

...working in partnership to enhance the quality of life for all...
COUNCILLOR ROY BULLOCK

Leader of the Council Portfolio Statement

2009-12

Cllr Roy Bullock



TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL



1. What is the portfolio responsible for?

Introduction by Councillor Bullock

As the Leader of the Council, I have overall responsibility for allocating Cabinet portfolios and overseeing the delivery of the Strategic Plan and other key policy framework documents within the financial and constitutional parameters of the Budget and the Constitution.

I have overall responsibility for corporate planning and for overseeing Council performance and improvement-related activities. I jointly (with the Chief Executive) 'own' the Council's Leadership Development Statement and Plan and this Portfolio Statement sets out ways in which I will be looking to deliver it over the next three years.

I also have responsibility for representing the Council within a range of partnerships at Borough, County and regional level.

My overall objective is to champion the best interests of the borough and to deliver high quality services to enhance the wellbeing of all, through a soundly financed and well managed organisation.

2. Functions and Services

As Leader of the Council, my range of responsibilities is somewhat distinct from that of other portfolios: with the exception

of the Performance and Improvement section and elements of the Community and Corporate Planning team, the portfolio is not responsible for any service sections or the delivery of any Council services. This portfolio statement is therefore more strategic in its content with an emphasis on delivering the Council's Strategic Plan and coordinating the activity of other portfolio holders.

I am very much committed to partnership working and part of my role is to foster and develop the partnerships that are crucial to the delivery of our priorities. In particular, I am the Council's lead representative on a range of partnerships, namely:

- The Council's LSP (Local Strategic Partnership)
- GOSE (Government Office of the South East)
- LGA (the Local Government Association)
- Meetings of Parish Chairmen
- WKP (West Kent Partnership)
- MIDKIP

I also play a lead role in negotiations to develop, and steps to implement:

- The Kent Commitment
- The LAA (Local Area Agreement)

Finally, I have been playing and will continue to play a lead role in promoting improved two-tier working between districts and KCC and to improve joined-up working between districts, especially through the

Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MidKIP).

3. Key Plans and Strategies

Whilst the Strategic Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy are formally 'owned' by full Council, as Leader of the Council, I have a responsibility (with Cabinet) for ensuring that they are reviewed on a regular basis and for assuring their delivery. I also jointly own the Council's Leadership Development Statement and Plan including the 'Leadership Umbrella Framework'.

I take an active interest in all other key policy framework documents, in the portfolio statements of my fellow cabinet members and in service plans relating to those services for which I have overall responsibility.

4. What are the opportunities for this portfolio?

The Leadership Development Statement and Plan identified five key priorities:

- Place-shaping and visioning;
- Working together;
- VFM;
- Networking and learning from others; and
- Developing the organisation.

In addition, over the next three years, I would like to:

- Work with partners to strengthen and oversee the continued development of

our local LSP to deliver local priorities for the Borough;

- Develop a more coherent approach to partnership working with neighbouring authorities and other tiers of local government;
- Continue our improvement journey with a view to reducing the burden of external inspection and achieve a successful Comprehensive Area Assessment for Kent.

5. What are main areas for improvement?

The Council draws on a broad spectrum of information to inform its improvement programme. This includes external inspection, internal audit, complaints, feedback from staff, resident surveys and other outreach initiatives such as ward walks. We have successfully delivered the bulk of the work associated with the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan and this culminated in a CPA 'Excellent' rating from the independent Audit Commission. One key area for improvement is the need to review the range of partnerships in which we are involved.

6. What are our priorities for 2009-12?

The Council has come a long way over the past few years. We have done a great deal to identify what matters to our residents and to shape services around these

priorities. Tough choices have had to be made and will continue to be made but the Council continues to go from strength to strength: our performance is now amongst the best in the country, overall satisfaction levels remain very high and our levels of Council Tax are low. Most importantly, improvements are clearly visible on the ground: our streets are cleaner, 'grot spots' are being tackled, progress is being made on the cinema site, crime levels and fear of crime are coming down and we are improving the way in which the public can access our services. My priorities for the next three years are as follows:

Place-Shaping and Visioning

We have done a huge amount of work on developing our forward planning and this culminated in the Council adopting a 'Vision' for the Borough up to 2026. I will look to build on this by refreshing the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy in 2010.

One of the most significant decisions taken by the Council in recent years is the appointment of a private-sector development partner to produce development plans for our four key towns. This, perhaps more than anything else, will shape the future of the Borough.

Working Together (corporate planning)

We have already made some significant improvements to the way in which Cabinet, 'front-line councillors and officers are working together. We have a much stronger framework through the LSP,

Strategic Plan and reinvigorated select committees. I want to continue involving councillors, officers and partners in decision-making and improving joined-up working. Particular initiatives will include:

- Overseeing delivery of the second-generation LAA: the Kent Agreement
- Delivering on the Council's obligations under the 'Kent Commitment'.
- Holding an annual 'Councillor Convention' to improve joined-up working between the tiers of local government in the borough and to inform and shape future plans

VFM

This has long been a watchword of the Council and is embedded in the Council's corporate customer service commitments. The Council has made enormous strides in reducing cost and reducing reliance on its reserves. Whilst I will retain an overall interest in ensuring that local residents get the best possible value for money, responsibility for delivering this on a day-to-day basis will rest with the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder.

Networking and Learning from Others

We have done a great deal to learn from others. Examples have included our approach to Gateway and Masterplanning. I will do my best to represent the Council externally, to raise its profile and to act as a conduit for new ideas and I will encourage other Members and Officers to do the same. This is an explicit commitment in our Leadership Development Statement.

Developing the Organisation (learning from feedback)

Excellent organisations are those that learn from feedback and adapt accordingly. We have sought to put in place a wide range of ways in which we can gather the views of the public, partners, residents and customers. These include surveys, Ward Walks and our comments/complaints system. I have also pioneered an 'Ask the Leader' forum on the Council's website. Responsibility for these issues will rest, on a day-to-day basis, with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Customer Access and Housing.

Strengthening our Local LSP

In 2007 we commissioned a review of our LSP – the West Kent Partnership. That review concluded that, whilst the WKP had some strengths, it was not fully fulfilling the functions of an LSP. In light of these recommendations, we have taken the decision to establish our own, local LSP. I will be looking to ensure that this LSP is proactive, focused and accountable. It will have a key role to play in delivering some of our cross-cutting commitments and many of our obligations under the Kent Agreement.

Improved Partnership Working

It has long been my view that partnership working is vital to improve the customer experience, to deliver on key cross-cutting priorities and to reduce cost. Accordingly, in February 2007 I, along with 12 other council leaders signed the 'Kent Commitment' to give Kent the best local government in the country. TWBC has long

been positively disposed towards partnership working. It has developed a range of partnerships with neighbouring authorities dealing with revenues and benefits, overview and scrutiny, CCTV, equalities and licensing. It has also put in place arrangements to ensure that our partnerships are well governed and fit for the purpose for which they were intended. My priorities in this area will be

- To improve our partnership register and to be clearer about what we want from organisations who are delivering services on our behalf (through SLAs or equivalent)
- To think about where we should be concentrating our efforts in working with neighbouring authorities and developing a set of principles that we can jointly adhere to in delivering services in partnership
- To explore opportunities for part- or fully-shared services with neighbouring authorities through BPR techniques.

These priorities are underpinned by a need to recognise that the Council is operating and is likely to continue to be operating in changing times. The Council is heavily reliant on income and has suffered from the impacts of the recession. Looking forward, it is likely that we will have to manage with considerable reductions in central government grants. This is something that we will manage but all priorities must be seen against this backdrop and may be subject to changes.

7. Delivery and performance management

This Plan draws on and elaborates on a number of key issues set out in the Council's Strategic Plan. I have also discussed these corporate priorities and my portfolio priorities with the relevant service managers and these have been incorporated into their Service Plans. Key Performance Indicators and Local Performance Indicators which are relevant to my portfolio are set out as an appendix to this Statement. Along with Cabinet, I will be receiving quarterly reports on these indicators. I

9. Contact

COUNCILLOR Roy Bullock
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council,
Town Hall,
Royal Tunbridge Wells,
Kent. TN1 1RS
Phone: 01892 890166

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