

Report to: The Executive Member for
Corporate Strategy and External
Affairs

Date: 9 July 2008

Report of: Chief Executive

**Report
No:**

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Report Title: Corporate Big Issues 2009/12

**Confidential /
Non Confidential:**

(**Non-Confidential**) This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Purpose:

To reflect and review the council's strategic position and set out the 'big issues' to inform the business planning process.

Recommendations: The Executive Member is asked to:

1. Comment on and approve the corporate big issues for 2009/12 and financial headline guidance for the same period
2. Agree that this report and more detailed financial guidance is presented to the Executive on the 25 July.
3. Agree that each department now develops their own big issues paper – in the context of the corporate big issues and financial guidance – and bring these forward to Executive Members in the next cycle.

Decision:

**Background
Doc(s):**

Signed:

Leader/Executive Member

Monitoring Officer

Date:

Summary:

(on its own page

Using the council's three main aims as a framework, the report summarises the big issues facing the council over the next few years. This is an important opportunity for the council to reflect on its position and the challenges and opportunities ahead and forms the basis of the business planning process moving forward.

The report also sets out the broad financial guidance for services to work within. In addition to this report – and more detailed financial guidance being presented to the Executive on the 25 July, services are now asked to produce their own service big issue papers and present these to Executive Members as appropriate during the next cycle.

*with background
docs)*

1 Introduction

- 1.1 During 2007, Bolton Council and its partners from the Bolton Vision Partnership published a new community strategy – Bolton : Our Vision 2007 – 2017. It sets out a compelling and ambitious vision for the borough into the 21st century and a bright future for the current and future generations. This sense of optimism, encapsulated in the phrase - it's Bolton's time – is underpinned by a proud history and a drive and commitment of the council and its partners to improve the quality of life for local people.
- 1.2 Whilst we can point to many successes, we are acutely aware that many challenges and opportunities remain. We can be confident in our ability to deliver based upon our impressive track record, the firm commitment of all partners and strong and effective political and managerial leadership. However, we cannot be complacent, and the council's business planning process provides an important framework to help the council plan and manage effectively.
- 1.3 The 'big issues' process is an important part of that framework, where the council reflects open its recent progress and considers the big issues over the next three years. This opportunity to reflect and refocus forms the basis of the business planning process and important decisions around priorities, capacity and resource allocation.
- 1.4 This report also proposes that the headline financial guidance for 2009/12 should be that all services should work on the basis of finding 4% re directions, at least 3% of which need to be cashable efficiency savings. A more detailed report will be brought forward to the Executive at its next meeting on the 25 July 2008.
- 1.5 The Executive are asked to endorse the big issues and the headline financial guidance and that these form the basis of guidance to departments in pulling together their own service big issues to Executive Members in the next cycle.

2 Main Aims and Priority Themes

- 2.1 It is worth reflecting on the vision that was agreed by the partnership in 2007 and reinforced in the Bolton Plan 2008/11 that was fully endorsed by Full Council on the 21 May 2008.
- 2.2 The council and its partners have a shared ambition represented in our twin aims of securing **economic prosperity** and ensuring the maximum benefit for local people whilst at the same time **narrowing the gap** across six priority themes:
 - Healthy Bolton
 - Achieving Bolton
 - Prosperous Bolton
 - Safe Bolton
 - Cleaner and greener Bolton
 - Strong and confident Bolton.
- 2.3 This clarity and focus is essential and is shared and understood by all partners. The council has a third main aim of **transforming services** – the achievement of

even greater value for money for local people and ensuring all services are focused on the achievement of better outcomes for local people.

3 Strategic Analysis

3.1 Before considering the big issues in turn, it is important to consider and affirm the current strategic position that the council is in, some of which has already been referred to:

- Over the last couple of years, a clear and firm strategy has developed and crystallised which is set out clearly in the borough's community strategy and reinforced in the council's corporate plan – The Bolton Plan.
- The council is now predominately in a phase of delivery – turning our ambitions into real delivery on the ground leading to better outcomes for local people.
- This agenda is both exciting and transformational – a number of significant opportunities and programmes are being progressed which can and will make a significant contribution to the achievement of our ambitions over the short, medium and longer term.
- The scale of the agenda is welcome but we need to recognise that this will require careful planning and risk management and will inevitably draw heavily on the capacity and expertise of Elected Members, managers and staff across the organisation.
- Strong and effective political and managerial leadership will be essential to drive the council – and its partners – in this importance phase of delivery.

3.2 As Members will be aware, the Executive and the council's management team are jointly committed to the effective management and delivery of this agenda and will be spending time together formally and informally to collectively manage the agenda.

3.3 To summarise, the council is well placed to deliver, but a clear and consistent focus on priorities will be needed to ensure we achieve our ambitions – our robust and embedded business planning process provide an important framework for the organisation to work within.

3.4 Whilst the detail will not be replicated here, a more detailed analysis of performance was presented to the Executive at its meeting on the 27 June within the Corporate Performance Dashboard Report 2007/08.

4 Economic Prosperity and Narrowing the Gap

4.1 Like any other modern council in the 21st century, Bolton has two distinct and complementary roles. The first and most traditional is to provide and commission a wide range of services to local people, ranging from education and schools to refuse collection and street cleaning. Broadly speaking, our services are generally very good although the enduring challenge of delivering even better services, greater value for money and responding to increasing demands of local people is one we must remain focused upon.

- 4.2 The second and more recent role is that of **'community leadership'**, increasingly referred to as 'place shaping' by government. Bolton is at the forefront of this activity and has been for many years and. The strength of our partnerships and shared commitment and vision has been cultivated since the early 1990s. The focus on economic prosperity and narrowing the gap is the embodiment of our focus on community leadership – a coherent vision and plan for the sustained development of our borough over the long term leading to a better quality of life for current and future generations. Clearly, a number of big issues sit within this, but before considering each of those in some detail, it is worth reflecting on progress overall in delivering our twin aims.
- 4.3 The headline analysis is that overall good progress is being made. The twin aims represent a long term strategy for the regeneration of the borough and particularly our most deprived communities and therefore our success ultimately must be judged over that time period. However, within our business planning process, we have clear plans for the short and medium term that we are focused on delivering and against these, good progress is being made.
- 4.4 In terms of **economic prosperity**, economic growth across the city region and within Bolton largely due to investment in the town centre is forecast to bring in the region of 16,000 new jobs to the borough over the next ten years. The town centre programme is progressing well and is largely on track although the impact of the 'credit crunch' and slow down in international and national economies could have an impact. However, development partners are still fully committed to long term investment in the town centre and the significant public sector investment in the town centre will begin this autumn with the start of the construction of the new community college and 6th form college and the multi storey car park in the innovation zone.
- 4.5 Whilst economic growth in the borough is a good thing in itself, we have a once in a generation opportunity to **maximise the benefit of that growth for local people**. In short, ensuring that as many local people as possible access the new jobs that will come to Bolton and in particular those people from our most deprived communities who, without focused support and assistance would be excluded from the opportunities.
- 4.6 Making this happen will require careful planning and focus from the council and its partners over the short and longer term. Many existing interventions will contribute, but to truly maximise the benefit, a clear, coherent and resourced plan is needed. This level of detail is progressing well with the leadership and drive of the Executive Member for Strategy and External Affairs and the Chief Executive.
- 4.7 Whilst a detailed plan will be brought forward to Member shortly, there is a clear focus on **raising aspirations, increasing educational attainment and driving up skills levels** across the borough's workforce. These are a challenging set of issues and outcomes that we are trying to tackle and will require a continued focus from the council and its partners over the long term.
- 4.8 In terms of **narrowing the gap** more generally, the Corporate Performance Dashboard presented to the Executive provides a more detailed analysis but the

headline is that whilst we can point to many successes, particularly around crime, the environment and housing, overall, we have a significant challenge of concentrated pockets of deprivation in parts of the borough. Therefore, the intensified focus on neighbourhood renewal is a focus for the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and External Relationships and the Chief Executive.

- 4.9 At the heart of this agenda is the importance of **community cohesion**. Refining the borough's community cohesion strategy in the light of the ICoCo report and the council's response to the government report - Our Shared Futures – will be an important issue for the council and its partners.

5 Transforming Services

- 5.1 To compliment the twin aims shared with the Bolton Vision Partnership, the council has a third main aim of transforming services and whilst the specific issues will be considered later, the key message is that whilst the council generally provides very good services and value for money, it needs to be radical to ensure our services are fit for the 21st century and can respond to the increasing demands of our diverse communities, deliver even greater value for money and support the delivery of better outcomes and quality of life for local people and particularly those who are most disadvantaged.
- 5.2 In short, this is about the '**mainstreaming**' of **value for money, innovation and neighbourhood renewal** and making these part of the day job. We are starting from a firm base but we need to be more explicit about the importance of these issues across all of our services in the future.

6 Big Issues – Economic Prosperity

- 6.1 Having set out the broad analysis which is overwhelming positive, each of the big issues is briefly considered below using the three main aims as a framework.

6.2 Greater Manchester City Region – Governance

- 6.2.1 The Greater Manchester City Region is growing in importance due to its central role in driving economic growth, competitiveness and skills; facilitating investment in transport infrastructure and building sustainable communities – places where people want to live.
- 6.2.2 The issue of governance is important because whilst AGMA (the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities) has achieved much over recent years, many issues remain in a number of key areas. We need an effective, accountable decision making framework to ensure there is a single and integrated focus for co-ordination and action which brings together the key players in Greater Manchester who possess the resources and power to make a difference.
- 6.2.3 The Executive confirmed the Council's support for the new AGMA constitution at its meeting on the 27 June and the big issue moving forward will be effective political and managerial leadership and support for the new constitution to ensure it's effective in helping Greater Manchester achieve its long term aspirations.

6.3 Manchester's Multi Area Agreement (MAA)

- 6.3.1 Manchester's decision to develop an MAA was based upon the need to build joint ownership and commitment from key agencies across the city region to common goals and interventions focused on economic growth, skills development and tackling unemployment and worklessness. The bid was submitted to government in May and a decision is expected soon. An endorsement from government could give greater powers, resource and flexibility to develop Greater Manchester wide interventions to compliment local activity focused on driving economic growth and prosperity for all citizens.
- 6.3.2 Whilst this is clearly positive, there will clearly be implications for political and managerial leadership and a draw upon capacity and expertise within the council to ensure the MAA is a success and adds value to our local efforts.

6.4 Transport Innovation Fund

- 6.4.1 As Members will be aware, Manchester's bid to the Transport Innovation Fund (TiF) has recently been approved by government. This could deliver £3 billion investment in Greater Manchester's public transport infrastructure followed by the introduction of a limited congestion charge at limited times of the week and day at certain points across the sub region.
- 6.4.2 This is clearly a sensitive and controversial issue that will need to be managed carefully as we move forward. Effective assessment of the benefits and issues for Bolton will be undertaken and a decision taken on the issue of a poll for Bolton or Greater Manchester.

6.5 Town Centre Developments

- 6.5.1 The continued redevelopment and renaissance of the town centre is a central plank of the council's long term ambitions. Outside of Manchester city centre, Bolton is forecast to see the biggest growth in its economy and jobs over the next 10/15 years, the bulk of which will be concentrated in the town centre. This is a 'once in a generation' opportunity that the council has positioned itself to drive and maximise the significant opportunities and potential. Within the package of developments sits the plan to provide a **town centre swimming pool** – this is a clear priority for the council and its partners that is being progressed as part of the master plan.
- 6.5.2 Whilst the master plan is largely on track and being effectively managed and delivered, the market adjustments taking place in the housing sector particularly could influence the mix of future developments. This is being worked through with developer partners and appropriate adjustments and reprofiling being undertaken to ensure the pace and momentum is maintained.
- 6.5.3 The scale and complexity of the town centre is such that it draws heavily on political and managerial capacity and that of key partners to ensure the developments are delivered effectively and contribute to council's wider ambitions of tackling inequalities and deprivation.

6.6 Maximising the Local Benefit

- 6.6.1 Whilst there may well be issues around timing and profile, we can be very confident that Bolton will see significant net job growth in the future, the bulk of which will be in the town centre but also at key development sites such as the Loco Works and Cutacre. A proportion of these jobs will obviously go to local people but the challenge is to ensure that we maximise the number of local people who benefit. This is a key policy challenge facing the council and its partners.
- 6.6.2 Many other cities and large towns have seen experienced massive physical redevelopment but that hasn't been accompanied by a proportionate impact on levels of deprivation. Whilst the reasons for this will be many and complex, Bolton must ensure it doesn't miss the opportunity to squeeze the optimum for the borough.
- 6.6.3 A detailed strategy including how we raise aspirations, **educational, skills and access** to new employment opportunities is coming together and we are not starting from a blank sheet of paper – many important programmes are in train – the challenge is to see this as a holistic strategy with a focus in particular in maximising the local benefit.

7 Big Issues – Narrowing the Gap

- 7.1 In view of the importance of this issue, the Chief Executive is personally driving this agenda as part of a wider approach to neighbourhood renewal (see below) and this will be one of the key priorities for the council for many years to come.

7.2 Intensified approach to neighbourhood renewal

- 7.2.1 'Regenerating our deprived communities' has been an enduring focus of the Bolton Vision Partnership for over ten years and many successes have been achieved. However, a borough with the history and profile of Bolton, like many other northern ex-industrial towns still suffers from significant pockets of deprivation and there is a real danger without a concerted effort from all partners – public, private and voluntary – that this situation could be compounded with the new prosperity coming to the borough in the future.
- 7.2.2 Therefore, over recent months, an intensified approach to neighbourhood renewal has been developed which has a number of components:
- Explicit reference to this in the portfolio for the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and External Affairs – a clear signal of the importance of this issue.
 - A personal priority for the Chief Executive who will drive and lead a newly formed neighbourhood renewal leadership group.
 - A stronger corporate approach with resources being brought together within the Chief Executive's Department to drive the agenda working with colleagues in Development and Regeneration who will lead on delivery.

- The roll out and delivery of neighbourhood action plans (NAPs) in our 11 most deprived areas with named area leads who will lead and co-ordinate targeted interventions specific to each area.
- Probably most importantly, a focus on the **mainstreaming** of neighbourhood renewal council and partner services – we need to shift the mindset that this is not about regeneration monies, this is about mainstream revenue and capital resources.

7.2.3 This agenda is progressing well and area leads should be in place by the end of the year. The challenge moving forward will be the degree to which we can bend mainstream resources to focus on specific issues in localities and develop evidence based interventions that really make a difference to the quality of life of our most disadvantaged residents. The ‘**better interventions**’ work which has been piloted has provided a valuable insight into ‘what works’ and the learning will inform future activity in this important area.

7.3 Shifting Difficult Outcomes

7.3.1 The increasing focus on narrowing the gap is short hand for the need to narrow three gaps:

- The gap between Bolton and the rest of England
- The gap within Bolton between the least and most deprived neighbourhoods
- The gap between individuals – wherever they may live in the borough.

7.3.2 Inevitably, it is very often the same families and individuals but sometimes it can be different. In terms of the gap between Bolton and rest of the England, this remains a key challenge. Whilst the gap has narrowed in some areas, the government’s latest measure of deprivation – the indices of multiple deprivation (IMD), demonstrates that Bolton is still the 54th most deprived boroughs when compared with 354 boroughs nationally.

7.3.3 Whilst we need to be realistic about what can be achieved, we know that a targeted focus based on what works will ensure we narrow the gap as much as possible and improve the quality of life for our most disadvantaged residents. The corporate performance dashboard provided Members will a fuller analysis of our current position and what our priorities but suffice to say for this report, that the evidence base is clear – we need to focus on narrowing three gaps in particular – **health, educational attainment and skills**.

7.3.4 Health Inequalities

7.3.5 Bolton, like many other towns in the North West, has a particular problem with **health inequalities** life expectancy varying by some 15 years in different parts of the borough – this is clearly unacceptable. Whilst the council and its partners such as the PCT and hospital in particular have been focusing on this issue for many years, there is a recognition that we must redouble our collective efforts. The recent ‘big Bolton health check’ was a huge success and is an example of this intensified approach. Members will recall the strengthened action plan presented

by the Director of Public Health to the Executive on the 14 April – work has continued since then to develop a set of detailed actions to further strengthen our approach. Good progress is being made but this will remain a big issue for many years to come.

- 7.3.6 Driving up educational attainment and skills within the workforce to increase people's life chances has always been important, but never more so in Bolton with the new prosperity and jobs that are coming to the borough. Ensuring that current and future generations have high aspirations, a good education and skills to enable them to play an active part in a modern knowledge based economy are a key priority. Whilst again, many programmes were already in train, the opportunities afforded by **Building Schools for the Future, Primary Capital and the potential for new Academies** are significant and must continue to be a key priority moving forward. However, Members will be aware that large and complex programmes bring an element of risk and will draw heavily on the council's capacity moving forward.
- 7.3.7 Whilst investment in the borough's school building is welcome and essential, they won't in them selves deliver better educational outcomes. This investment must be complemented with an enhanced focus on **the quality of leadership and teaching within schools** – this is a key priority for the council and its partners.
- 7.3.8 Bolton's economy has changed significantly over recent years with a move away from manufacturing towards a service and knowledge based economy. Therefore, the skills needed to compete successfully in the modern market place will be different. A clear strategy aimed at increasing the skills levels in the local workforce is coming together with key partners such as local business, schools, the colleges and the university all working together as part of the **Bolton Skills Board** to ensure the right provision is available and accessible to local people. This is a long term strategy and must continue to be a big issue moving forward.
- 7.3.9 Economic growth over recent years whilst welcome, has contributed to a problem of **affordable housing in Bolton**. This is a top priority for central government and certainly one for the council and its partners including Bolton at Home. The housing agenda has two distinct but related elements to it. The first is transforming estates which is about the provision of affordable housing, the second is about the future status of Bolton at Home in terms of its ability to attract investment to further improve and maintain the borough's stock and infrastructure.
- 7.3.10 These are exciting developments that will need to be managed carefully and sensitively. Proposals have been submitted to government and we await their announcement. The issue of affordable housing will remain a big issue for years to come.

8 Big Issues – Transforming Services

- 8.1 The council's third main aim of transforming services is the focus for a number of important issues for the council and its partners. Those of greatest significance are summarised briefly below.

- **Value for money** – the value for money agenda brings a set of challenges and opportunities that will need careful planning. The prize is more resource to focus on council priorities and front line services, the challenge is essentially how to get ‘more for less’. The Executive agreed a corporate strategy at its meeting on the 27 June (including shared services, process improvement, accommodation and a programme of service reviews) and departments will be bringing together their own strategies for Executive Members to approve over the coming months. The numbers are significant – the council needs to find over £15 million of true efficiency savings during 2008/11 so Members will need to lead and challenge this agenda to ensure plans and strategies will deliver.
- **Achieving a faster rate of improvement** – whilst this is a general theme across all of the big issues set out in this report, it is worthy of a specific reference. The analysis of performance in the year end corporate dashboard was broadly very positive but a council with Bolton’s track record and capability has the potential to deliver an even faster rate of improvement, particularly against its local priorities. These local priorities were set out in the performance framework report to the Executive on 27 June and will be a particular focus over the next 2/3 years.
- **New performance framework** – changes to the national performance framework will hopefully see a reduced burden on local councils and more discretion to focus on local priorities – for Bolton these are set out in the new three year plan that was agreed by the Executive on the 27 June and highlight some 20 areas where the Executive want to see particular improvements. Delivering on our local priorities will hopefully ensure we receive an ‘improving strongly’ judgement from the Audit Commission next year and are seen to be delivering excellent value for money by securing a 4 from the new use of resources framework.
- **Public perception and satisfaction** – Members will be aware of the increased importance being placed on improving the perception of local council and the satisfaction of local residents with services. Our latest survey results showed an improvement to some 52% of respondents being satisfied with the council, whilst this is welcome, there is room further improvement. Whilst the survey of BME (black and ethnic minority) residents was better, again, we would want to see some improvement. Recent investment in the brand and the agency has helped and further investment in communicating the full range of services we provide and the council is generating greater value for money is critical.
- **Customer service and experience** – linked to the previous point is the issue of the customer experience. Investment over the last few years around the one stop shop and contact centre has worked well but is clear from customer intelligence that we can do more to ensure we get it ‘right first time’ and respond to customer contact quickly and to a high quality. Improving the web site as a tool to find out about local services and do business with the council and further embedding good customer service across the council will be big issue for the council – and its partners – as we move forward.
- **Community engagement and cohesion** – linked to the issue of community cohesion that was referenced earlier in the report is the complex issue of community engagement. Whilst more detail will be brought forward to Members in the future, suffice to say here that ‘upping our game’ around community engagement is an integral part of our approach to both neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion – engaging with individuals to try and deliver better outcomes for them and their families.

- **Area Working** – Area Forums and area working are an increasingly important part of our approach to service delivery in localities and engaging with our communities. Implementing the refreshed approach is going well with forums being better attended, more engaging and focused on local issues. The challenge is to maintain this momentum and ensure that area forums continue to be a success and more importantly that the council and its partners respond to the issues identified. A fuller report will be brought forward to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources after round 1 has been completed setting out the successes and learning points for the future.
- **Environmental sustainability** – as a large organisation and as a community leader, the council has a key role to play in ensuring that the issue of environmental sustainability is 'front and centre'. The introduction of recycling within council buildings and the important work with the Carbon Trust to help minimise emissions and therefore cost from the council's operations are important developments. Driving the delivery of the council's approach and achieving the challenging targets around CO2 emissions are important issues over coming years.
- **Transforming social care** – needing to transform its social care services will be a big issue for the council moving forward. Bolton, like all authorities will be piloting the approach over the next 3 years which will have significant implications for the council as whole and will draw heavily on capacity in parts of the council.
- **Young people's review** – whilst part of the council's programme of value for money reviews, the review of services to young people is of such significance – both in terms of delivering better value for money and transforming the provision of services to children and young people that it is worthy of separate note. The headline review has been agreed by the Executive Member and the focus is now on delivering the implementation plan over the next 12/18 months to put in place the appropriate mix of services that will help deliver better outcomes for children and young people in the borough.
- **Libraries review** – similar to the previous point is the libraries review. As Members will be aware, a key priority for the council is how to significantly improve the quality and access to library services across the borough whilst at the same time delivering better value for money and library services fit for the 21st century.
- **Pay and grading review** – Members have now agreed an implementation date of the 1 April 2009 and good progress is being made dealing fairly with the appeals that have been made and the development of a new pay structure and the wider set of terms and conditions. This whole process is clearly very sensitive and Members are keen to ensure the best possible outcome in terms of service delivery, industrial relations and affordability. This will continue to be a big issue for the next couple of years at least.
- **New constitutional arrangements** – one of the opportunities provided to local councils by the recent local government act was the power to review and strengthen constitutional arrangements. A decision needs to be made by the end of 2009 as to what changes, if any, Members would want to pursue. Officers will work with Members to explore the options and the potential benefits and disbenefits before a decision is made.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 Bolton has every right to be optimistic about the future for current and future generations. Growing economic prosperity provides a 'once in a generation' opportunity' make a real difference to the quality of life for local people. The council and its partners have a shared and compelling vision to maximise the benefit for local people from the new prosperity. This agenda, complimented by a clear desire to transform services and deliver greater value for money represents an exciting agenda but one that will need effective leadership, management and delivery.
- 9.2 This short report attempts to provide a summary of that broad agenda and set out the big issues for the Executive Member to approve to essentially formally 'start' the business planning process for 2009/12. The report also sets out the headline financial guidance for the same period which the Executive Member is asked to approve.

10 Recommendations:

- 10.1 The Executive Member is asked to:
1. Comment on and approve the corporate big issues for 2009/12 and financial headline guidance for the same period
 2. Agree that this report and more detailed financial guidance is presented to the Executive on the 25 July.
 3. Agree that each department now develops their own big issues paper – in the context of the corporate big issues and financial guidance – and bring these forward to Executive Members in the next cycle.

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