

MODERNISING OLDHAM COUNCIL

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MODERNISING OLDHAM

1. INTRODUCTION

“Oldham is a Council that delivers a wide range of good quality services in a challenged environment. Many Councils, confronted with the social deprivation that Oldham face would feel challenged. Oldham’s task is doubly difficult, confronted as it is with the lack of social cohesion, a legacy of segregation and targeted by political extremists.”

Ecotec – Corporate Governance Review
A report to Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Oldham as a borough, a community and a local authority faces major challenges. The development of a cohesive community, a town at ease with itself and a place which local people will be proud to call home may barely seem attainable goals when set within the context of the events of the last year. When one adds the need for effective measures to tackle extreme economic and social deprivation and to restructure the local economy the agenda appears daunting.

Oldham MBC cannot and must not seek to address these issues in isolation. It can only be successful by working closely with a range of partner organisations locally and with the support of Government and its agencies regionally and nationally.

The role of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is of critical significance in this context. The development of a shared vision underpinned by a set of common values will provide the framework within which all can make their contribution. This work has commenced and will be brought to fruition over the summer months.

There are however a specific set of challenges and tasks which fall solely upon the local authority. The purpose of this paper is to identify those issues and to outline a plan for responding to them. In particular the purpose of the report is to:

- outline action to be taken by OMBC over the next twelve to eighteen months to meet the challenges identified by the Oldham Independent Review; the Ecotec Report considering Corporate Governance Arrangements; our own Best Value Review of Corporate Governance; and the issues we anticipate will be raised by the Corporate Governance Inspection team following their visit to Oldham in July;

- identify additional resources required to meet the work programme including assistance from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA); and
- emphasise the importance of maintaining a bi-partisan approach between the two major political groups represented on the Council.

2. CONTEXT

The context and environment in which the local authority operates is now well understood locally. The events of three days in May 2001 shattered many perceptions and illusions. The reality of a sharply segregated society and the fractured and divided nature of community relations in Oldham was demonstrated for all to see. Issues which had been ignored or glossed over for many years emerged as the highest priority for the local authority and other statutory and voluntary agencies within the borough.

The process of analysis and review, driven by a determination to understand both the causes and implications of events, began almost immediately. Local debate and discussion was informed by the Oldham Independent Review, chaired by David Ritchie which was published in December 2001. This review was commissioned by Oldham MBC, Greater Manchester Police and the Greater Manchester Police Authority. The report was critical of the failure of the local authority in particular to meet the needs of disparate and segregated communities within Oldham and to provide a quality of community leadership consistent with the scale and nature of the problems faced.

Whilst many take issue with the tone and detail of the report, the broad conclusions were accepted within the local authority. By the end of February 2002 each of the one hundred and thirty recommendations contained within the report had been considered and a detailed response provided. More importantly work had commenced to deliver change and improvements to services designed to respond to issues raised by the report and by others.

However, the events of the summer of 2001 prompted questions about the role of the local authority in Oldham which went beyond issues of community relations. Concerns were expressed about the Council's willingness to embrace the Government's modernisation agenda, attitudes to partnership working within the town, its ability to deliver quality services within a framework of continuous improvement, its ability to manage change and to provide community leadership based on a coherent vision of the future. One of the recommendations contained within the Independent Review Report was that the Audit Commission should undertake a Corporate Governance Inspection (CGI). This was confirmed to take place in July 2002.

In order to prepare for this inspection the Council commissioned a firm of consultants, Ecotec, to undertake a trial inspection to inform the preparations for the CGI. It has also prepared its own Best Value review of corporate governance to inform the process and that report complements this document highlighting similar issues.

The Ecotec report was received in May and contained a detailed analysis of the local authority using a similar methodology to that which will be employed by the Audit Commission in July. Findings and conclusions were provided under the following headings:

- Community Focus
- Structure and Process
- Financial Stewardship and Risk Management
- Service Delivery
- Standards

The report contained twenty eight recommendations for action which have been used to inform the action plan contained within this report. The resource implications of the recommendations were acknowledged by Ecotec but the report concluded :

“However Oldham's problems run deep. The history of other fractured communities has shown that change only comes from leadership and decisive action. The challenge to Oldham is to respond quickly, with determination and single-minded focus.”

There is also a wider political context which must inform the debate about the role of, and the issues facing, the local authority. At the General Election in June 2001 the British National Party secured substantial support within the two major constituencies in Oldham. In May 2002 at the local Council elections the same party stood in five wards and came second in four. In nearby Burnley the BNP won three seats on the Council.

Oldham's future is dependent on increased understanding and closer integration between different communities based on a recognition that whatever other allegiances and loyalties we may hold we are all Oldhamers. The BNP with an ideology based on division, bitterness and race hatred has no solution to the problems we face. In these circumstances there is a compelling need for the local authority to offer leadership and to promote a long-term vision for the town capable of securing widespread support. This is not a responsibility which falls exclusively upon the Council but it is an issue on which it must take the lead.

3. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

This section of the report considers the issues which have emerged as priorities for action in the light of the events of the last twelve months and the analysis undertaken both by external commentators and by members and officers within the Council.

The priorities are categorised under two headings, namely those with an external focus and those with an internal focus. There is inevitably an overlap and a blurring of the distinction between the two but it is considered to be a helpful classification.

A External Focus

Community Leadership

This issue was raised both within the Independent Review Report and the Ecotec document. In the latter report seventeen of the twenty eight recommendations are included within the section of Community Focus.

Leadership is related to vision, direction and action.

This report, and the response to the Independent Review, will make a significant contribution to meeting the concerns expressed. In particular the Council's work through the LSP, the ever extending range of partnership working and the bi-partisan approach to major issues between the two major political parties will all move the Council forward.

It must be recognised however that a change of culture and behaviour will develop incrementally. Oldham is not alone in experiencing difficulties in adjusting to new roles and responsibilities. The critical point is the will and determination to make the changes and to secure appropriate assistance in doing so. The programme of change outlined in this document is a clear illustration that the will is there.

Importance of LSP

Increasingly the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) will become a major player in Oldham. As a body it will be responsible for determining overall strategic direction, a vision for the town and securing the resources to deliver that vision. It has the key role in ensuring local agencies – statutory, voluntary and community, and the private sector work together to secure the town's future.

The Council's responsibility is to ensure that it provides the maximum support to ensure that the LSP is effective. It must not seek to dominate or control but rather to act as one of a number of partners of equal status and worth. Securing the right balance will be difficult particularly if one accepts that a failure to deliver a strong and effective LSP will inevitably be perceived as a failure and a weakness on behalf of the Council.

It will also be important to ensure that the LSP is perceived as accountable to the wider community of Oldham.

Partnership Behaviour

The Ecotec report and other recent work undertaken in conclusion with partners in Oldham has indicated that the local authority needs to adapt and change to new methods of working. In large part this will be a continuation of a programme and process of change which is already underway. There are some excellent examples of partnership working within the borough and in particular relationships developed to deliver priorities in areas such as lifelong learning; town centre management; and health and social care have been rightly praised. There is however a need to build a greater level of understanding with partners, "to let go" and not seek to control and direct working arrangements in every case. Above all there has to be a recognition that external agencies and partners are seeking opportunities for dialogue, discussion and engagement. There are significant cultural issues involved in this process which will not be effectively addressed without a fundamental re-appraisal of the Council's role.

Understanding our Communities

The events of May 2001 and the consequences both politically and socially brought home to the Council that it did not have a detailed understanding of its local communities. Issues concerned with the allocation of resources and in particular a perception of inequity and a widespread belief within sections of the Oldham community that “the Asians get everything” have contributed to feelings of mistrust, bitterness and division between communities.

Radical programmes of action to tackle the current levels of tension will only be effective if they are based on a more detailed understanding of the needs, aspirations and motivation of all communities in Oldham. There has long been an emphasis on programmes of research both within the Council and outside designed to inform policy and to a degree these have been successful. The issue of concern is the way the material is used and shared with our partners to inform policy priorities. There is also a need to ensure that more informal, but no less reliable networks are used to gather information. In particular the role of elected members need to be recognised and enhanced – as individuals in touch with community issues and concerns and in a unique position to articulate those issues and to feed them back in a manner which genuinely informs policy discussion and debate. There are resource implications associated with this proposal but this should not be allowed to prevent this important initiative developing.

Urban Regeneration Agency

A proposal for an Urban Regeneration Agency for Oldham was made in the Independent Review Report. It was not an original proposal in that such an initiative had previously been discussed within the Council and identified as a potential means of securing resources and the necessary focus on issues of economic and social regeneration.

Since the publication of the Oldham Independent Review report a substantial volume of work has been undertaken to develop this proposal and it is now at a stage to be brought forward for detailed consideration. There are particular issues relating to the nature of the relationship between any agency, the LSP, and the Council which will need careful consideration. In particular the proposal must be firmly located within the vision for Oldham and recent initiatives such as the Housing Market Renewal Fund.

B Internal Focus

Vision for Oldham

The Corporate Plan expressed the mission for Oldham as:

“The Council’s mission is to make Oldham a better place which local people will be proud to call home.”

Any vision must be owned not just by the Council but by the range of partners represented within the LSP. Considerable work is currently being undertaken within the LSP to determine both the vision and the underpinning or supporting values which will inform its work. The work will be brought together over a two to three month period and will develop a vision shared by all LSP members. The priority for the Council is to play its part in developing that vision and to ensure that ownership extends across the Borough. The actions and targets which flow from the vision must then be built into our own corporate planning processes. Our overall mission and corporate objectives will need to be amended to focus on community based outcomes and good management practice leading to quantifiable measures of success and achievement.

Organisation Development

Oldham Council has changed considerably in recent years. A new constitution, new officer structures and new methods of working which have followed have changed the nature of the organisation. There is however a need to move further and faster in key areas of activity and in particular to manage change more proactively.

In particular detailed consideration needs to be given to the relationship between important functions at the centre of the organisation relating to human resource management and performance management. A much closer and integrated approach between these two key functions will be necessary to deliver organisational change in a manner consistent with the nature of the challenges facing the organisation.

The Council first published a Corporate Plan in November 2000 and this was closely related to initiatives and developments undertaken in relation to the introduction of the Best Value regime. Significant progress has been made since that time in developing systems and approaches which reflect the principles of Best Value. The progress made has been recognised by external commentators and in particular by the Council’s external auditor, KPMG.

The next stage of development requires the integration, in service delivery if not necessarily in structural terms, of our approach to the management of staff both individually and within teams, with the next phases of the performance management system. This will enable training and development needs to be set within the context of an appraisal system designed to establish individual targets and the measurement of performance against them.

These two critical areas of performance and human resource planning are potentially those in which the greatest gains can be made in driving change through the organisation.

Service Quality

As indicated by the quotation in the introduction to this document the Council provides what are widely regarded as good quality services within an environment which is particularly challenging and complex.

The challenge we now face is to ensure a process of continuous improvement within the financial constraints which will inevitably continue to operate. An equal priority is to continue and accelerate the process of corporate and team working, building relationships between departments and moving away from what has been described as the "silo" departmental approach characteristic of many local authorities in the 80's and early 90's.

The challenges Oldham Council faces require, more than ever before, cross departmental working internally and partnership working externally. The changes at the centre of the organisation are designed to facilitate and strengthen corporate working. It must now be seen as a priority across the organisation which builds on the quality and excellence of many of our existing services.

New Constitution

There is no area of Council activity which has changed as dramatically or as radically within the last two years as our decision making structure and constitution. The move from a recently streamlined traditional committee system to one based on the principles of division between executive and scrutiny arrangements was not greatly welcomed. There was a degree of reluctance, widespread within the Council, to abandon a system which was perceived to have served Oldham well for many years. There is no doubt that had an option of a streamlined committee system been available it would have been the preferred choice of a vast majority within the Council chamber.

Notwithstanding these reservations change has been rapid and has been achieved on a bi-partisan basis. A new constitution was put in place in September 2001 and it has recently been reviewed and revised with changes agreed at the annual meeting of the Council. It is a document which has been praised for its range and scope.

There remains however much to be done within the organisation to secure a full appreciation and understanding of the nature of the changes and their potential to deliver a new and beneficial form of governance in Oldham.

This is true of officers and members and a programme of familiarisation and training is required if the full benefits of the new system are to be realised. In particular the role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and their potential to contribute to policy development in addition to undertaking detailed scrutiny of issues and decisions requires further work. This is also true of Area Committees where there is a need to develop a clear view of the scope for increased delegation of resources and decision making powers over the next two to three year period.

Above all the Council at both member and officer level need to recognise that the new system of decision making is here to stay and that real benefits for both the authority and local communities will only be delivered when there is both a detailed understanding and “buy-in” to the new system.

Communication

A dominant and central theme of both the Ecotec report and the Oldham Independent Review was the criticism of the Council’s failure to communicate effectively. This criticism related to both internal and external communications. Ecotec also commented

“We suspect that Directors and the Council leadership will find this message particularly frustrating, given their efforts to communicate effectively.”

A new communication strategy has now been developed and in its scope and recognition of the need to use a range of techniques and media it is a significant development for the Council. However a strategy requires implementation and a commitment from officers across the authority to make it work. If it is to be successful it has to be owned by staff and in particular by management who must fulfil their responsibilities in relation to staff who report to them. Communication is not just the responsibility of a small group of professional staff in the Marketing and Communications section within the Chief Executive's Department. They have a critical role to play but it is a relatively minor one by comparison with the wider management structures of the organisation.

There is also an increasing emphasis on the need for the Leadership of the Council and Chief Officers Management Team to promote clear and consistent messages. This is particularly true of the change management process and the major policy issues facing the Council.

Race and Diversity

“There is a sense of relief among officers that since the Oldham Independent Review, it is now acceptable to talk about race issues..... the Council has insufficient self-knowledge and many officers seem to lack a sense of urgency with respect to dealing with the race and segregation issue.”

- Ecotec

Since the events of May 2001 and the publication of the Independent Review Report in December Oldham has faced the issues of race and diversity in a manner which it has never done before.

The detailed response of the local authority and its partners has been outlined in its two stage response to the Independent Review. There is a mass of detail relating to individual policies, initiatives and approaches which it would be inappropriate to detail in this document. Suffice to say that the implementation of the plans and proposals outlined in the response documents will be of central importance in securing Oldham's future. A mechanism needs to be developed to ensure timescales and deadlines are met and the impact monitored. The proposal later in this report for an advisory group to support the local authority through the significant programme of change should apply to the response to the Oldham Independent Review in addition to the programme of work laid out in this document.

The major initiative being undertaken internally is the development of a programme of diversity training for all officers with the Council building on the work undertaken in a number of departments previously.

4. MATTERS OF CULTURE AND STYLE

The Action Plan appended to this paper identifies a series of tasks and activities designed to address issues which have been raised either by external commentators or by internal appraisal. Taken together the measures outlined constitute a significant agenda for change designed to secure a greater degree of corporate working, co-operation and delegation. The combined effect of these measures if brought to a successful conclusion will have a dramatic effect on the culture and style of the organisation.

It is important to place this programme of change in context. There have been significant developments over the last two to three year period which have served to promote the Government's change and modernisation agenda and also to address issues raised within the local authority and the wider borough. By way of example:

- the creation of an Executive with Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- the establishment of Area Committees;
- the move to a three year strategic budget;
- the new system for managing vacancies and filling posts within departments;
- the new constitution and specifically the scheme of delegation incorporated within it;
- the latest version of the Corporate Plan complete with targets, outcomes and measures of success;
- the allocation of corporate responsibilities to Chief Officers managed through Chief Officers Management Team;
- the creation of an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) for local authority housing services; and
- new partnership arrangements designed to deliver a response to complex issues (eg Connexions, Oldham Business Management School).

The cumulative effect of these measures and others now in train will be to change the nature, style and culture of the local authority. This may happen rapidly and dramatically in certain areas of the Council activities and more slowly in others. But the organisation will move to a new style of operation and method of working.

In practical terms there is an increased responsibility placed on Chief Officers supported by their management teams to manage the resources available to them, particularly people and finance, within a framework of corporate policy and with the objective of securing the implementation of the Council's corporate plan.

A new style and culture does not, and indeed cannot stem from external imposition; it develops and grows over time. Any change must be based on firm principles and values and in Oldham these are clearly stated in the Corporate Plan as:

- Empowerment
- Fairness
- Openness
- Respect
- Sustainability

The importance of the values which drive the organisation cannot be overstated. The values are guiding principles which inform activity, policies and programmes. They are an essential statement and of particular importance to a public sector organisation charged with the responsibility of delivering services to local communities and individuals.

5. THE ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan appended to this document addresses the key issues which have been raised as matters of concern and where progress / change is required.

The programme of work is broken down over seven headings, namely:

- Organisation Development and Change Management;
- Communications;
- Officer/Member Structures;
- Human Resources;
- Diversity;
- Performance; and
- Budget and Resources.

Each heading has an identified lead Chief or Second tier officer, a priority for action over the next twelve months, a statement outlining the importance of a particular measure, the anticipated outcome and a performance target.

The Action Plan will be monitored and regular reports submitted both to the Executive and through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure. The process of monitoring will also take into account the Best Value Review of Corporate Governance.

6. RESOURCES AND STRUCTURES

The programme and plans outlined in this document are extremely resource intensive. They also require skills and abilities which in some cases are not currently available within the local authority.

Discussions have been held with the Improvement and Development Agency (Idea) with a view to securing external support to assist members and officers over the next twelve month period. A detailed specification of this work is currently being developed. An Advisory Group will also be established (see section 9) to support the change programme.

The Council will also need to determine its future management structures in certain key areas over the coming months and this will be informed by some of the work undertaken by the Idea. The process of change at senior management level is driven by a variety of factors of which the changing environment in which the Council operates is of particular significance. Major changes have been made to the senior management structure over a period of years some of which have been driven by the management review undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand in the mid 1990's.

It is not proposed to subject the local authority to a radical restructuring. It is however equally important to recognise that changes in the provision of Health and Social Care, the creation of the ALMO, the new Leisure Trust and other service changes will mean that structures and working arrangements will continually evolve.

7. MAJOR INITIATIVES

Oldham has developed a number of key initiatives which are central to the future of the Borough. This section of the report identifies some of the more important currently in progress.

The **Housing Market Renewal Scheme** will be a joint initiative between Oldham and Rochdale intended to address the severe problems of poor housing conditions. The Government intends to provide a very significant level of resources to support comprehensive regeneration approaches that will transform the housing market. In Oldham extensive areas of the Borough require this intervention. The initiative is extremely welcome, allowing us to address a central recommendation of the Oldham Independent Review. It will involve very substantial research and analysis, strategy development and implementation activity, and will need to be handled with great sensitivity to make sure that it furthers, rather than jeopardises, community cohesion.

Oldham has recently established an **Arms Length Management Organisation** (ALMO) to provide housing services and this has now received Government approval. This brings with it the prospect of major investment in the public housing stock and a much greater degree of tenant involvement.

A large scale programme of **rebuilding and refurbishment of the Borough's secondary schools** is planned. This is in line with the high priority which the Council places on educational investment and complements previous programmes which have created 20 new primary schools and a highly successful Sixth Form College. It is intended that it be supported with a Private Finance Initiative. A recent bid was unsuccessful, but a revised bid is to be submitted shortly.

To further develop learning and aspiration, a new **Central Library and Lifelong Learning Centre** is to be constructed alongside the recently opened Gallery Oldham. A PFI approach is well advanced. The two facilities will sit within the Oldham Cultural Quarter with phases 3 and 4 of the Quarter providing new **Museum and Archives Centre** and a **Performing Arts Centre** which will also provide a new venue for the Oldham Coliseum Theatre.

Planning is well advanced for two flagship economic development schemes. The **Oldham Central Economic Development Zone** will create 1300 jobs in higher value added sectors. £8 million of European Objective 2 funding has been secured to support this scheme. At **Hollinwood Junction**, on the recently opened M60, the North West Development Agency is helping to bring forward a cluster of sites for business development. The new **Metrolink** extension will provide access to these areas and connect our communities to the large scale job opportunities in Manchester City Centre, East Manchester and Kingsway Business Park.

Our major **community regeneration schemes** include the £20million SRB 6 scheme covering the Coppice, Werneth and Hollinwood areas; the £53 million New Deal for Communities programme for Fitton Hill and Hathershaw; and thematic and area based activities which are being supported under the £10.5million Neighbourhood Renewal programme.

8. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Members have demonstrated an ability to unite to tackle the big issues and have made significant progress over the last 12 months. It is worth reflecting upon the journey that has been made.

We have been honest and open in analysing the difficulties facing the Borough. Working closely with key partners, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and Greater Manchester Police Authority (GMPA), we have sought an external perspective through the Oldham Independent Review.

Since October 2001 there has been very effective and regular cross party working to :

- make a Council submission to the Review Panel in October 2001;
- set out the Council's views in terms of initial thinking about policies for the future in "The Way Forward" published in December 2001;
- organise the receipt of OIR and handle the media response, involving shadow LSP members;
- lead the preparation of the interim response to OIR by 28th February with the participation of partners;
- undertake processes of public consultation leading to the publication of a "final" position at the end of June 2002; and
- since January 2002 there has been cross party working to prepare for CGI and CPA. As with OIR, the Council has shown that it is able to be open and honest about its strengths and weaknesses, that it welcomes both challenge and support from outside, and that it is able and prepared to learn and improve where necessary.

In every case a consensus position has been achieved, and relatively easily, probably reflecting a situation where there is little distance between the parties on the principles so far as the major issues of community cohesion, housing, education, provision for youth, and regeneration are concerned

Importantly, the Council has not just accepted the OIR recommendations. This is a strength of the cross party working which has taken place. It is a sign that local politicians have a clear headed view of what is appropriate to Oldham's circumstances. Two examples readily come to mind :-

- the rejection of the Elected Mayor option. The naivety and danger of this proposal should now be widely recognised. Oldham could see this when the point seemed to elude others; and
- the OIR emphasis on "Race and Diversity" and its suggestion of engineering mixed communities is generally and increasingly seen as unhelpful. By contrast, the principles set out in "The Way Forward" and in the Interim Response are closely aligned with the Government's new Community Cohesion approach.

The point that these examples demonstrate is that cross party working has produced a quality response. We have been very willing to listen to external challenge, but have also been able to determine where external prescription has been wrong headed. On the big issues, the main parties working together have developed a strong and intelligent local position. The OIR criticised Oldham for being too much driven by the latest externally driven initiative. We can demonstrate that local government in Oldham has the maturity and sense to reject externally designed solutions which would be counter productive in the local context.

The Council now needs to demonstrate that it has a clear vision for the future of the Borough around which Members are united, and which is shared with the LSP. Cross party working is essential if this is to be achieved.

9. SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Oldham has used external scrutiny as a catalyst for change. Many of the issues and criticisms which have been raised in recent months we have accepted. In many cases we had already recognised weaknesses but we are now working even harder to tackle them.

In order to continue to benefit from this process of external challenge and scrutiny it is proposed to establish an advisory board to oversee the implementation of the "Modernising Oldham" project. The scope, roles and responsibilities of the Board are set out below in table 1.1.

Table 1.1: The Remit Of The Advisory Board

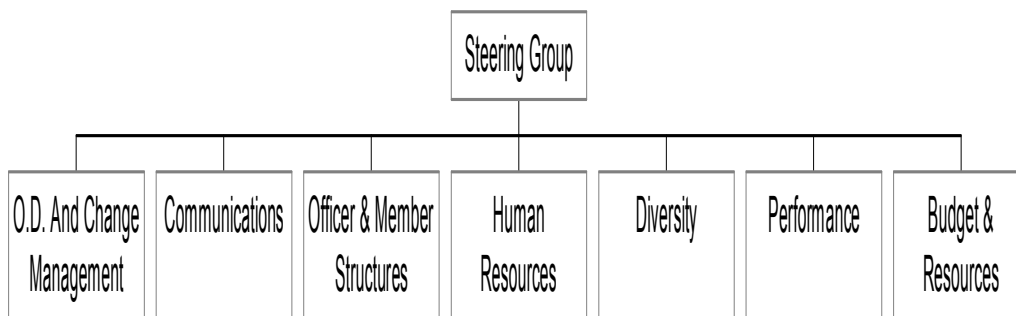
Scope	The Advisory Board's scope will cover the Council's responses to Oldham Independent Review, Corporate Governance Inspection, Comprehensive Performance Assessment and associated improvement plans.
Outcome	The delivery of commitments set out in the improvement plans, enhanced by on-going advice, guidance and critical support by the Advisory Board. The Board will provide explicit and external validation on progress achieved by the Council.
Purpose	To provide Oldham Council with independent advice, guidance and critical support in achieving its improvement plans. To monitor and report on the implementation of the commitments set out in the above improvement plans.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To support the achievement of the Council's improvement plans.• To monitor and review progress on achieving the milestones set out in improvement plans and associated work programmes.• To provide independent advice, guidance and critical support to enhance the delivery of the commitments set out in the improvement plans.• To bring to the Executive's attention issues of good and poor performance in delivering improvement plans.
Commissioned by	The Executive.
Report to	The Executive.

Membership	The Advisory Board will be made up of the following representatives: External Consultants; a Local MP; the Local Strategic Partnership; the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA); the Oldham Chronicle; North West Development Agency; Home Office, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit; Government Office North West; the Race Equality Panel, the Leaders of Oldham's two largest parties (with arrangements for substitute Members) and the Chief Executive.
Milestones	Quarterly reports to the Executive – October 2002, January 2003, April 2003, and July 2003.
Links to	The Executive, Leaders of the Majority Parties, Members of the Council, Chief Officers, service managers, front-line employees, own organisations; partner organisations, external agencies and bodies.
Resources	Contributors' time, transport costs, accommodation, administrative support, project management support.
Potential Constraints	Capacity to support members of the Advisory Board, assembling the "right" team, understanding the Oldham context, commitment to Oldham, developing trust and confidentiality.

Operation Of the Advisory Board

The Advisory Board will be structured along the following lines, providing advice, guidance and critical support on the key areas outlined in the "Modernising Oldham" improvement plan, as follows:

- Organisation development and change management;
- Communications;
- Officer and member structures;
- Human resources;
- Diversity
- Performance; and
- Budget and resources;



It is envisaged that the Advisory Board Steering Group will coordinate the work of its sub-groups, and call plenary sessions on a quarterly basis to review progress in achieving the improvement plan milestones.

It is envisaged that the Advisory Group will be established for a period of eighteen months in the first instance, to December 2003, with a review after twelve months operation.

10. CONCLUSION

This report lays out a challenging programme of change to be followed through over the next twelve to eighteen months. Whilst the challenges are great so are the rewards. None is greater than the potential to deliver significant benefits and improvements in services to individuals and communities who rely on them.

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
A	ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT					
A1	Contribute to the development of a LSP vision for the Borough	Chief Executive	*	OMBC key player in LSP.	Vision develop in partnership, signed up to by council.	September 2002 vision in place.
A2	LSP vision has to incorporate targets – SMART – applicable to all partners.	Assistant Director Policy and Partnerships	1	As above	As above	As above
A3	Develop Oldham Council's vision and establish priorities, following on from the LSP work.	Chief Executive	2	OMBC needs a clear understanding of its priorities and what it is trying to achieve.	Vision for a modernised Oldham, with cross party support.	New vision developed November 2002.
A4	Council vision exercise has to lead to detailed understanding of our responsibilities in delivering the Community Strategy as well as our own specific responsibilities. As a result a review of the Corporate Plan to take place in the Autumn.	Assistant Director Performance	2/3	As above	Employees have understanding of role and contribution their job makes to achieving the Council's vision.	Revised Corporate Plan produced to drive service planning from April 2003 / 04.
A5	Gain Member and Officer commitment to delivery of the Council's vision.	Chief Executive	1	To gain joint ownership of council vision.	Cross party agreement of vision.	-
A6	Establish protocol between leadership and major opposition party on areas of agreement in relation to the delivery of the Council's vision, to review	Chief Executive	2	To establish areas of agreement and areas of legitimate political debate.	Adoption of protocol.	Establish target date for Protocol to be agreed.

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
	progress on joint areas of activity and to reinforce partnership working.					
A7	Develop a change management and organisational development programme to support the delivery of the Council's vision for Members and Officers.	Chief Executive and IDeA	1 / 2	To support the implement of this action plan.	Create the capacity, skills, knowledge and abilities to deliver this action plan.	Training programme in place by and number trained- - target to be established
A8	The Council's vision to be communicated on a personal level to key partners – so that they understand the Council's role, responsibilities and resource commitment in delivering the Community Strategy.	Chief Executive	2 / 3	Partners have a clear understanding of OMBC's role and responsibilities and resources.	Acknowledgement of council's contribution to LSP.	Number of meetings with key partners completed by March 2003
A9	Reconsider the structure at the centre of the organisation in relation to the Deputy Chief Executive or an alternative.	Chief Executive and IDeA	2	To develop structure at the centre or organisation.	Capacity to meet challenges set out in vision.	Review completed July 2002.
A10	In light of the Council's vision, re-visit 2 nd and 3 rd tier structures in Departments, emphasise an ownership of corporate agenda whilst retaining focus / capacity on specific service delivery issues.	Chief Executive and IDeA	2 – 4	To establish accountability at 2/3 tier.	Responsibilities for service delivery clear and understood.	Review completed by March 2003

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
A11	Create group from 2 nd /3 rd tier officers to shadow COMT to bridge the gap between strategy and action. First job to review working parties and also decision analysis and mapping		1 / 2	To create capacity to undertake corporate working.	Greater networking and corporateness at 2/3 tier.	Reduce total number of working parties.
A12	Establish regular mechanism for seeking the views of all employees.	Head of Corporate Human Resources	2 -3	Seek views of employees on key issues impacting on OMBC.	Views used to develop policy and action.	Annual survey
B	COMMUNICATIONS					
B1	Implement the Communications Strategy to build the image of the Council with local people.	Communications Strategy Group	* - 2	Need identified through Departmental Audit, Best Value Review, Ecotec Report, COMT.	Vision for Council articulated and understood by employees and partners; improved image of Council with local people.	Publish Strategy by July 2002
B2	Review the effectiveness of the Communications Strategy	Communications Strategy Group	4	Ensure alignment of corporate and departmental systems.	Individual responsibilities identified. Any resource requirements identified.	Effectiveness of Strategy taken by mystery shopping
B3	Develop a programme for the production and delivery of a regular corporate newsletter, outlining progress on delivering the Council vision.	Communications Strategy Group (Lead: Principal Officer Marketing Communications)	*	To secure continuous improvement.	Ensure robust systems are in place. Strengthen links and contribution to other strategies, i.e. e-government	First edition June 2002 Publication on a quarterly basis

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
					Customer Care, Consultation, and Marketing Oldham.	
B4	Establish responsibility for communications at a corporate, department and managerial level.	Chief Executive; Departmental Chief Officers	2	Outline progress on the Council's Vision	Key messages communicated regularly, feedback opportunity for employees and partners.	Communications Infrastructure established by April 2003

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
C	OFFICER / MEMBER STRUCTURES					
C1	Need to re-visit Area Committees – clear set of proposals for development over next three years involving increased delegation, protocols for conduct of meetings, and resourcing.	ACE PPR	*	To clarify the future role and resourcing of area committees	Increased delegation of resources to deliver local services, increased input in local area service planning.	Implement new role, June 2003. Chairs' satisfaction with new role – target to be set.
C2	Design and implement a Boroughwide approach to neighbourhood/area management	ACE PPR	3	To provide better local design and co-ordination of services. To tackle deprivation.	Improved services.	Phased implementation from Autumn 2002 - beginning in regeneration areas (SRB6, NDC, NRF).

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
D	HUMAN RESOURCES					
D1	Establish brief to review function, to include the development of a workforce strategy, the development of a representative workforce, an Oldham management training programme, competencies based approach to recruitment, selection and training, and graduate trainee scheme	ACE Legal, Democratic and Personnel	1	To address the issues identified in the Ecotec Report relating to HR	Implement a HR approach to managing people, underpinned by competencies and training.	May 2002 Workforce Strategy - December 2002. Appropriate BV PIs as set out in the Corporate Plan. Management Training Programme July 2002. Number trainees - target to be established. Graduate Trainee Scheme - October / November 2002
D2	Complete review	IDeA and Head of Corporate Human Resources	1 / 2	As above.	As above.	June 2002
D3	Establish appraisal process in the first instance with Chief Officers, setting measures of success at corporate and service level.	IDeA and Head of Corporate Human Resources	1	To ensure ownership of appraisal process. To ensure appropriate skills and training provided to ensure high standards of	All Chief Officers appraised.	September 2002. All appraised by February 2004.

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
				performance and demonstrate high performance standards.		
D4	Role out appraisals across the organisation	IDeA and Head of Corporate Human Resources	3 - 4	As above.	Officers appraised.	February 2003. All staff appraised by February 2004.
D5	Common Purpose - roll out action plan for Oldham.	ACE Legal, Democratic and Personnel and LSP.	3 - 4	To allow communities together at 2/3 rd tier and to develop leaders of tomorrow.	Introduce common purpose with LSP September 2002.	All 2/3 tier officers through programme October 2004.

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
E	DIVERSITY					
E1	Develop strategy and guidance to enable the Council to effectively participate in dialogue with local people and local communities	Executive Director Education and Culture	2	To raise awareness of issues relating to cultural diversity and racial harmony.	The Council and schools to undertake CRE standards review and have common approach to addressing issues relating to cultural diversity. Schools Youth Council expanded and other consultative forums across the communities established. Update Audit of consultative mechanisms and establish areas for development.	100% Council Departments and schools undertake CRE review by March 2003. Action Plans in place for development of community consultation.
E2	Implement on a organisation wide basis a corporate programme of diversity training, complementing the Race Equality Scheme	Executive Director Education and Culture	1 / 2	To raise awareness of issues relating to cultural diversity and racial harmony and to promote understanding and knowledge across the department.	High quality training delivered across all departments.	Numbers trained, target to be established.

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
F	PERFORMANCE					
F1	Review the corporate performance management system, after the implementation of employee appraisals.	Assistant Director Performance	3 / 4	To ensure that a holist system for evaluating performance in place	Effective and consistent approach to performance management is undertaken	Appraisal process in place by April 2003
F2	Develop a high performance culture, recognised by gaining external accreditation in the first instance to cover the priority areas of: areas developing a Council vision and HR practices.	ACE Legal and Democratic and Personnel Services, PPR	3 / 4	To endorse the work progress undertaken by the Council	External validation and recognition of good work.	Achievement of awards. Two awards by April 2004.
F3	Extend this process to other areas of the Council's work.	Service Managers	4	To endorse the work progress undertaken by the Council	External validation and recognition of good work.	Achievement of awards
G	BUDGET AND RESOURCES					
G1	Develop a medium term financial strategy (MTFS) to deliver the Council's vision and priorities, to include delegation of responsibility for financial management to service heads.	ACE Finance and Resources	*	To move away from annual budget process to enable a three year view of service planning and resourcing.	Enable longer time horizon, greater delegation and management control to department s and executive Members.	MTFS approved June 2002. MTFS in operation April 2003
G2	Identify target for development fund for 2003/04.	ACE Finance and Resources	*	To develop a process fund service growth based in corporate	Positive exercise creating capacity to respond to environmental changes in line with	As above.

	ACTION	WHO	PRIORITY / WHEN	WHY	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE TARGET (smart)
				priorities	corporate priorities.	

KEY:

- * Underway
- 1 May to August 2002
- 2 August to December 2002
- 3 January to March 2003
- 4 April to June 2003

Please Note:

This is a high level action plan. It is underpinned by project plans, setting out resources, timescales and targets to deliver the actions set out above.

