

Ryedale T2020

A Mandate for Change



RYEDALE
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



About the Mandate

The Mandate for Change is intended to be a high level document that provides a reason for embarking on the Transformation Programme. It provides the rationale which links people and activities to a common purpose and objective. It creates a context for change and helps to provide a link between multiple activities and workstreams. It is there to create a personal connection to the Programme. The Mandate is not intended to replace or be a substitute for any of the proper programme documentation or governance, such as the business case or the programme plan.

The Context

The Ryedale and the current economic landscape

Ryedale District Council has historically been a leading and high performing council. It has always had a voice and impact beyond its size, including in areas such as the region's economic development, health and environmental services. The Council has always looked to be more efficient and effective and in the last few years has undertaken a number of successful efficiency programmes achieving savings in the region of £3.3 million. However, the future financial landscape means that we will need to think even more radically and we will need to understand and respond to issues such as devolution and combined authorities.

The Devolution question

All of these changes are occurring at a time when there is a heightened call for increased devolution and combined authorities. Devolution means the transfer of certain powers and responsibilities from national government to a particular region. The intended benefits are that decisions made locally meet the needs and aspirations of the people who live and work in the area. Combined Authorities are about two or more neighbouring local authorities collaborating on major strategic issues such as transport investment, skills, economic development and regeneration. Ryedale has always been open to partnership working and keen to drive the local strategic agenda, but any considerations will need to have demonstrably and measurably better outcomes for the residents and businesses of Ryedale who are amongst our customers.

Scale of the financial challenge

The Government announced its planned deal for Local Government through to 2019/20 in the Local Government Finance Settlement on 17 December 2015. The background to this was the Spending Review announced alongside the Chancellor's Autumn statement on 25 November 2015. This indicated that Local Government would receive the largest funding reductions in comparison to other areas of public expenditure. The four year settlement that was announced, however, was materially worse than had been expected. The current savings requirement is £1.1M. Whilst there has been some short term additional funding because of the rural nature of our area, the long term picture remains the same. In short, we need to transform the organisation, not for the short term of the council, but for the future of the district.

Transforming Ryedale District Council

What do we mean by Transformation?

What we need to prioritise as a council will not change, this has already been laid out in the Ryedale Council Plan. However, we need to recognise that the scale of the savings required for Ryedale to address the fiscal challenge is immense. Small improvements (doing the same things better) on the current delivery of service to customers alone will not suffice if the council is to survive and the district is to endure, let alone be sustainable, even in the short to medium term. It is strongly evidenced that service reviews just cannot achieve the level of savings we need to make. We therefore need to adopt whole organisation change and re-invent the way in which we deliver service, with a rapid requirement to move to a lower cost, higher value operating model – we will need to do *very different things*, in a *very different way*. Our transformation will be all about our customers and we will aim significantly to improve customer experience and outcomes at reduced cost through the removal of duplication and waste, and focusing on prevention to reduce unnecessary demand for services. We need to reflect forward to meet the needs of tomorrow as well as today.

The reason for being – our customers

At Ryedale we have always focussed on the customer. Many councils often struggle with the term customer, but for us it is clear. It is anyone who uses or may need to use the services that we deliver or support now or may deliver in the future. This includes citizens and service users, including residents, businesses and visitors. It also includes our partners, of which we have many. Each group – and in fact each individual within different groups – may have different needs. However, what is critical to us is that it is all about creating value for every one of those customers. To achieve this we need to ensure we understand who our customers are, what they require and then deliver it in the most efficient and appropriate way.

What does creating value mean?

Value is all about doing “what matters” to the customer. A simple idea, but how many local authorities really know what customers care about, since many local authorities get wrapped up in what they currently do and have always done? This is often demonstrated through media such as their website, which is focused around the current professional delivery activities and structures rather than clearly understood customer needs.

This is often because value (as the customer perceives it) is not easily calculated, but after all the dust settles from a customer experience, what is left is a perception of the service we provide. It is about how the customer feels we deliver our services. Did the customer end up with a feeling of satisfaction, or not? It’s not about getting all the touch points “perfect” or even giving them the answers they wanted, it is about being treated efficiently, fairly and with empathy.

So what creates value for customers?

These are the things that will create value for the customers of a future Ryedale Council:

- Allowing people to do the things they need to do for themselves as easily as possible, when they need to do them. Allowing us to focus on those with the most complex needs.
- Being open, transparent and accessible.
- Being modern, efficient and business-like.
- Treating all customers equitably and delivering a consistent and appropriate level of service.
- Doing our best to ensure customers issues are resolved.
- Being clear on expectations of what we can and cannot do.
- Understanding that whilst we will need to deliver against our required obligations as a council, our focus will be on what matters, not what is “statutory”.
- Having ownership of, and responsibility for, a customer issue and dealing with it seamlessly across all parts of the organisation as one council.

A one council approach

To deliver this future aspiration we need to work as “one council”. This not only means breaking down any silos within our organisation, and thinking radically about our structure and ensuring we do deliver “seamlessly” - adopting a single “Ryedale way” of doing things - but it also means all officers, members and partners working in the same way, to the same ends. This sounds like a simple vision, but it will be challenging to achieve.

A vision for the future

Our vision for the future is therefore (deceptively) simple:

‘Continuing to do what matters for Ryedale’

It’s simple, in that doing what matters will be all about a focus on adding value for the customer. However, it is also complex and challenging, as it means getting closer to the customer, really understanding their needs and sometimes challenging our own pre-conceptions and traditional ways of doing things. It is also set in a landscape of competing priorities and demands. We will need to have a mature approach to the management of risk, one that moves beyond the traditional local government approach, centred on a risk-averse culture that seeks to mitigate risk beyond all reasonable doubt, to managing risk based on an appropriate balance of probabilities to the likelihood of risk occurring and the impact a risk might have. To increase our appetite for risk, our staff at all levels will be empowered to take timely decisions necessary to support services and customers.

What will this mean for staff?

Our people are our greatest asset and in the future we want the way we operate to move from being a formalised and structured organisation and become a dynamic, creative and innovative place to work. For staff this means three things. Changes to:

The Work - Our focus on work will include what work is and where, when and how it takes place, as well as changes in skills and job needs, changing career progression with new opportunities and pathways for those who want it, maximising technological developments and embedding new ways of working.

The Workforce - Our focus on the workforce will recognise our demographics, wider population and legislative changes, attitudes and expectations, the changing skills base and how people are best organised, developed, managed, motivated and rewarded to perform at their best.

The Workplace - Our focus on the workplace will recognise how organisations are evolving and adapting, recognising that *work is an activity and not a place* and allowing for flexible work location and hours and a flexible physical work environment that benefits both the individual and the organisation – and ultimately the customer, as we will bring the service closer to them.

Engagement and communication

In delivering this transformation it will be essential to build commitment, understanding and momentum in staff for the development of a new operating model, new behaviour and ways of working. We will need to clearly articulate the impact of the changes which will be developed from this Mandate and encourage dialogue about change with staff.

Next Steps

What now and what next?

The Mandate will be a ‘touchstone’ as we make progress with our transformation programme – we should constantly be able to refer back to it to see if any changes we are making are in line with its aspirations. It allows us to take the next steps to define a set of high level operating principles for the Council. These will inform a more detailed strategy and plan of how we interact with our customers, the levels of performance and service we should be providing and how we want staff to be working in the future. These considerations and clear expectations will then ensure we can start to build the organisation we need to be in the future to deliver what matters for the customer at a cost that ensures we are a sustainable organisation – our organisational Blueprint.

The long term

Staff have already undertaken work to consider what factors might effect our future. Whilst there are many issues such as devolution that may impact on us, the overriding theme of those discussions was that, to a considerable extent, our destiny is within our own control. If we pro-actively address many of the issues they can be opportunities for us for future, and not threats. It is only through radical thinking that we will be able to deliver the scale of efficiencies we need to make us sustainable. However, this will mean taking some bold, and sometimes tough, decisions about what we do and how we do it. Services and functions will change at a rapid pace, which in turn will drive wider structural reform for Ryedale District Council as a whole.