

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET

1. Meeting:	Cabinet
2. Date:	24th July 2013
3. Title:	Corporate Priorities
4. Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

Following on from the recent report on budget principles, this report provides cabinet with the refreshed draft corporate priorities for consideration, together with the more detailed key commitments that form the draft “plan on a page” (see appendix). The report also sets out the rationale for arriving at these priorities and provides a timetable for final approval and dissemination to staff and partners. The priorities are:

- Stimulating the local economy and helping local people into work
- Protecting our most vulnerable people and families, enabling them to maximise their independence
- Ensuring all areas of Rotherham are safe, clean and well maintained
- Helping people to improve their health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities within the borough

6. Recommendations

That cabinet:

- 1) Consider the new priorities and plan on a page and provide feedback to guide further development and discussion
- 2) Agree that further work should take place to identify the outcomes we want to achieve and to ensure that the plan reflects the need for a new approach to meet the challenges facing the council
- 3) Recommend that a final version of the priorities and plan are brought back to cabinet for discussion and agreement in September, before seeking final approval from full council

7. Proposals and Details

Background and context

Various discussions at member and senior officer level have highlighted the need to review the corporate priorities in the context of changes in the external environment and realities now facing the council. The key pressures and challenges include:

- *A decade of reductions to council funding* – cumulative savings of approx £70m from 2011-14; further significant year on year reductions confirmed for 2014/15 and 2015/16; this trend almost certain to continue until at least 2018
- *Demographic pressures increasing need* – ageing population will put increasing pressure on adult social care services
- *Welfare reform* – increased hardship for many low income families, with more children and young people likely to be living in conditions of neglect; reduced benefit income will also impact on the local economy; increased demand for services that support the most vulnerable; likely reduction in rent and council tax collection rates with introduction of universal credit and localised council tax support scheme
- *Increasing city region influence on resources and service delivery* – more funding to be devolved to city regions (via LEPs and the new combined authority) to pursue economic growth objectives; local economic strategy will need to recognise and align with this.

As reported to cabinet on 3rd July, these factors led to us identifying a small number of budget principles that will enable the council to operate effectively within the funding available. These are:

- Focus and deliver on business and jobs growth
- Help people to help themselves wherever possible
- Provide early support to prevent needs becoming more serious
- Continue strong financial management and governance and tight control on spending.

The new corporate priorities must reflect this new financial reality and provide a framework for the council, working with our partners, to deliver the best possible outcomes for local people.

Priority 1: Stimulating the local economy and helping local people into work

As well as being significantly reduced, the composition of local government funding is also changing. The largely needs-based element (i.e. revenue support grant) is reducing and an increasing proportion will come from retained business rates and – to a lesser extent – new homes bonus.

To respond to these changes we will need an increased emphasis on business and jobs growth. Not only will this have a direct impact on the council's finances, but it

will also provide more opportunities for people to move from benefits into employment.

Priority 2: Protecting our most vulnerable people and families, enabling them to maximise their independence

Regardless of the financial situation, supporting the most vulnerable people in our society and protecting them from abuse, violence and neglect, will remain a central priority and essential duty, both statutorily and morally, for the council.

Identifying problems and intervening at the earliest possible stage will enable us to prevent needs becoming more serious and will be more cost effective in the long run.

Priority 3: Ensuring all areas of Rotherham are safe, clean and well maintained

This is an area that local people consistently tell us is most important to them and so it should continue to be a key priority.

Though our performance is generally good on crime, reduced funding is presenting real challenges for street cleaning and road maintenance services. To address this, we must work with communities to engender pride in local areas, helping us to create and maintain quality public spaces and safe environments.

Priority 4: Helping people to improve their health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities within the borough

There remains a strong correlation between poor health and deprivation and there is a large gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in the borough.

Improving people's physical and mental wellbeing will have knock on benefits for employment and will reduce costs for public services in the medium to long term.

Business principles

In light of the factors and principles set out above, it is felt that our current business principles remain fit for purpose:

- Talking and listening to all our customers and treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Supporting and enabling our communities to help themselves, whilst meeting the needs of the most vulnerable
- Getting it right first time, reducing bureaucracy and getting better value for money
- Working with partners to ensure people get the services and support they need as early as possible
- Having the right people, with the right skills in the right place at the right time

However, to reflect the new direction needed by the council, it is felt that a number of additional principles should be identified to guide the way in which we commission and deliver services.

The coalition government's approach has emphasised both opening up public services to other providers (i.e. the Localism Act's "community right to challenge"; big society agenda; open public services white paper) and achieving service transformation through more efficient and effective joined up working (i.e. community budgets, troubled families, integrated health and social care).

Given this context and our ongoing local work on joint commissioning, particularly around the health and wellbeing agenda, and the increasing emphasis on personal budgets, we would suggest the following principles:

- Collaborating with others to deliver the best outcomes for citizens that we can afford
- Achieving the best quality, safest and most reliable outcome via the most affordable service commissioning approach, either external to the council or provided in-house
- Providing services directly, only when we can provide the best solution - in terms of cost and quality - to meet the eligible needs of our citizens
- Equipping our citizens to improve self determination and contribution to decisions about their own lives, the lives of those they care for and the communities they live in

Next steps

Cabinet are asked to consider and provide feedback on the updated priorities and the commitments set out in the draft plan on a page, as well as the principles outlined above.

Over the next two months, more detailed work will be undertaken to identify the specific outcomes that we want to achieve and to establish a related performance management framework, which will be reduced from the current 29 outcome measures.

When this work has been completed, an updated draft of the plan, setting out the priorities, commitments, principles and outcomes, will be presented to cabinet for agreement in September, before final consideration and approval via scrutiny and full council.

To aid with dissemination to staff, a briefing will be prepared and M3 manager presentation delivered in November.

Timetable

Cabinet – 24th July / September (date TBC)

Scrutiny – 20th September (TBC)

Full council – 23rd October (TBC)

M3 managers – 22nd November

LSP board – November (TBC)

8. Finance

There are no direct financial implications as the new priorities / plan on a page will be published on the website rather than in hard copy form.

Operating within the agreed budget principles, financial and service planning must align to the corporate priorities if we are to ensure that resources are effectively targeted.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It will be critical to continually assess the direction of government policy in relation to local government and other relevant areas such as welfare reform and city regions.

These and other areas of policy have changed rapidly over the past few years and have a huge bearing on our available resources and our consequent ability to deliver against the corporate priorities.

Expectations must be carefully managed so that the public and other stakeholders understand that the council will no longer be able to provide the same range of services or provide ongoing services to the same extent as previously.

It should also be noted that there are statutory duties for the council that sit outside of the corporate priorities, which must also be complied with. The council will want to look at the level of discretion it has in complying with these duties and the consequent resource requirements.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

We must ensure that the council's policy framework is properly aligned beneath the corporate priorities and that appropriate performance management arrangements are in place to effectively monitor progress and highlight problems at an early stage.

Where any existing strategies are regarded as no longer fit for purpose given the council's changing priorities, this should be addressed with the relevant lead officer / directorate.

Similarly, where existing performance measures are no longer required or new ones needed, this must be identified and appropriate action taken as part of the revision of the performance management framework.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Budget principles cabinet report, 3rd July 2013

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