

**Subject:** Rossendale Borough Council's  
Economic Strategy

**Status:** For Publication

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**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007

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**Report of:** Head of Regeneration

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**Portfolio**

**Holder:** Regenerating and Promoting Rossendale

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform members of the procedure and timescales for producing an economic strategy for the Borough Council and to request Members consider the options for the scope of the strategy.

**2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

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

Whilst delivering regeneration is identified as a key priority for the Council in the current Corporate Plan the authority does not currently have a strategy or action plan setting out how it will work to deliver the priority. The lack of any sort of economic strategy was highlighted through the recent CPA inspection. It has also been highlighted as a gap during the development and delivery of other key Council policies. For example recent work on the development of a robust Core Strategy as part of the Local Development Framework has struggled to provide the necessary evidence base for many of its 'economic-related' policies as a clear and shared vision for the Borough economic role and function is not set out anywhere.

This document aims to rectify this situation. It will provide a clear statement of what the Borough Council is seeking to achieve in economic terms for the Borough and will set out the framework for how we will deliver and, just as importantly, how we will demonstrate that delivery. It will also give us the mechanism by which we can prioritise actions, programme delivery, secure support, and check progress.

### **3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- This is a piece of work that will have resource implications for the Borough Council particularly in respect of officer time. A challenging timetable has been put forward for the production of a final strategy by the end of the financial year which will require a substantive amount of officer time to be directed to this over the next six months. This comes at a time when the regeneration agenda for the Borough is growing both in respect of volume and complexity. However there is an on-going capacity building exercise being undertaken within the regeneration team, building on the joint working relationships that have been established with LCDL, that are bringing additional resources into the team which should ensure that the required officer time can be dedicated to delivering the strategy against the identified timescales.
- The Borough continues to be disadvantaged in delivering its regeneration agenda by a lack of external resources, primarily because the Borough does not score highly enough with the deprivation indicators. Whilst the Borough has become more adept at finding different ways of delivering against its priorities any strategy must be mindful of our potential to deliver within the current and future resource context. This will require us not only to be able to strike the balance between ambition and potential to deliver within the strategy itself but to be able to adequately explain this rationale to partners and stakeholders in order to secure their support.

### **4. BACKGROUND/REASON FOR REPORT**

4.1 As highlighted earlier in the report Rossendale Borough Council does not currently have an agreed Economic Strategy to provide the framework for its involvement and investment in regeneration activity. With regeneration being recognised as a priority of the Borough Council it is important that this policy gap is filled. Consequently the production of a RBC Economic Strategy was included in the Economic Regeneration and Strategic Housing Service business plan for 2007/08.

4.2 The Economic Strategy will provide a framework for action by Rossendale Borough Council, working with its partners, to help in delivering national, regional and local priorities for the sustainable and appropriate growth of economic prosperity in Rossendale Borough. As an agreed strategy that will have the approval of both the Borough Council and the Rossendale Regeneration Board the Strategy will:

- Set the context for prioritising investment
- Have a role in ensuring that national and regional priorities are appropriately interpreted and delivered at a local level.

- Be used to put across local priorities and actions so that they can, where appropriate, influence national and regional policy.
- Be outward as well as inward looking accepting that Rossendale can no longer only look to within its boundaries for the solutions to its longer term economic future.
- Recognise the inter-relationship between economic growth and other key priority areas for improving quality of life for example education, skills, tourism, transport, health and crime.

Finally this strategy will have an important role in communicating the importance of the economy in delivering other agendas in the Borough and the need to account for potential economic impact in every decision that is made.

4.3 The timing of the production of this strategy has been put forward to ensure the best possible strategic fit between the Borough Council's strategy and a range of other crucially important policies and strategies including the refreshed Regional and Lancashire Economic Strategies, the Pennine Lancashire Economic Strategy and the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy. Because of the timescales for the delivery of some of these wider strategies the draft Rossendale strategy may need to be kept under review until finally agreed in March 2008.

4.4 Key milestones for the production of the Strategy include:

- To undertake a review of economic data with the intention of providing an economic profile that can be reviewed and refreshed on an on-going basis by October 2007.
- To prepare a draft strategy for consultation by November 2007.
- To undertake a period of consultation on the draft strategy between November 2007 and January 2008.
- Prepare a final draft for agreement by Cabinet and the Rossendale Regeneration Board by March 2008.

## 5. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 Internal discussions between officers at the Borough Council have been undertaken to consider the potential scope of the strategy and members views are now sought on which of the options set out below is most appropriate. A number of options have been put forward for how the final strategy is developed and finally presented including:

Option 1 A Regeneration Strategy – this sort of strategy would usually address all aspects of regeneration including social and environmental regeneration as well as economic regeneration. As such it could potentially duplicate other strategies belonging to the Borough Council and may closely resemble an over-arching document for the Borough such as the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Option 2 An Economic Regeneration Strategy - this would overcome some of the difficulties outlined with option 1. There are however some perceptual difficulties with the term 'regeneration' which is linked to renewal/rebirth/revival and as such may be perceived as limited to only tackling issues of disadvantage and dilapidation and as such may be too narrowly focused.

Option 3 An Economic Strategy – this could overcome the disadvantages of the first two approaches identified above by focusing on those factors that directly impact on the economic performance of the Borough whilst being sufficiently broad to encompass building on the areas economic strengths as well as addressing its weaknesses.

(Each of the options would need to be accompanied by a delivery plan setting out how we would work over the short-medium term to deliver the strategy).

- 5.2 Members views are also sought on the appropriate mechanisms for involving Members in the development of the strategy and in particular whether or not Policy Overview and Scrutiny are asked to become involving in helping to guide the production of the strategy.

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES**

- 6.1 There are no additional financial implications, other than those previously identified within the Councils budget.

## **7. COMMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF REGULATORY SERVICES**

- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

## **8. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 8.1 There are no specific Human Resource implications.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The lack of an Economic Strategy leaves a major gap within the Borough Council's suite of core policies and the resources and mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that this gap can be fulfilled by the end of the financial year. This report aims to begin the process of developing the strategy with the appropriate involvement of Members.

## **10. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 10.1 That Members endorse the principle of developing an Economic Strategy for the Borough Council (Option 3) and at the same time agree the most appropriate mechanism for involving Members in the process of developing and delivering an agreed strategy.

## **11. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT**

- 11.1 Consultation will be undertaken as part of the development of the Strategy.

## **12. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Yes

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached

No, to be completed if Strategy is endorsed.

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No background papers