

Subject: Healthy Business Scheme

Status: For Publication

Report to: Policy Scrutiny Committee
The Cabinet

Date: 22 February 2007
21 March 2007

Report of: Head of Street Scene and Liveability

Portfolio

Holder: Street Scene and Liveability

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To report progress in the development of a Healthy Business Scheme

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The Council's priorities are a means of focusing on improving our services and influencing others. The priority of improving health and wellbeing across the Borough is designed to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 The workplace has a powerful effect on the health of employees in many ways. How healthy a person feels affects his or her productivity, and how satisfied they are with their job affects their own health, both physical and psychological.

4.2 A workplace where the health and well being of employees is a priority can improve health and reduce health inequalities. High standards of health and safety are allied with policies and procedures that take into account the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health of workers.

Employers can also contribute to health and regeneration outside the workplace by employing and purchasing locally, and enhancing the skills of their workforces.

- 4.3 The Environmental Health Service recognised that the general health of the people of Rossendale was not as good as the Region or National averages. As a part of the process of redirecting the work of the service, it aimed to deliver services that would make a significant difference to the health of residents and employees by targeting workplaces as a “Healthy Setting”.
- 4.4 It is lamentable that in the 21st century there are significant differences in health equality. It is a fact that the people of Rossendale have a life expectancy of up to 10 years shorter than either the national or regional average. Even during their shortened life span residents in the Valley are significantly more likely to suffer from cancer, heart disease or a stroke. Oral hygiene in children, general alcohol abuse and poor diets all contribute to Rossendale being amongst the most deprived areas in the country
- 4.5 The Government’s Public Health White Paper “Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier” (DH November 2004) stated that “for people in employment, work is a key part of life. The environment we work in influences our health choices and can be a force for improving health – both for individuals and the communities they are part of”. “Government and others can take action to extend healthy choices by:-
- Reducing barriers to work to improve health and reduce inequalities through employment;
 - Improving working conditions to reduce the causes of ill health related to work; and
 - Promoting the work environment as a source of better health”.
- 4.6 Discussions started in October 2005 with local community leaders with the view to developing a Local Business Partnership. A key part of this scheme was a proposed Healthy Business Award Scheme. The intention was that this scheme “would use the business organisation as a means of improving the health and wealth of its people and, through them, their families. By encouraging a healthy lifestyle, businesses and their people have been found elsewhere to benefit in the following ways:-
- The workforce should be healthier and happier
 - Motivation would improve
 - Management/employee relations would improve
 - Sickness absence would decrease
 - Staff turnover would decrease
 - Reduced insurance costs
 - Improved public image
 - Positive links to the community.

4.7 The main issues to include in such a scheme would be:-

- Health & safety at work
- Health checks for a range of issues
- Physical activity
- Alcohol awareness
- Stress management
- Healthy food choices
- Smoking policy
- Dental/oral health
- Occupational health issues such as musculoskeletal disorders

4.8 As a result of the discussions the concept of developing a Healthy Workplace Strategy was included in the Environmental Health Service Plan for 06/07. Invitations were sent to a range of local agencies and organisations, interested in the concept of a healthy workplace, and a number of large local businesses with the intention of discussing the overall concept and gauging interest.

4.9 A meeting was held on 31 January 2007 and was attended by 18 people with a range of interests, including representatives from Hollands Pies, part of Northern Foods, and Webron, two large local employers. Generally the outcome was supportive with a favoured first choice of developing a “MOT” style short intervention by a worker who could visit workplaces and interview interested employees to help determine what changes needed to be made. The idea came from the employer representatives that a “market stall” type presence could be set up in the workplace at lunchtime or break time where people would be encouraged to give a pledge to do something different and receive some sort of reward through the scheme e.g. discounted leisure activity or other reward depending on what people would find attractive to them.

4.10 The agencies involved, including the Environmental Health Service, the Public Health Network in East Lancashire, the Leisure Trust, the East Lancs PCT Health Promotion Service, the Community Dietician, REAL, NEAT, Groundwork, the Stop Smoking Service and others agreed to consider how they could contribute to such a scheme. The concept was also to be considered further by the business representatives and others contacted outside the meeting.

4.11 Consideration is also being given to the badging of the scheme so that it could be marketed throughout the valley to all sizes of business as well as the public and voluntary sectors.

4.12 It is hoped that by encouraging healthy lifestyles, and removing some of the barriers to their adoption, “healthy champions” may become established within business to act as foci for further action. Employees who pledge changes should also be able to influence their families and contacts outside work and thereby achieve further changes.

- 4.13 In November 2006 the Chief Executive was sent a letter from the Department of Health inviting the Council to join the Communities for Health Initiative and allocating the Council £100,000 of Communities for Health money. The money is non recurrent and must focus on local health priorities, as well as assisting in achieving local area agreement targets and the LSP delivery plan for health and well being.

The Communities for Health Initiative was introduced in the Choosing Health White Paper. The three strategic aims of the white paper are:

- Engage communities in their own health and develop capacity to support individual behavior change for healthier lifestyles
- Build partnerships between organizations and communities
- Develop innovative practices for community based health improvement.

An initial meeting was held between Borough Council staff, community representatives, Rossendale Leisure Trust and LCC where it was agreed that the Healthy Business Scheme, with its links to businesses and, through them, the local community, would be an appropriate scheme to fund.

5. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 6.1 There are no immediate legal implications.

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

- 7.1 There are no Human Resource implications.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Progress is being made, in consultation with local businesses, in the development of a healthy Business Scheme which will contribute towards delivering one of the Council's key priorities – the health and well being of people in Rossendale.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 That members note the progress being made and support the concept of a Healthy Business Scheme.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 Consultation has been undertaken with selected individuals and organisations culminating with the meeting on 31st January 2007. Further consultation is being undertaken now that the scheme, as a concept, is beginning to take shape.

Contact Officer	
Name	Philip Mepham
Position	Interim Manager, Environmental Health
Service / Team	Environmental Health Service
Telephone	01706 252566
Email address	philipmepham@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier. Department of Health. November 2004.	Stubbylee Hall
Creating a Healthy Workplace. Faculty of Public Health and Faculty of Occupational Medicine.	Stubbylee Hall
North West Workplace Health Strategy. University of Central Lancashire. 12 January 2007	www.healthysettings.org.uk