

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting: Economic and Development Services matters

2. Date: 11 May 2004

3. Title: Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives

4. Originating Officer:- Noel Bell, *Forward Planning, Ext 3831*

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5. Issue

The paper sets out the Government's vision for effective community involvement in planning, to promote a planning system which is transparent, accessible and accountable, and which effectively promotes public participation.

6. Summary

The paper sets out:

- The importance of greater community involvement in planning and how this fits with the Government's broader agenda
- The principles underpinning the approach
- How the reform programme will strengthen community involvement

7. Clearance/Consultation

The consultation paper on revised Planning Policy Statement 1 sets out the Government's policies for planning and seeks comments on the principles of community involvement. Final regulations and new planning policy statements will be published following those consultation exercises once the Planning Bill comes into effect (Summer 2004).

8. Timing

See 7 above

9. Background

The planning system already provides many opportunities for local people to participate in key decisions about their areas. An accessible and transparent planning system, which provides continuing opportunities for local people to participate, is essential to deliver the objective of creating inclusive, accessible, safe and sustainable communities.

10. Argument

The views of local people have always been an integral part of the planning process and the case for the community's voice is clear:

- Involvement leads to outcomes that better reflect the views and aspirations and meet the needs of the wider community in all its diversity.

- Public involvement is valuable as a key element of a vibrant, open and participative democracy.
- Involvement improves the quality and efficiency of decisions by drawing on local knowledge and minimising unnecessary and costly conflict.
- Involvement educates all participants about the needs of communities, the business sector and how local government works.
- Involvement helps promote social cohesion by making real connections with communities and offering them a tangible stake in decision making.

11.Risks and Uncertainties

The barriers to public involvement include:

- The costs of participation for local communities (and for the planning authorities running community involvement exercises)
- The complexity of many of the issues.
- The difficulties of identifying and reaching the different groups within a community.
- The perception that community involvement exercises will be captured by individuals or articulate groups which dominate proceedings.
- Finally, concerns in achieving both more effective consultation and greater speed in the planning process remain significant.

12.Finance

Any future costs incurred in facilitating the involvement of the public within the development of the Local Development Framework will be borne by the Forward Planning section. The first bullet point of the risks and uncertainties section also needs to be reiterated, in that the costs, both in human and financial resources are also by necessity likely to be substantial.

13.Sustainability

Changing the way people think and feel about the planning system is a vital part of the planning reform agenda. As is, the promotion of a positive view of planning as a strategic, proactive force for sustainable development. The Sustainable Communities Plan sets out a vision for sustainable communities. Effective community involvement is central to delivering the Plan.

14.Wards Affected

All

15.References

ODPM (2004) - Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives

ODPM (2003) - Sustainable Communities: building for the future

16.Presentation

For planning to be seen as positive, all sections of the community must believe that the process is legitimate, operates in a timely manner, and that the

outcomes are in the public interest. The process should be simple to follow, and delivered in a fair, transparent and efficient manner. Community involvement is a key part in achieving this.

17.Recommendations

i) That the cabinet member notes the Government's vision for effective community involvement in planning as expressed in "Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives".