

RMBC – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	Cabinet
2. Date:	26th February 2014
3. Title:	Corporate Priorities
4. Directorate:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

The report provides a summary of responses to the corporate priorities consultation process and includes the draft corporate plan for comment and approval.

6. Recommendations

That cabinet:

- 1) Agree that, in light of the broadly supportive consultation responses, the draft corporate priorities are approved
- 2) Consider and agree the overall plan (see appendix) subject to any required amendments

7. Proposals and Details

Background

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

The draft priorities agreed by the strategic leadership team and members prior to consultation were:

- 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

A number of commitments were identified to sit beneath these priorities (see appendix).

Consultation

Consultation on the draft priorities was integrated with the “Money Matters” budget consultation.

An online discussion forum was launched, incorporating a specific topic on the corporate priorities, and a stakeholder event was held at New York Stadium on 13th November.

Further consultation took place via area assemblies, the parish council network, Fairs Fayre and Carers’ Rights Day.

Though people’s main focus was – understandably – on budget issues, the limited specific feedback received on corporate priorities (summarised below) was broadly positive.

From the online forum

- ‘Priorities fine, but represent “status quo”. They could be more distinct and aspirational, particularly in relation to promoting Rotherham to the outside world as a great place to visit or live. To reflect this, a suggested alternative for P1 is: *“Making Rotherham into a must see, must visit, must work, must live kind of place. A place that attracts visitors, friends, families, and businesses.”*
- ‘Priorities are an excellent starting point, but are they fit for purpose and deliverable given the scale of the financial challenge? Maybe communities should be taking more responsibility, for instance for the look and feel of their neighbourhood or looking after those who are elderly are vulnerable. The

priorities and aspirations should be owned by the people of Rotherham not just the council.'

- 'Need to identify problems first then come up with solutions. Suggested problems are: health/premature death, unemployment, early pregnancy, non-integration of communities.'

From the event at New York Stadium

There was limited direct feedback on the corporate priorities as the event's discussion workshops focused primarily on budget issues, but a range of relevant responses are summarised below.

Economy

- The council and partners need to continue representing Rotherham in the outside world to bring in business, making sure the good things about Rotherham are heard nationally and internationally. Employers also need to know that Rotherham is a safe place for their employees to locate their families.
- We need to insist on "buy local" as much as legally possible and maximise local spend to benefit local businesses and communities. Non-local delivery leads to loss of money to the Rotherham economy.

Early support

- Prevention and early intervention is important. This should be a priority in its own right and should be more explicit.
- Need to focus on parenting skills and good parenting so that children's services and youth services don't have to pick up the costs of poor parenting.
- Preventative interventions for disabled people and older people are important so they can live independently for longer, reducing care costs in the long term.
- Focus on prevention rather than early intervention for vulnerable families

Targeting services

- Review discretionary services, but don't make cuts that will affect the most vulnerable
- Advice and support on social issues, such as healthy living or good parenting, are often only needed, or needed to a greater extent, in more deprived areas. Level of service delivery should be based on local need.
- Needs-based targeting should focus on people rather than place, including certain communities whose needs are greater
- Should look at what assets people already have and not just what people are lacking, tapping into local skills and knowledge

Supporting the most vulnerable

- Support for carers shouldn't be cut as they make a huge financial contribution
- There is no funding for autism in adults; there should be working opportunities for this to happen.
- Disabled people need more support to travel to work
- Increase direct payments and let people choose what they want to do, rather than day care services. We should embrace 'personalisation'.

Helping people to help themselves

- People need knowledge and information to help themselves e.g. money management.
- Need to break down bureaucracy to enable people in the community to run their own groups - the “bureaucracy” can put them off
- Funding is needed to empower communities to make long term savings

Miscellaneous

- Importance of libraries in providing computer access
- Clean and safe is a more important priority than well maintained luxuries and events such as ‘Rotherham by the Sea’.
- Not a specific suggestion, but it was emphasised that decisions should be underpinned by clear priorities, principles and values, rather than just cuts for the sake of saving money. Short term cuts can be counter-productive in the long run – we need to take a long term strategic view, despite immediate pressures
- Linked to this, it was pointed out that even if we have to withdraw services, we can work with local people to tackle inequalities and help to create happier, fairer communities.

On the whole, feedback from the online forum and the consultation event seems to support the draft priorities and commitments. Some of the more specific points will be picked up in service plans.

Corporate plan

To augment the plan on a page, the draft corporate plan (appended) includes the following brief sections:

- *Context* – quickly setting out the major financial and structural changes facing the council
- *Priorities* – a succinct rationale for each of the priorities
- *Performance management* – summarising monitoring arrangements and the outcomes we hope to achieve over the three years of the plan.

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

Clearly the new corporate priorities have taken shape against a backdrop of huge financial pressures. It will be important to ensure that, in line with these new priorities, the council maintains a focus on achieving the best outcomes for local people rather than being driven purely by cost savings and efficiencies.

At the same time, 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. 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.

It is important to ensure that a clear golden thread is visible throughout: corporate priorities → outcomes → directorate/service plans → suite of outcome measures.

Officers are currently working with a sub-group of the self-regulation select commission to finalise performance management arrangements, including progress measures / key indicators.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

As outlined in the paper, extensive consultation has taken place with a wide range of stakeholders.

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