

Rossendale Borough Council Achievements

1. Delivering Quality Services to Our Customers

I have nothing but praise for the Council's new One Stop Shop. The staff are really friendly, you are treated with respect and don't have to wait too long to see someone. It's much cleaner and well laid out than the old town hall. The staff know about lots of different council service and go out of their way to help you.

One Stop Shop Customer

We are committed to improving services to customers across the Council and have put in place a number of major improvements during the past year. Crucially, almost 80% of our staff now feel that we emphasises the importance of the customer (58.5% in 2005).

As a result, customer satisfaction with Rossendale Council continues to improve from our poor performance in 2003/04. For example, 68% of people are satisfied with recycling services (an increase of 5%) and overall satisfaction with the council since 2003/04 is up 8% (the biggest rise in the country). However, our overall satisfaction rate is still not at the level we want and further improvements will take place during the next 12 months.

Many of these improvements will take place through the partnership we entered into with Capita during 2006. This ten year, £13m contract for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services is already delivering improved customer services, faster processing of benefits claims and longer opening hours for telephone enquiries. The new contract is saving us £190,000 per year compared with the previous arrangements and demonstrates our increased focus on delivering value for money. Already, the majority of performance indicators have improved and further improvements are expected throughout the contract. The partnership with Capita has also delivered new investment to enhance the services provided, investment which we would have had to find if we had retained the service.

One of the service improvements delivered through our partnership with Capita has been the new contact centre which opened in September 2006 for revenue and benefits. In December 2006, 2,986 calls were received, 92% of which were answered within 20 seconds.

Our One Stop Shop in Rawtenstall also continues to deliver excellent customer service with more than 45,000 customers using it since it opened at the end of 2005. Of these, 96.3% are satisfied their experience.

During 2006/07 our's website at www.rossendale.gov.uk has continued to improve and is now ranked in the top 30 of all local government websites, by Site Morse. An increasing range of on-line services are now available and the web was visited on 3,312,444 occasions during 2006.

Other improvements for customers during 2006/07:

- Major improvement to our planning service which is now processing planning applications more quickly.
- Successful completion of the £1.4m rebuild of Whitworth Civic Hall resulting in a new state of the art community centre for the people of Rossendale.
- Improvements in disabled access to council buildings - up from 76% of building accessible in March 2006 to 92% in March 2007.
- Using our well-being powers to support our communities, for example making land available to Stacksteads Riverside Park Group for the construction of a family resource centre and working with the community association in Edenfield to use our land to secure a new community centre.

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- Listening to local people's views - Over the last 2 years more than 1000 people have taken part in consultation activity through Rossendale's Council's "Feedb@ck panel" which is delivered in partnership with the East Lancashire e Consultation Partnership.
- Developing our approach to consultation feedback – "*You Said: We Did*" shows people what we have done as a result of what they have told us in surveys. For example people thought that dog fouling was a problem and our response has been to invest in a 'pooper scooper' machine and increase our enforcement action (issuing 64 Fixed Penalty Notices).
- Achieving level 2 of the Government's Equality Standard and on target to achieve level 3 in 2008. This demonstrates our commitment to ensure that all sections of the community have their needs met by the Council.
- Involving communities in service delivery e.g. young people have been involved in the designs for a project on the Stubblelee Skate Park and Tennis Court area and in improvements to Stacksteads Recreation Ground.
- Appointment of the borough's first mini-mayor as a way to reach out to young people and engage them in our work. A question time event was also held at Haslingden High School during Local Democracy Week in 2006.

As a council we consider complaints to be an important form of feedback about our services and we believe that we can learn from complaints and make improvements to services. Satisfaction with the way complaints are handled is up from 22% in 2003/04 to 34% in 2006/07 and we are aiming to improve this further. During 2006/07 we revised our complaints procedure and updated our leaflets and publicity as a way to encourage more people to use this important method of feedback. Our relationship with the Local Government Ombudsman has also improved during the year, primarily as a result of improvements put in place within our Development Control Service and a new case management approach that we are piloting with the Ombudsman.

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2. Regenerating Rossendale

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....

Green Vale Homes Tenant

Many people (64%) in the borough are satisfied with Rossendale as a place to live and 59.3% say that the Council is making the local area a better place to live, but we want to deliver a better quality of life for every resident. That is why regeneration is so important to us and why we have made it a priority for the last three years running.

There are five main elements to our regeneration strategy:

- Championing projects to deliver physical regeneration in the borough
- Delivering improvements to social housing and private housing in the borough
- Supporting business development
- Providing an effective spatial development framework and a good planning service
- Tackling financial exclusion

In order to deliver the improvements we want to see, we have established a Regeneration Board to oversee the strategic regeneration of the Borough, and secured £450,000 over the next three years to develop a Regeneration Team for the borough.

Physical regeneration

We have championed the transformation of Rawtenstall Town Centre through direct action and partnership working.

Throughout 2006/07 we have worked with the owners of the Valley Centre to bring forward a £33.5m scheme for the redevelopment and enlargement of the shopping centre. A planning application has now been submitted and subject to the correct planning applications being in place, work may start this year.

We have also worked with a local developer to secure an appropriate form of development for the New Hall Hey site – this will include a new Homebase store.

In the east of the borough, at Futures Park in Bacup, development agreements have now been negotiated that will result in private sector investment of £4.8m and employment opportunities for over 100 people. The remaining plots at this site are also being marketed and new jobs continue to be created through the facilities provided at the £2.8m Kingfisher Centre at Futures Park.

The past year has also been the final year of operation for the £5million 'Building a Better Bacup' Single Regeneration Programme which we have supported through work with the Bacup and Stacksteads Community Partnership Board. Throughout its lifetime the programme has levered in almost £4million from the private sector and £9.5 million from other public sector sources. This has helped to:

- create more than 300 new jobs
- train 800 people in new qualifications
- advise more than 500 businesses,
- improve more than 10 hectares of open space

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Housing

Following the transfer of more than 4,000 homes to Greenvale Homes during 2006, we are no longer a direct provider of housing. However we do still have responsibility for providing a strategic housing service which is capable of delivering positive outcomes for the people of Rossendale. These include the delivery of various improvement programmes such as the Elevate funded Housing Market Renewal programme and ensuring that arrangements are in place to provide a homelessness service. We also retains control of the borough's housing policy framework and is responsible for providing an adequate planning system that can meet the boroughs current and future housing needs.

The Housing Market Renewal Programme in Bacup, Stacksteads and Britannia continues to be a major success and is delivering housing and other improvements for local people, including:

- face lifting to 114 stone built terraced houses
- refurbishment of 128 properties
- a Group Repair scheme covering 14 properties
- a shop front improvement programme covering 12 commercial properties
- neighbourhood management
- investment in bin stores and other environmental improvements
- new community facilities such as parks and play areas
- disabled facilities grants for 57 households arranged by the Housing Renewal Team

We are also very pleased with the progress made by Green Vale Homes in refurbishing former council homes. Our decision to transfer council housing to Green Vale Homes has released £40m of investment and by December 2006 had resulted in:

- 169 new sets windows and doors
- 329 new kitchens
- 370 central heating installations
- 118 new bathrooms
- 38 new roofs
- footpath and handrail replacements at 4 sheltered schemes

Our strategic housing service has also made great progress during the past year developing a 'fit for purpose' Housing Strategy, incorporating a completed Housing Needs Assessment. The service has also:

- Put an affordable Housing Strategy in place and secured £670,000 of Housing Corporation funding for 20 new build flats in Rossendale.
- Approved and Empty Homes Policy designed to return at least 84 empty homes into use.
- Established an Accredited Landlord Scheme to improve conditions in the private rental sector.
- Continued to support the borough's Landlords Forum providing landlords with opportunities for training and information.
- Revised the Homelessness Strategy and re-launched Rossendale Homelessness Forum.
- Delivered an improved homelessness service in partnership with Green Vale Homes resulting in fewer incidents of repeat homelessness and a fall in the length of stay for people in temporary accommodation.
- Reached agreement with all Registered Social Landlords in the borough to reduce the levels of homelessness and alleviate the pressures on the Housing Register.
- Helped to secured accommodation for the M3 Project which provides supported lodgings for young homeless people.

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During an inspection of our Strategic Housing Service the Audit Commission found the service to be 'fair' with promising prospects for improvement.

Business development

We support PEER (People Encouraging Enterprise in Rossendale) which operates through a fifty strong community board of local people. It was the UK's first Enterprise Facilitation project based on the Sirolli tm approach to local regeneration. This 'good practice' approach to enterprise support is now being rolled out across East Lancashire. Between April 2006 and January 2007 PEER helped in the formation of 16 new businesses.

Spatial development

Our regeneration plans require a comprehensive spatial policy and good planning team. During the past year progress on the main building blocks of the Local Development Framework has been good and the Core Strategy and Rawtenstall Area Action Plan will be submitted later this year. Policies addressing key issues such as housing and planning obligations have been developed in the interim.

We have also worked hard to improve the quality and performance of our planning team. We have developed a capacity building partnership with Urban Vision and put an improvement plan for our Development Control Service into action in October 2006. As a result, performance is now improving with 58.77% of 'major applications' being heard within 13 weeks, up from 34.78% in 2005/06. Our performance with 'minor applications' is even better with 77.7% being determined within the government's target of 8 weeks. As a result of these improvements the planning service no longer requires additional government supervision.

Tackling financial exclusion

We have continued to provide funding for the three local credit unions in the borough and has worked with partners to launch RELi (Rossendale Enterprise Loan Initiative) in October 2006. Since then RELi has provided over £40,000 of loans to 13 local businesses who would not otherwise have been able to secure venture finance. We have also worked with welfare rights organisations and the Citizens Advice Bureau to encourage the greater take up of benefits by local people.

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3. Keeping Our Borough Clean and Green by creating quality spaces people respect and are proud of.

The Council's Town Centre Caretakers have been a huge success and our borough is looking much cleaner as a result. Every day I can see that Barbara from the council is out and about cleaning up the litter. I don't envy her – if only people weren't quite so thoughtless and would stop throwing their litter away she wouldn't have to work quite so hard and our street would be even cleaner.

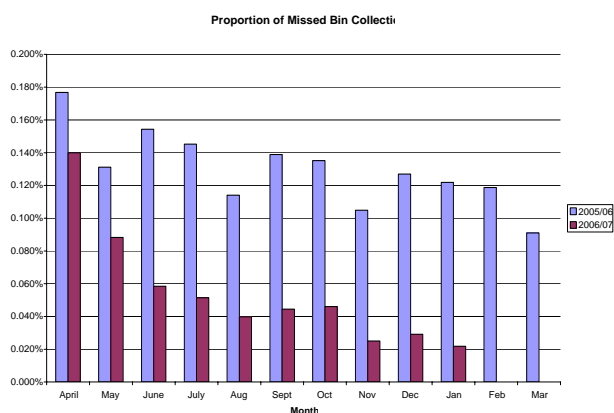
Waterfoot Resident

Our Streetscene service is one of our highest profiles services and has benefited from a significant investment during the past year.

Refuse collection and street cleaning

A new fleet of refuse collection vehicles are now in place following the negotiation of a new lease. This is delivering the equivalent of £100,000 of savings each year compared with the previous lease and has allowed us to purchase of two additional road sweepers. We have also sold our older vehicles for £80,000 and been able to redeploy three staff. As a result of this investment we have achieved cost saving and an increase in vehicle reliability leading to an improved level of customer service.

The new vehicles, combined with our decision to introduce fully digitised collection rounds and satellite tracking of vehicles for refuse and recycling at the end of last year has paid off with a reduction in the number of bins that we fail to collect – down from 193 missed bins per 100,000 in 2004/05 to 54 per 100,000 in 2006/07.



The new investment has also helped to bring down the cost of waste collection from 7.2% below average in 2004/05 to 28.4% below in 2006.

From October 2006, the additional cleansing vehicles allowed us to revise our sweeping routes and increase the sweeping frequency on all roads and footpaths (including parks and open spaces for the first time) This, together with the introduction of Town Centre Care-takers (who provide a complete maintenance service including grounds maintenance and litter picking), has led to a significant improvement in cleanliness in the borough. As a result the governments measure of how clean/dirty our streets are (BVPI 199), has improved from 18% in 2005/06 to 12% in 2006/07.

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Further improvement will take place over the next five years with £100,000 allocated to buy new and improved litter bins. This was the result of an Overview and Scrutiny review of litter bins which took place during 2006. Litterbins emptying schedules have also been revised following the review.

These improvements mean that people in Rossendale are feeling more positive about their environment. In 2006, 55% of people were satisfied that we had kept land clear of litter and refuse – a 15% increase from 2003/04. We also saw an increase of 15% in the number of people who agreed their neighbourhood has clean and well-maintained town centres.

Recycling

Recycling in Rossendale continues to be a success with our recycling rate reaching 28.91% - up from 15% in 2003/04. We now have same day collection for seven separate recycled materials – glass, cans, plastics, textiles, paper, cardboard and garden waste and have issued 10,500 composting bins – a significant number given only around 15,000 of our properties have gardens.

In October 2006 we piloted a scheme using grey wheeled bins for the collection of paper and card. The trial targeted 1500 properties (approx 5% households) with almost 70% of those targeted joining the scheme. The amount of paper and cardboard recycled through this scheme has increased by about 20% going from an average of 455.46 tonnes per quarter to 521.12 tonnes. We are currently distributing another 1,000 bins to other parts of the Borough.

Through our recycling initiatives and our educational work we have also achieved a reduction in the amount of waste collected, down from 480 kgs per head in 2000/01 to 371.7 kgs per head in 2006/07, a 22% reduction. Nationally, the amount of general refuse collected is actually rising by 2.1%, but ours fell by 4.99%.

As recycling services have improved so too has resident's satisfaction with the service. Since 2003/04, satisfaction with local recycling facilities has increased from 63% to 68% and satisfaction with the recycling collection service has increased by 5% to 70%.

Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams (NEAT)

Our Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams (NEAT)' have been a huge success. Since they were set up in April 2005 they have responded to 2,761 requests for service. They have organised a series of community clean-ups and visited schools to promote environmental education and recycling.

The NEAT teams have also taken responsibility for the fast track removal of abandoned vehicles which means that 100% of problem vehicles are now removed within 24 hour. This has reduced the number of reports of abandoned cars by approximately two-thirds.

The NEAT teams are also taking a lead on behalf of the Council in using our influence and our statutory powers to take action against those who have a negative impact on, or are actually damaging our environment. For example, we have used our Section 215 powers to target the owners of 101 properties/pieces of land, requesting that they make improvements or face the prospect of prosecution – as a result, about £120,000 of improvements have been made to date. We have also issued 64 fixed penalty notices for dog fouling and served 84 notices under the Environmental Protection Act.

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Environmental improvements

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.

Audit Commission, February 2006

Local people are proud of their environment and as a Council we are working hard to protect and enhance the borough's natural assets. Our newly adopted Environmental Strategy sets out a roadmap to a more sustainable future for the Council and for the borough as a whole. We take our environmental responsibilities seriously and through our work with the Local Strategic Partnership's Environment Theme Group are providing community leadership on this issue. For example we have demonstrated our commitment to reduce carbon emissions by signing up to the nationally acclaimed Nottingham Climate Change Charter.

We have also worked with a wide range of partners such as Groundwork and community organisations such as Civic Pride to involve the wider community in making environmental improvements. This has included the provision of a network of Multi-user games areas (MUGAs) in our parks and organising community clean-ups so that local people can contribute to improvement in their own neighbourhoods. We have also involved our communities in a range of physical improvement schemes including:

Britannia Gateway - environmental improvements along Rochdale Road opposite Britannia school and on other adjacent sites including new signage, landscaping and public art installations - all following consultation with Britannia residents groups and the school.

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

Bankfield Street – provision of bin storage areas and extra parking facilities together with improved drainage and streetworks.

Rossendale Crescent - Improvements to the play area, planting, security improvements and better paths and fencing.

As a result of implementing our Clean and Green policies 65.8% of local people now agree that we are working to make the area cleaner and greener. We are pleased with the progress made so far and following an environment inspection in 2006 we was assessed as providing a fair service, with promising prospects for improvement.

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4. Promoting Rossendale

We are so lucky to have such a wonderful landscape right on our doorsteps. I am delighted that the Council is making a real effort to encourage people to come to the borough and find out more about what we have to offer. The new Halo sculpture will certainly catch people's attention.

Guest House owner, Edenfield

This is an exciting time for Rossendale and for the wider 'Pennine Lancashire' area. Work on our iconic Halo 'Panopticon' will soon be completed and this landmark public sculpture will become a major visitor destination in its own right, putting Rossendale well and truly on the map.

As well as being important to the borough, the Halo has been chosen as one of six major landmark projects for the 'Marketing the North to the World' programme being developed by the Northern Way. This will result in a major national and international media campaign to support the Halo. In addition to the Halo structure, £540,000 of regeneration funding has been secured for landscaping, access improvements and environmental improvements to make this former landfill site into a pleasant green space within the borough.

The Halo project complements the work we are doing to promote tourism in the borough and the development of an outdoors brand – the 'Adrenaline Gateway' to promote the fantastic leisure pursuits that the borough has to offer and to raise our profile as a major centre for Adrenalin sports activity.

Partnership funding has been secured to develop the brand and projects within the brand which will build on the existing facilities that Rossendale can offer including: the Mary Townley Loop, Valley of Stone, Irwell Valley Sculpture Trail, Water-Skiing (Whitworth Reservoir), Mountain Biking and of course, Ski Rossendale.

We have also commissioned Brighter Business Solutions to implement the first phase of our Tourism Action Plan including the Visit Rossendale web-site, tourism guide and a dedicated Rossendale tourism telephone line.

These initiatives all support the work being done across East Lancashire as part of 'Transforming Pennine Lancashire' programme which is focused on re-branding East Lancashire and promoting it as an area to live and invest.

Within Rossendale, we recognise the importance of promoting the borough to local people and providing a platform to promote the successes and achievements of local residents, businesses and organisations. High profile events such as the 'K for Kids Festival and the Rossendale Alive Weekend help to bring the community together to celebrate our success and project a positive image of Rossendale. This encourages a culture where local people actively talk-up the borough, which has a positive impact on visitors and potential investors.

In addition to community events, we are also working hard to raise its own profile and improve its reputation. Our Rossendale Alive Newsletter, produced three times per year, provides an opportunity to inform residents about our services, explain our policies and decisions and promote the success of our partners and ourselves. We have also signed up to the Local Government Association's Reputation Campaign which aims to improve the reputation of local authorities across the country. As part of the reputation project we have adopted the Rossendale Alive brand and is applying it to new vehicles, new uniforms, leaflets, other Council literature and signage on a phased basis (linked to renewal and replacement).

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5. Health and Well Being

Too many people in Rossendale suffer from poor health. There are no easy, overnight solutions, but if local agencies can work together they can make a difference. One of the biggest differences the Council will be able to make this year is to ensure that the new SmokeFree laws are upheld. Smoking and passive smoking cause thousands of deaths every year and shortened life expectancy.

General Practitioner, Bacup Health Centre

During the past 12 months Health and Wellbeing has emerged as an important priority for us and more importantly for the local community.

Proposals to reorganise NHS services in the region will have a potentially adverse impact on local people which has prompted us to exercise its community leadership role and challenge the proposals. We have also been a key partner in the development of proposals for improved community health facilities in the borough, promoting the concept of a health campus for Rossendale and encouraging the NHS to invest in improving local health services.

In addition to championing the needs of local people we contribute directly and indirectly to organisations, projects and services that have a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing. These include our Environmental Health Service, funding for Rossendale Leisure Trust, housing improvement, supporting cultural activities, maintaining the borough's parks, play areas and open spaces and our contribution to the borough's Community Safety Partnership.

Environmental Health

In April 2006, our Environmental Health Service was restructured to reflect the new public health agenda and the need to prioritise services to improve health and reduce health inequalities. As a result of this, the service has led a number of important health campaigns including back safety, stress at work, occupational dermatitis and smoking cessation.

The service has been preparing carefully for the introduction of Smoke Free legislation in July 2007 to ensure that the local businesses and local people are aware of the changes.

As part of the smoke free preparations, Environmental Health piloted a smoke free homes scheme in parts of Bacup and Stacksteads, inviting 136 families to join the project (22% of preschool families living in the area with 205 children living in those homes). The scheme has been a success with 41 homes receiving a follow-up fire safety home visit by the fire service, and 25 people being referred to smoking cessation services.

Rossendale Leisure Trust

Leisure has a significant role to play in improving health and wellbeing, providing opportunities to improve physical fitness and mental wellbeing. There is a clear link between improved fitness and reductions in a wide range of illness including heart disease and cancer.

Since establishing the Rossendale Leisure Trust in 2004, we have remained its primary funding agency, committing about £500,000 per year to the Trust to manage and develop sports, leisure and cultural activities in the borough. This decision has led to an extra 54,000 visits to Leisure Trust facilities,

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including out of school activities and holiday clubs. Customer satisfaction has also increased from 50% in 2003/04 to 55% in 2006/07 and the number of visits increased by 10.93% between 2005 and 2006. Following a review of leisure during 2006/07 we are considering proposals for a new Swimming Pool at Haslingden Sports Centre.

Housing improvement

There is a clear link between poor quality housing and poor health. Our decision to transfer its 4,000 houses to Green Vale Homes has resulted in £40m of new investment to improve housing standards in the borough. In addition, our Housing Market Renewal Programme in Bacup, Stacksteads and Britannia is aiming to bring private sector housing up to a better standard. As part of our overall housing strategy we are encouraging private landlord to sign up to higher standards and we are encouraging tenants to contact us if they are concerned about the quality of the housing they are renting.

Cultural activities

Cultural opportunities can impact positively on mental wellbeing. Following the active promotion of Rossendale Museum to schools, the number of pupils visiting the museum has increased from 53 in 2003/04 to 708 in 2006/07.

During 2006 we supported the 'K Festival' for kids, which was the first children's arts festival in the North of England to receive Arts Council funding. The festival demonstrated effective partnership working with the Local Strategic Partnership's Arts Alliance to deliver a regionally significant event for children in the borough.

We have also continued to support the Rossendale Alive weekend which brought a wide range of people together to celebrate their cultural identity.

Parks, play areas and open spaces

During the past year we have completed a comprehensive Open Space Audit which led to the development of a coherent Open Spaces Strategy. The strategy, developed through multi-agency working, will enable a joined up approach to investment and provision by us, together with our partners, over the next 12 years.

Open spaces play a key part in providing opportunities for local people to become more active. Well maintained parks encourage people to exercise and good quality sports facilities encourage physical activity.

We have also developed a Play Strategy which has influenced development of children's play areas at Festival Park in Whitworth and Gordon's Street in Bacup, ensuring that better and more diverse facilities are provided to cater for a range of different age groups.

Rossendale has established a clear vision and scope for play, which builds strongly on an understanding of the widest range of formal and informal free play opportunities.

Play England

Our successful Youth Provision Strategy, developed in previous years, in partnership with other organisations, has continued to deliver high quality Multi-Use Play Areas, skate parks and youth shelters throughout 2006/07.

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Improvements have also taken place at Britannia Gateway, Spring Terrace and Rossendale Crescent as part of the Housing Market Renewal programme (see page X).

Community Safety Partnership

When questioned whether they felt safe in their neighbourhood over two thirds of the respondents from Rossendale agreed that they felt safe. This is a 13% increase on the survey's 2004 result and shows that Rossendale is becoming a safer place to live.

Living and Working in East Lancashire Survey 2006

Our Community Safety Partnership is the best in the country at reducing crime according to the Audit Commission. In the year to December 2006, the partnership helped to achieve a 17% reduction in crime on top of an 11% reduction during 2005. As a result of this reduction 50.4% of residents in the borough agreed that we are working to make the area safer. One of the biggest reductions was in criminal damage which is down by 24.3% and burglary - down by 11.8% following efforts to target persistent offenders and crime reduction initiatives.

Some of the key crime reduction projects that we have helped to deliver during 2006/07 include:

- The Staghills Youth Shelter which opened in August 2006 following complaints about youth related anti-social behaviour.
- Operation Streetwise 2006 – attended by almost 900 Year 6 pupils.
- Implementation of a third Outdoor Alcohol Control Zone in Bacup in direct response to complaints from residents and businesses.

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A Well Managed Council (Member Development, Human Resources and Financial Management)

Rossendale Council is changing. As someone who has worked with the Council over the last X years it is clear to me that things are much better than they used to be. I can see that they are working hard to get things right within the organisation. It means that I am confident that the Council is a good organisation to work with to achieve the goals set out in the borough's Community Strategy.

Jan Shutt, founder of Civic Pride

As a Council it is vital for us to have the relevant systems, processes and capacity in place in order to deliver our 5 outward facing priorities – Quality Customer Services, Regeneration, Clean and Green, Promoting Rossendale and Health and Wellbeing. Our priority of 'A well run Council' focuses on three main areas - Member Development, Human Resources and Financial Management. In addition to these we are embedding effective performance management systems into our day to day operations and ensuring that we have a fit-for-purpose ICT strategy and new technology.

Member Development

We have an excellent member development programme in Rossendale which has been recognised nationally through our shortlisting for the Member Development category of the MJ Awards 2007 – we will find out if we have been successful later this year.

Councillors in Rossendale are committed to becoming some of the best councillors in the country and have committed themselves to an ambitious Member Development Strategy. As a result of the strategy and the Member Development programme our 36 councillors took part in a total of **865 hours** of development activity during the past year.

During 2006 our member development was formally recognised when we were awarded the North West Charter for Elected Member Development.

Human Resources

Council staff are one of our biggest resources and we work hard to support and motivate staff within the context of our Human Resources Strategy and Organisational Development Plan.

A relatively high level of sickness absence has been a problem in the past, but a new sickness monitoring regime has been put in place with regular reports to councillors. As a result of the changes made during 2006/07 the level of absence has fallen from an average of 13.53 days per employee per year in 2005/06 to 6.9 days per employee in 2006/07.

Our biggest achievement this year has been achieving the Inventors in People standard for the whole Council. The award recognises the importance that we place on training and development within the organisation and the importance of creating a learning culture.

We have made significant investment in training over the last three years with all staff undertaking compulsory training in customer care and equalities. In addition to this 7 staff have completed a Certificate in Management Studies, 2 staff are undertaking a Diploma in Management Studies and 18 staff have completed the Introductory Certificate in First Line Management. Our senior managers are also participating in the East Lancashire Leadership programme.

In 2006/07 the budget for development was £107,000, an increase of £38 per head from £344 in 2005/06 to £382. This compares very favorably with the average local government spend of £216 per

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employee. The training that we are putting in place is leading to significant improvement in staff productivity and improvements in customer care.

Our focus on training and motivating staff is paying dividends with 72% of staff now feeling valued at least some of the time, compared to just 7% in 2004/05.

Financial Management

We are determined to deliver good value for money services, minimise the impact of Council Tax rises, ensure that our resources are focused on our priorities and maximise the use of all our assets.

Through the effective financial management strategies and policies that we have put in place we have been able to achieve significant savings worth £500,000 (70% above the Government's target).

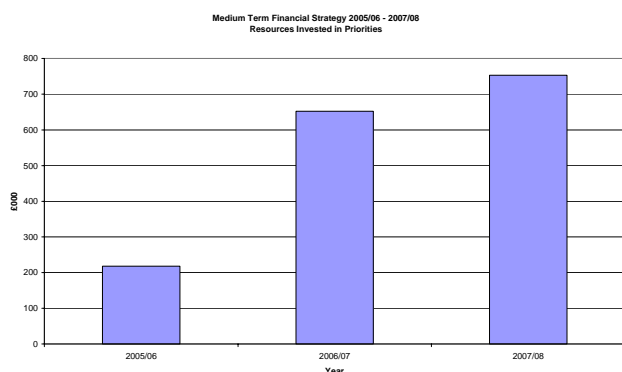
Many of these savings have been achieved through our Procurement Strategy which has helped to drive down the cost of purchasing goods and services.

For example, by working with an East Lancashire purchasing consortium (the East Lancashire e Partnership) we have saved approximately £80,000 on things like ICT equipment, recruitment advertising and janitorial supplies. Modernised contract procedure rules have also been introduced to ensure that value for money is being achieved.

As a result of the saving achieved we have been able to minimise the impact of Council Tax increases to below the rate of inflation as measured by the Retail Price Index for 2006/07 and 2007/08. This amounts to a real terms reduction in Council Tax of 1.5%. This has required us to achieve £660,000 of cashable savings in 2006/07 which will rise to £967,000 in the next year (as counted in our Annual Efficiency Statement). This is significantly in excess of the Government's 'Gershon' efficiency targets and indicates our focus on delivering value for money services.

We are also making the best use of our assets. Our recently approved Capital Strategy (rated 'good by the Government) and Asset Management Plan, allocate capital resources in line with corporate priorities. If an asset is not longer of use to us and we can achieve a good price for it, we will sell the asset and reinvest the money into priority projects and services.

This approach to maximising our resources and reducing costs has allowed us to redirect around £1.6m over the last three years into our priority areas.



Performance Management

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Corporate Priorities DRAFT-19/06/2007

Rossendale Borough Council Achievements

Our approach to performance management is set out in chapter 6. As a result of our decision to apply the Council's performance management system to the work of the Local Strategic Partnership, the partnership was able to clearly evidence that it was achieving a high level of success in implementing the Community Strategy Delivery Plans. This means that during the past year the Partnership has successfully achieved 'Green light' status for its work (the best possible), and the first of its type in the country to get the top grade.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Information and Communication Technologies are a vital part of any modern organisation. During 2006 we adopted a new ICT Strategy which set out our future requirements. As a result of the strategy we have been able to develop a new web site, intranet and extranet with integrated content management systems and achieve a top 30 ranking amongst all local government websites as ranked by Site Morse.

Other ICT achievements during 2006 include:

- A new firewall with ISO 27001 accreditation.
- Remote access and mobile working.
- A new file server.
- Robust Business Continuity Systems for ICT.

Through the introduction of new technology we has now made revenue savings of more than £100,000 per year.