

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1	Meeting:	Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel
2	Date:	10 th December, 2009
3	Title:	CONTEST 2 and Prevent Strategy Progress
4	Directorate:	Chief Executive

5. Summary

This paper provides a summary of the report contained in the agenda for the previous Democratic Renewal Panel on 29th October 2009.

The previous report provided information about the Government's national CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy and Prevent strategy. It also reports on progress made in Rotherham to respond to this agenda.

6. Recommendations

That Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel:

- 1. Notes the progress made against the Prevent agenda**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Background to CONTEST

Since 2003, the Government has had a comprehensive strategy in place to counter the threat from international terrorism. The strategy is known as CONTEST. The aim of the strategy is 'to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence'. The Contest Strategy was revised in March 2009 to take account of the evolution of the threat and of the understanding of the factors which are driving it.

There are four main workstreams of the strategy – known as *Pursue*, *Prevent*, *Protect* and *Prepare*. Local partners are responsible for delivering the Prevent workstream, the aim of which is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism.

7.2 The Threat

According to the Government the most significant current terrorist threat is assessed as coming from Al Qa'ida and like minded groups. It is this threat that is the focus of *Prevent*. The threat is in various forms, such as:

- The Al Qa'ida leadership and their affiliates.
- Groups affiliated to Al Qa'ida abroad.
- Self starting networks or lone individuals with a similar ideology but no connection to Al Qa'ida.
- Terrorist groups with a similar ideology to Al Qa'ida but their own agenda.

The development of CONTEST has been based upon the effect and impact of four deeper and longer term strategic factors:

- Unresolved regional disputes.
- The violent extremist ideology associated with Al Qa'ida.
- Use of technology.
- The radicalisation process.

Assumptions underpinning this are:

- The structure of Al Qa'ida is likely to fragment and diversify into smaller groups.
- Technology will be a facilitator.
- The Al Qa'ida ideology will probably outlive the structure.
- Our ability to reach out to vulnerable people will determine the shape of the threat.
- British Muslims and others will continue to challenge Al Qa'ida's ideology

7.3 Scale of the threat

Nationally, between 2001 and 31 March 2008, over 1,450 terrorism-related arrests took place, of which one third led to a charge. Three-quarters of these were for terrorism-related offences, and just over half of these resulted in a conviction

7.4 The Prevent Strategy

In June 2008 the Government published a booklet entitled *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*. Recent guidance issued in August 2009, entitled *Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An Updated Guide for Local Partners*, reaffirms and updates the earlier document, taking into account lessons learned and emerging best practice.

7.5 The Prevent Framework

The *Prevent* strategy needs to be delivered through a wide ranging local partnership and should be informed by an understanding of the local context. Local *Prevent* partnerships should make connections between *Prevent* and other associated agendas.

Local partnerships are responsible for ensuring that their *Prevent* programme of action includes clear objectives, measurable impacts and comprehensive arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.

7.6 Rotherham Partnership response

a) Leadership and Coordination

Partnership groups have been established to lead and coordinate Rotherham's response to the Government's Prevent Strategy. These are the Guardian (strategic), Silver (tactical) and Delivery (Bronze) groups. The groups were formally established from October 2008 and have met regularly since then. Representation at Guardian Group includes, from RMBC: the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive, Children and Young People's Services, Engagement and Cohesion, and Safer Neighbourhoods. Partners represented include SY Police (Rotherham Command); FE Colleges; Voluntary Action Rotherham; and SY Fire and Rescue Service. At Silver group, Probation Service, Headteachers, the Chamber of Commerce and REMA are also represented. The GOYH Prevent Adviser provides advice and support.

b) Rotherham Prevent Action Plan

Rotherham Prevent Action Plan was developed and agreed by all partners. It sets out actions to respond to the five objectives (plus 2 cross-cutting enablers) contained within the national Prevent Strategy. It was based on the priorities for Rotherham identified by Guardian Group in accordance with the Prevent Strategy, taking into account the local context.

Rotherham's action plan has been recognised as good practice by GOYH and OSCT, and as a result, Guardian Group representatives have been asked to share this work at several regional, national and European forums.

The action plan is supported by a series of projects to deliver work in partnership with partners and communities. These activities, along with community cohesion activities, are labelled under the "Rotherham One Town One Community" initiative, which is inspired and led by Cllr Mahroof Hussain, Cabinet Member for Community Development and Engagement.

7.7 Next Steps

The guidance (*Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An Updated Guide for Local Partners*) incorporates new learning based on experience and comments from local authorities and Muslim communities. The new guidance acknowledges that the effectiveness of the programme can be reduced if the labelling of local activities or their restriction solely to Muslim communities discourages some groups from becoming involved.

The new guidance includes the need to:

- Strengthen Partnership working and involvement of partners, such as health partners.
- Broaden and deepen engagement with communities.

- Ensure best practice around the *Prevent* objectives is reflected in the design of local *Prevent* programmes.
- Programmes need to focus on individuals, communities and places.
- Recognise that communications, and in particular, the internet and digital media are vital to *Prevent*.
- Ensure that the *Prevent* programme of action includes clear objectives, measurable impacts and comprehensive arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensure interventions draw in many different communities, working alongside one another.
- Embed *Prevent* in mainstream delivery and make links with related work such as community safety and cohesion.
- Support vulnerable individuals through effective interventions.

The new guidance also makes reference to the need to respond to other forms of violent extremism such as far right extremism. It makes clear that alongside the *Prevent* strategy, the Government and the police are engaged in a range of work in response to these concerns.

Rotherham has been accepted for the IDeA *Prevent* Peer Review Programme. Commissioned by CLG, this programme provides support from IDeA Improvement Managers and specialist associates who will work with us to improve our *Prevent* programme and ensure it responds to the latest guidance and learning.

8. Finance

Area based grant funding for *Prevent* has been allocated by central Government to support this work. Rotherham's ABG *Prevent* budget for 2008 to 2012 is £339,750. Additional funding has also been allocated via South Yorkshire Police, for example, funding for young people's leadership training and capacity building for Mosques, along with staff resources.

In August 2009, the Communities Secretary John Denham announced that Local Authorities will receive an additional £7.5 million to broaden their counter-terrorism activities. The new funding is intended to allow greater flexibility to support a broader range of activities to improve the effectiveness of the *Prevent* agenda. Further details of this and any Rotherham allocation is awaited.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

This is a sensitive agenda and a strong partnership and community approach is vital to ensure that all sections of the community are engaged and supported in working to prevent violent extremism and promote shared values.

10 Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Progress towards the *Prevent* Strategy is measured and reported through NI35. It is also part of CAA and inspection frameworks. It is linked to the Community Cohesion agenda which is a priority within Rotherham Community Strategy and LAA.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England (June 2008)

<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/newspublications/publication-search/Preventstrategy/>

Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An Updated Guide for Local Partners (August 2009)
<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/general/updated-guide-for-local-partners>

IDeA support for local delivery of Prevent 2009/10:
<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=13510589>

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