

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel
2.	Date:	28th January 2010
3.	Title:	Community Cohesion (Hate Crime) Performance Update
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

Following the setting up of the Community Cohesion Service in June 2008 Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement was presented in February 2009 with the first of regular reports on the work of the service. This report provides a further update on the progress and work of the service.

6. Recommendations

NOTE:

The continued positive progress made by the Community Cohesion (Hate Crime) Service and acknowledge the associated financial implications, with regard to the future of the service.

7. Proposals and Details

Since it was established in June 2008, the Rotherham Community Cohesion Service has been part of the Community Safety Unit within RMBC Safer Neighbourhoods. The team consists of a full time Community Cohesion Officer supported by a part time admin support officer. The service was established in order to comply with the Home Office recommendation that such a service should be within a statutory organisation as opposed to the voluntary sector. Since its establishment, significant steps have been taken in the implementation and delivery of this service which acknowledges the cross government hate Crime Action plan of late 2009.

Key Outcomes:

- The formation of the 'ACT' (Action on Community Tension) group bringing together a number of key statutory and Voluntary/ Community groups in order to provide and develop intelligence and information on hate crime and community tension and to work in partnership to address this either reactively or proactively within the community.
- The creation and implementation of a 'bespoke' database to collate both individual hate crime and tension within the community.
- The implementation of a monthly tension monitoring process resulting in a tension monitoring report being produced and actions formulated and implemented ultimately to promote Community Cohesion in Rotherham and to formulate actions to prevent the escalation of Community Tension
- The commissioning of a free 24 hour hate Crime reporting and advice line through Stop hate UK. South Yorkshire Police have since taken over (since Oct 09) the commissioning of Stop hate UK to deliver this service across South Yorkshire as a result of Rotherham having led the way with this initiative.
- The implementation of an RMBC staff survey relating to their understanding of the racial incident policy and procedures and whether it would be appropriate to change to include all hate incidents. A similar exercise was also implemented for a sample of victims of racist incidents.
- Integration with the PREVENT theme for counter terrorism and radicalisation.
- The refreshing of the council's racial incident policy and procedure to include all hate crime which is currently awaiting adoption. This policy and associated procedures will effectively provide a single point of contact (SPOC) for all victims of hate crime via the Community Cohesion Officer and Community Safety Unit ensuring that victims are responded to promptly via appropriate referral where necessary, feedback is given regularly and expectations are managed.
- The development of a hate crime awareness presentation for elected members, area assembly teams council staff and other partners.
- Presence at Community Galas and events throughout the borough.
- An increase in the receipt of information as a result of expanding the service to collate figures relating to all hate incidents and community tension. A 64% increase on incidents in 2008/09 as compared to 2007/08 when only racist incidents information was collected.
- The securing of a small publicity budget via the Community leadership fund of £600 as a result of the direct support of a small number of councillors. In addition £10,000 has been secured via the Cohesion Budget to fund Training and awareness of Hate crime and associated procedures across frontline staff of the council and Partner Agencies for use during the 3rd and 4th quarters of this year and 2010/2011.
- Implementation of the new tension monitoring process as part of the Community Cohesion service has meant that a wider picture of hate crime and community tension

has been gained with the opportunity to establish actions for promoting community cohesion in hot-spot areas.

The work undertaken to date has increased the number of reports received by the Council by 64%. This is as a result of all community tension and hate crime reports being recorded as opposed to solely racial incidents (2007/08 racist incident reports = 174).

The following statistics have been collated from information from a wider range of organisations than previously and include RMBC, schools, 2010 Rotherham Ltd, South Yorkshire Police and the independent reporting line Stop hate UK as well as smaller organisations and relate to all reported hate crime and community tensions.

The total of 286 incidents for 2008/09 is an increase of 112 on the previous year. See attached appendix 1

The statistics for quarters 1 and 2 of this financial year are shown at appendix 2 and show a total of 201.

During the 3rd Quarter 145 incidents (appendix 3) were recorded on the database. This shows a total of 346 in the first 3 quarters therefore we have already exceeded last years total as this represents a 21% increase in reported incidents. If this continues an increase of 61% can be anticipated for the full year. This does not necessarily mean that this year Rotherham has experienced more hate incidents and tensions but that perhaps there is more reporting. In addition RMBC is receiving information about reports of both hate incidents and community tensions from a range of partner agencies in addition to those reported to RMBC. An Increase in reports was therefore inevitable.

The service is also a vital source of information in terms of the PREVENT Agenda and ensures that information relating to individuals and groups at risk of radicalisation are identified and strategies formulated to respond. Reported incidents are checked on a daily basis which ensures swift and appropriate action as a result of appropriate referral.

In order to assist in the formulation of actions in relation to tension reports it is necessary to complete a mapping exercise to identify sources of remedies and proactive responses which can be called upon in the promotion of cohesion. There are a number of services and organisations that can be drawn upon and it is important that these are identified and mobilised appropriately. This is a task for the cohesion officer for 2009/10 which is being supported by partners.

The Community Cohesion Service continues to develop with further work still being progressed including:-

Work being undertaken	Proposed completion
Draft Hate Crime Policy	Agreement by March 2010
Front line staff training (SNT)	E learning Package available April 2010
Increase reporting across equality strands	ongoing
Awareness raising across the borough re hate crime and Community tension	Ongoing
Hate crime awareness presentations in 7 area assembly areas	March 2010
Engagement and negotiation with Colleges and	ongoing

housing Associations to provide information	
Review of Tension Monitoring process	February 2010
Development of Reporting centres specific to the 7 equality strands	April 2011

Summary of Outcomes achieved

A substantial increase has been seen from 2008/09 and 2009/2010 in relation to SRP performance indicators which was expected due to the receipt of information from a range of organisations and which are still developing. As mentioned previously the total for all incidents in quarters 1, 2 and 3 for 2009/10 is 313. The performance indicators relating to the cohesion service are SRP5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 some of which are new indicators relating to levels of Hate crime and community tension.

8 Community tension reports have been produced which have resulted from the implementation of the community tension monitoring process which was begun in February 09. These are prepared monthly and give a clearer picture of levels and nature of tension across the borough and have provided the intelligence for the formulation of partnership action.

1 review of the tension monitoring process resulting in the adoption of Doncasters Model of tension monitoring. Monthly tension monitoring meetings will still be retained and resumed in February 2010.

1 Hate crime Awareness presentation developed.

9 Hate Crime Awareness activities have taken place via presentations and events which were targeted at both front line staff and partner agencies, councillors and also Rotherham residents since April 09. Approximately 80 Front line staff including council and partner agency staff have experienced the Hate crime awareness presentation as have members of key target groups including those with learning difficulties, of differing ethnic origins, and those with physical and/or sensory disabilities. A Further three presentations are planned with in priority areas in partnership with Area assembly staff and Rotherfed before the end of March 2010.

£10,000 secured from NRF Transitional fund (Cohesion Funding) for Hate Crime awareness raising and training across the council and partner agency staff and also community members to be spent before March 31st 2011

Begins to address 2 objectives of the new Cross government Hate crime action plan principally objectives 2 and 3 which are to prevent hate crimes from occurring or escalating in seriousness, and Improve access to and take-up of victim support.

Contributions to the prevent team and the work in preventing violent extremism have proved positive with feedback from Sergeant Karen Newton saying that one piece of information “resulted in a multi agency risk assessment meeting. This shows the system is working. Furthermore it has been useful to help build on rich picture. We need to make sure that this info keeps coming in so we can see the bigger picture in our communities”.

Finally the work of the Cohesion Service has contributed in RMBC receiving the standard of excellence in the area of equality within the equality framework for local government.

8. Finance

The Community Cohesion Service staff working within RMBC's Community Safety Unit are currently funded until March 2010 through the Safer, Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) of the Area Based Grant. The decision to allocate this funding to the service was made by the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP). The SSCF funding is available for 2010/11 and decision will need to be reached regarding the prioritisation of that funding stream or whether to consider other options.

A breakdown of the budget required for 2010/2011 includes a 2% increase on the previous year and is shown on appendix 4

Consideration needs to be given as to how the service will be funded 2010/11. There are currently 3 possible options for funding the service during 2010/2011 which are as follows:-

- Option 1. All Service costs as above met via SSCF
- Option 2. Costs shared between SSCF and NRF Transitional Grant(Cohesion Group)
- Option 3. All costs met via LAA Reward Grant

The Cohesion service currently operates with a limited dedicated budget therefore issues like funding publicity and marketing and also staff training continues to drain officer time. However the negotiation of the money secured via the NRF transitional fund for stop hate UK could be used towards this given that South Yorkshire Police are taking steps to take over the funding of this at least for this year. This may also result in finance being available through them to fund the promotion of Stop hate UK across the county. Beyond 2011 it is hoped that the sharing of Partnership resources will address this gap.

9.Risks and Uncertainties

There are still areas of the service being developed including the need to widen the sources of information relating to both individual incidents of hate crime and the reporting of incidences or potential incidences of community tension. This cannot be achieved without raising awareness as to what hate crime and community tension actually is and how to report. This also needs to be coupled with a raising of public confidence in organisational responses to reports and as such confidence in services and to a certain extent, the management of public expectation. This cannot be achieved without the commitment of partnership organisations to the sustained promotion of the community cohesion service, the exchange of information relating to reporting procedures and the implementation of work to inspire public confidence. The need for significant staff training programmes is also paramount and is not something which can occur in a short timescale. This is a partnership responsibility which requires coordination.

The future of the cohesion service remains at risk due to it being reliant on external funding streams. Failure to provide adequate funding may result in risks in terms of public well-being and community harmony in not having a well resourced and structured approach to community cohesion in Rotherham.

The development and continuation of the Community Cohesion Service offers greater opportunities for wider reporting, whilst still offering the facility for people to make reports to an independent recording unit outside of the Police and Council. It also offers the potential for early identification of issues leading to early intervention, therefore preventing community tension from escalating and the promotion of Community Cohesion.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

There are implications for RMBC's Community Cohesion Strategy and Action Plan given the work of the service. The service contributes to the delivery of a Safe Rotherham as recognised by the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan.

The new Community Cohesion Service has clear linkages to the Outcomes Framework for Adult and Social Care and importantly these include:

- Freedom from Discrimination or Harassment, by providing a well structured, well resourced service to people living in and visiting Rotherham.
- Improved Quality of Life, by supporting people to live a fulfilled life, free from harassment and to maximise their potential.

The Safer Rotherham Partnership currently has targets in respect of racial and LGBT incident reporting. In addition accurate, timely returns are required locally and by GOY&H

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The Cross Government Hate Crime Action Plan – HM Government 2009

Contact Name : Gail Wilcock, Community Cohesion Officer, Tel 01709 (33)4550, gail.wilcock@rotherham.gov.uk