needs of those using the One Stop Shop. However, additional survey work will be carried out during 2007 in relation to hours of opening to ensure the needs of customers are being met.

Rossendale Call Centre opened in September 2006 customers wishing to talk to specialist staff in relation to revenue and benefits are now able to contact a specialist call centre whose hours are extended to 08.45 – 7.00 Monday to Friday. This latter service enhancement has been made available as a direct result of the partnership with Capita. In December 2006 2986 calls were received, 92% of which were answered within 20 seconds.

Customer Service Strategy being delivered, together with 'Customer First' standards ,

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resulting in improved customer service and satisfaction.

All of Rossendale's ICT development is been brought back in to the council from its out sourced ICT provider which provides efficiency savings and also increases the service levels for both officers and Members.

Rossendale successfully implemented the Local Land and Property Gazetteer and achieved status 1. The information will be used to improve the data quality with better address management for customers and we are also going to develop web based GIS so all customers can access Rossendale services via the web.

All Members and Senior Officers have been issued with Blackberry mobile phones which enables remote working capability, Also RSA and Firepass remote working has been implemented this enables remote working from any where in the world. It meets all the Audit Commission security standards. As recommended by the Audit Commission Rossendale has implemented a new perimeter firewall and the Council has now reached the ISO 27001 security standard for security.

Improvement – The provision of high quality public services built upon the foundations of Finance, Risk, Performance, procurement and Human Resource Management – all of which are priorities for the Council.

- For the third year in succession, at the end of 2005/6 over 60% of the of BVPI's have demonstrated absolute improvement, resulting in fewer indicators in the worst quartile of performance and an increase in those 'above average'.
- Contrast current against the below for the end of 2005/6 quartile please Leanne

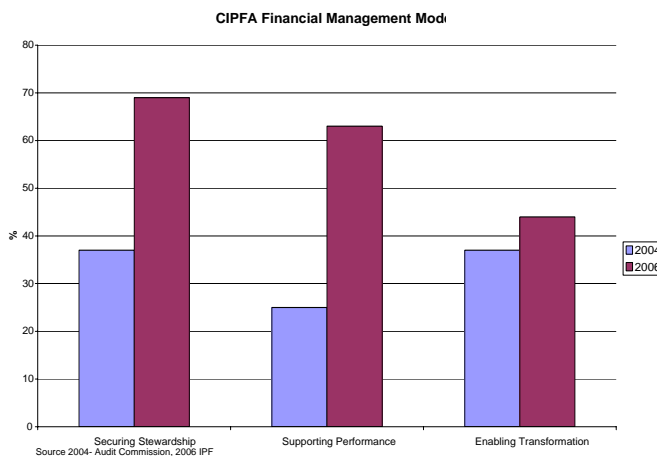
National indicators of council performance for the year 2001/2 identified that many of the service areas, and 57% of all comparable indicators, were performing amongst the worst 25% of all councils.

Only 10% of indicators were amongst the best 25% of all council

- Strategic Framework has now been put in place. This includes the Medium Term Financial Strategy, together with Risk Management, Procurement, and Capital Strategy (now rated as 'good') together with our first Asset Management Plan that will provide a framework to guide capital investment. This means that the Council has strategic plans and techniques on how to manage its finances, spending requirements and risks to the Council's objectives.
- Introduction of Radius financials (a new financial accounting system for the Council and its service areas) which has resulted in more timely financial monitoring, improved financial analysis and budget preparation.
- East Lancashire e- Partnership, Electronic purchase ordering system has provided cost savings due to reduced transaction and unit cost saving of IT Hardware £2,450 and Office Consumables £11,614.
- Achieved the target to rebuild of the Council's reserves in excess of £500k by 2006 meaning the Council now has the capacity to absorb more effectively the financial risk of unforeseen events. A Change Management Reserve has also been created to support the our Improvement journey.
- Earlier (unqualified) production of annual financial statements demonstrates efficient and effective year end close down procedures.
- Publication of simplified accounts in the Councils Newsletter to help customer understanding of customers in the way the Council allocates its financial resources.
- The Councils premier budget consultation document published January 2006 allowing stakeholders to influence the way in which the Council prioritises its objectives and its spending plans.

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- Partnership with Lancashire County Council for internal audit provision – Result: Creation of a fit for purpose Internal Audit team to assist the Council in achieving corporate improvement and effective corporate governance.
- Training and improving skill and capability: new Radius accounting system,
- All of the above reflect a growing maturity in the Council's financial management arrangements. This is partly reflected in solid scores on key elements of the Use of Resources assessment. The longer term underlying improvement is drawn out more thoroughly in the work done initially by the Audit Commission and more recently repeated by IPF using the CIPFA Financial Management Model. This shows a significant strengthening in the areas of stewardship and supporting performance within the organisation



- Achievement of the North West Charter for Elected Member Development which is a mark of best practice and quality in the area of member development.
- Internal re-structuring of the Council to increase capacity and focus where it is most needed, for example ??
- A robust Performance Management Framework now in place, supported by programme and performance management arrangements to provide

management and control of project delivery to agreed targets and deadlines.

- Housing Revenue Account of £1m following the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the Council's Housing Stock
- Complete review of ICT services leading up to a fit for purpose ITC strategy and cost savings
- Greater ownership and understanding of BVPI's within service areas has improved the accuracy & reliability of performance information, resulting no BVPI's being 'qualified' in the 2004/5 Audit of BVPI's (awaiting 2005/6 Data Quality Outcome)
- Implementation of the Covalent Management System throughout the Council has greatly improved performance reporting arrangements, facilitated Member 'challenge' of performance, and enables early corrective action to be taken where targets are not being met
- Members are very clear about their role and are confidently challenging performance and themselves engaging with officers to improve performance which is not reaching targeted level
- 85% of staff have participated in Personal Development Interviews during 2006 that help demonstrate how they contribute to the 'bigger picture'.
- Member Development Programme received a commendation in the MJ awards and 90% of Members voluntarily participated in a personal development appraisal process
- Investors in People Programme achieved in Human Resources and being rolled out across the organisation
- IDeA Member Development Programme including the Member/Buddy mentoring programme

Value for Money Examples (From Environment Inspection)

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The council has “brought waste collection costs down from over 40 per cent higher than the district average in 2003-04 to 3 per cent higher in 2004-05”.

“The costs of the planning and environmental health services and of sport and recreation are below district averages.”

The Council is moving from the role of provider of services to facilitator and commissioner, in order to maximise capacity and improve value for money. It is also adept at using partnerships to multiply the resources available to it.”

“The Council has become resourceful about using partnerships, consultancies and agreements with voluntary organisations to gain added value. For example, it is using volunteers from the local Civic Trust to complete heritage character assessments, and it is using a planning policy consultant to train planning policy staff on the job.”

“the amount of waste collected per resident and the cost of collection are both down; the service has significantly improved recycling”

“the new vehicle serving farms and outlying communities replaces a smaller one that needed emptying many times. The business case shows it will pay for itself within a year”

“new technology is increasing cost-effectiveness. For example, the number of bin collections that are missed has dropped substantially over the last year because tracking equipment on refuse collection vehicles allows customers and managers to locate them accurately (see paragraph 85). A future plan to give residents real-time information via the Council's website is expected to bring further efficiency gains through a reduced number of calls about missed bins to the Council's contact centre.”

5.2 Progress Made

This self-assessment demonstrates that since the Corporate Governance Inspection in 2002 significant progress has been made on making sure Rossendale Borough Council is an organisation that is fit for purpose. Change has taken place in every aspect of Council life

– from the brand and priorities to the offices and vehicles! This has included ensuring staff are in place with the right skills and tools in order for them to achieve their priorities. A clear agenda has been developed with focused priorities for the Council in the wider context of the agenda for the borough set out in the first Community Strategy. Significant emphasis has been placed on putting the strategic infrastructure in place starting with the Corporate Improvement Plan and translating this through a range of operational strategies and plans such as Medium Term Financial Strategy, Organisational Development Plan, Capital Strategy and Council Constitution. Comprehensive systems and processes developed and introduced (performance management, risk management and financial management). Appropriate development for staff and Elected Members is in place (reflected in liP for HR and NW Charter for Member Development).

Strong approach to partnership working reflected by Green status of LSP). Corporate Improvement Programme clearly articulated in the CIP. An improved profile for the Council has resulted in public satisfaction increasing from 27% in 2003 to 40% in 2006. (against national trend etc). Improvements have taken place across many service areas and significant changes to service delivery infrastructure have been made to ensure sustained improvements. Although absolute improvements have been made we recognise improvements by other councils still means our relative performance levels are at the level we want in some areas. We have built this into our future plans.

The Council is now beginning to engage in community leadership role and address cross-cutting issues (reflected by Children and Young People Strategy, Community Safety work and developing approach to Neighbourhoods). Elected Members are operating effectively through new decision making arrangements and increasingly using the Overview and Scrutiny process to develop policy and challenge performance.

Improved communication with residents, staff and Elected Members is developing relationships and contributing to better outcomes..

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Rossendale Future

Rossendale Borough Council is focused on delivering a clear agenda based on a strong evidence base enabling Councillors (and officers) to fulfil their community leadership role and stewardship of the borough.

Step changes will be achieved in service delivery demonstrably providing service improvements to support the Council's brand being recognised as a guarantee of good levels of service and customer care.

The capacity of the Council will be maintained and developed through skilled, appropriately equipped Elected Members and staff and engagement with customers and partners. Appropriate service delivery mechanisms in place for all services (and regularly reviewed).

Strong partnership with customers and residents delivered through neighbourhood management and the Council championing the borough through its role in cross-cutting issues such as health, climate change and community cohesion. Strong engagement in East Lancashire and wider sub-region.

Recognised in Lancashire as a place of excellence for programme management, neighbourhood working and organisational learning. Organisation viewed by staff as a good place to work where their contribution is recognised and valued.

The Council has adopted a modern approach to service delivery and driven through substantial changes to its core infrastructure facilitated by strong political and officer leadership. Improvements to corporate capacity are now showing through in better services and much improved user satisfaction. Over the past three years significant improvements have been delivered in financial management, human resources and ICT. Partnerships are more productive, investments have been made in training and development and sickness levels have reduced.

The Council has a record of implementing its corporate plans, including those which relate

to internal improvements. For example, the majority of the action plan relating to the 2005 staff survey have been implemented and the council is on track with its preparation for assessment for the Investors In People award. This demonstrates that