

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY COHESION

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham.**

Date: Monday, 27th February, 2006

Time: 10.00 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.
3. Apologies for Absence.
4. Declarations of Interest.
5. Minutes of the meeting held on 30th January, 2006 (herewith). (Pages 1 - 7)
6. Proposals N.R.F. and Community Chest (officers to report)
7. Newsnight Feature on Diversity in Rotherham (officers to report)
8. Rural Strategy (report herewith) (Pages 8 - 32)
9. RMBC/VAR Liaison Group - 11.00 a.m. start time.
To receive a presentation - Voluntary Action Rotherham's S.L.A. Update.
10. Date and Time of Next Meeting - 27th March, 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY COHESION
Monday, 30th January, 2006

Present:- Councillor Robinson (in the Chair); Councillors Ali and Burton.

Apologies for absence:- An apology was received from Councillor Sangster.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ali declared a personal interest in Minute No. 77 as reference was made to MAARI in the report.

70. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19TH DECEMBER, 2005

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion held on 19th December, 2005 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

Reference was made to Minute No. 62 (L.G.B.T. History Month Celebrations) and confirmation given to the flag flying ceremony from Reresby House on Wednesday, 1st February, 2006 between 12.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m.

It was noted that until a policy had been agreed no flags would be flown from the Town Hall.

It was confirmed that the first meeting of the "Proud" Spoke had taken place in relation to Minute No. 65 (N.R.F. Commissioning) and were supportive of the principle agreed by the Local Strategic Partnership.

71. COMMUNITY PLANNING UPDATE

A draft copy of the report was circulated to all those present and Martin Hughes, Community Engagement Manager, gave a brief summary and snapshot of activity on the progress of community planning in Rotherham, how it explored the development of geographically based Community Plans, engaged Communities of Interest, how it ensured and measured quality, how it impacted on strategic documents and service delivery and potential links into Neighbourhood Management, in particular with the establishment of the new Area Assemblies and their Area Plans.

A community boundary map was shown to Members depicting possibly forty-four areas for local community organisations that have/could have a Community Plan. The map illustrated three distinct colours:-

- Green – for local communities that have a plan.
- Amber – for local communities that were on with a plan scheduled to be completed by March, 2007.

- Red – for local communities where the process had not started, often as a result of reluctance from communities to get involved. Work was ongoing in these areas and it is still anticipated that these areas will have a Plan by March, 2008.

Members wished to see greater involvement with communities, how best to engage them, giving them the opportunity to become involved and to ascertain how their needs could best be met in the community planning process.

Members noted that the existing core budget of the Community Involvement Unit supported the work of the community plan process with the majority of the completed community plans having also been funded through Objective One.

There were a few community plans, where the Parish Council had taken a lead, which were funded through other funding streams where the Community Planning team had less of an influence. The Community Involvement Unit had the expertise to link communities strategically and were sensitively building relationships.

Resolved:- (1) That the continued development of Community Planning in Rotherham be noted and supported. Debbie – I think Glyn wants the Final version to be submitted for information at next meeting?

(2) That the contribution of the Community Involvement Team in providing opportunities for Communities of Interest to become involved in decision making be noted and supported.

(3) That consideration be given to the role of Rotherham Partnership and Area Assemblies in scrutinising the standard of Community Plans.

(4) That consideration be given to the development of an appropriate corporate mechanism allowing priorities identified through Community Planning to be fed into the decision making process, in line with the Corporate Community Involvement and Consultation Framework.

(5) That the contribution of local Community Plans in the development of Area Plans be noted and supported.

72. MIGRANT WORKERS UPDATE

Zafar Saleem, Equalities and Diversity Manager, gave an update on the situation concerning migrant workers and confirmed that an officer group had been established involving South Yorkshire Police, Neighbourhoods, P.C.T., Asylum Seekers Team and Children and Families.

Issues of concern appeared to be around:-

- People being exploited.

- Unlawful deductions from salaries.
- Housing issues, including overcrowding.
- Education and social care of adults and children.
- Health needs.

Whilst nationally there were some concerns about sexual exploitation of Eastern European women, it was uncertain if this was the case locally.

Some positive work was already taking place by the New Life Church at Canklow and through staff working with ethnic minority children in Education, Culture and Leisure Services, where an officer who spoke Slovakian was now based.

Some funding had been secured from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to conduct some research to determine numbers of adults and children in the area, what the issues of concern were and as to what action could be taken.

A meeting was to be arranged in the next few weeks to scope a programme of action and to see what self help or preventative work could be provided.

Resolved:- That the situation be noted and a further report be provided on research during March, 2006.

73. GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS UPDATE

Zafar Saleem, Equalities and Diversity Manager, drew attention to the current situation and requested a steer on how to address the problem from Members due to the political sensitivity of this issue.

The legislation concerning gypsy and travellers was to change and be incorporated into the Local Development Framework with a needs analysis much wider than merely a stop off site for this community.

A borough wide approach was, therefore, required to tackle these needs and an application had been submitted to the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly for £15,000 to carry out the necessary research.

An officer group had been established to look at various issues and to consider which Programme Area should take lead responsibility.

Resolved:- That once the outcome of the application to the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly was known, that a joint meeting be arranged with the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and Development Services, Neighbourhoods and Community Cohesion to ascertain which Programme Area takes ownership of this issue. Zafar Saleem, Equalities and Diversity Manager, drew attention to the current situation and requested a steer on how to address the problem from Members due to the cross Programme Area nature of this issue.

The legislation and guidance concerning gypsy and travellers was to change and strategic approach was required involving all Programme Areas and our partners such as the C.P.T. and S.Y.P.

The information from the O.D.P.M. indicates that the Council, Police, and P.C.T. will have to carry out needs analysis that will have to look into:-

- The provision of a site for the mobile gypsy and travellers.
- The location of the settled gypsy and travellers and their needs.
- How we deal with road side encampments and stopovers.
- The community safety and community cohesion issues that will arise.
- Enforcement and moving on policy.

A borough wide approach was, therefore, required to tackle these needs and an application had been submitted to the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly for £15,000 to carry out the necessary research.

An officer group had been established to look at various issues and to consider which Programme Area should take lead responsibility.

Resolved:- That once the outcome of the application to the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly was known, that a joint meeting be arranged with the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and Development Services, Neighbourhoods and Community Cohesion to ascertain which Programme Area takes ownership of this issue.

74. WOMENS' STRATEGY UPDATE

Zafar Saleem, Equalities and Diversity Manager, gave an update and confirmed that a core group and a steering group had been established to which Councillor Burton had been invited.

It was envisaged that a Conference take place after International Women's Day, to which community groups and organisations and various agencies be invited. The actual date and venue were yet to be confirmed.

The event will take place on 28th March, 2006 at the Unity Centre (10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.) with speakers and workshops based around the Community Strategy priorities.

Resolved:- That the information be noted and the date of the event be circulated upon confirmation.

75. NRF COMMISSIONING 2006/07 AND 2007/08 - UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report presented by Waheed Akhtar, Partnership Officer (Regeneration), which provided an update on progress with the commissioning framework for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (N.R.F.).

The process of developing the N.R.F. Commissioning Framework had been closely aligned with the process of refreshing and refining the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (N.R.S.) and developing the Local Area Agreement (L.A.A.). The priorities identified were based primarily on research and evidence of need that had come from the extensive consultation carried out as part of the refresh of the N.R.S. and development of the L.A.A. All sectors have been involved in both of these initiatives.

Reports on the commissioning process had been submitted to the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee and the Area Assembly Chairs meetings where concerns about links to the Steering Group were raised and that Area Assemblies themselves should be the decision-makers.

An updated version of Annex A on the priority areas for commissioning were circulated to all those present and explanations given to the six floor targets. It was also pointed out and explained that some amounts had also been set aside for allocation to further priorities yet to be agreed.

Resolved:- That the progress on the N.R.F. Commissioning Framework be noted. Consideration was given to a report presented by Waheed Akhtar, Partnership Officer (Regeneration), which provided an update on progress with the commissioning framework for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (N.R.F.).

The process of developing the N.R.F. Commissioning Framework had been closely aligned with the process of refreshing and refining the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (N.R.S.) and developing the Local Area Agreement (L.A.A.). The priorities identified were based primarily on research and evidence of need that had come from the extensive consultation carried out as part of the refresh of the N.R.S. and development of the L.A.A. All sectors have been involved in both of these initiatives.

Reports on the commissioning process had been submitted to the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee and the Area Assembly Chairs meetings. Members had asked for clarity on the links to the Steering Group and that the role of Area Assemblies in decision making on fund priorities.

An updated version of Annex A on the priority areas for commissioning was circulated to all those present and explanations given on activity relating to the six floor targets. It was also pointed out and explained that some amounts had also been set aside for programme management, a cross cutting element and to further priorities yet to be agreed.

Resolved:- That the progress on the N.R.F. Commissioning Framework be noted.

76. NRS UPDATE (VERBAL UPDATE

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

77. YEAR AHEAD COMMITMENT 43 - "BEGIN TO DELIVER THE COMMUNITY COHESION ACTION PLAN"

Consideration was given to a report presented by Zafar Saleem, Equalities and Diversity Manager, which outlined the progress on Commitment 43 in the Year Ahead Statement 2005/06 "Begin to deliver the Community Cohesion Action Plan".

As part of Commitment 43 of the Year Ahead Statement to progress the Community Cohesion Action Plan the progress/feedback shown in the Community Cohesion Action Plan in the submitted appendix demonstrated that the Council have made a significant progress and was on target towards the delivery/completion of the plan. Through implementation of the actions indicated the Council would meet the guidance issued by the Local Government Association and Home Office on promoting community cohesion.

The report detailed the Council's contribution to the delivery of the Community Cohesion Strategy and the progress on all the objectives listed in the Community Cohesion Action Plan.

It was also pointed out that due to movements in staffing there may be a gap in a champion to delivery the objectives and monitor their outcome.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress made on implementing the Council's Community Cohesion Action Plan 2005/2006 as set out in Appendix 1 be noted.

(2) That a further update report be submitted in March 2006 including priorities for the Council's Community Cohesion Action Plan 2006/2007.

(3) That the Council had been shortlisted for the L.G.C. Sustainable Communities Awards 2006 for our work on Community Cohesion be noted.

78. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion take place on Monday, 27th February, 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING TWO ITEMS IN ORDER TO PROCESS THE MATTERS REFERRED TO.)

79. R.M.B.C./TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL CHARTER

The Chairman introduced a report which provided an update on the development of a joint charter between Rotherham's Parish and Town Councils and the Council. The Charter set out how the two tiers of Local Government aimed to work closer together for the well-being of local people and to promote engagement with the democratic process.

The Charter would be examined at a Parish Councils Seminar on the 4th February, 2006. It was hoped that as many Parish Councils as possible would sign up to the Charter at this seminar to prevent any delay in its implementation.

Resolved:- That the progress in the development of a joint Charter between the Council and the Town and Parish Councils be noted.

80. ADVICE REVIEW

Consideration was given to a verbal report by Zafar Saleem, Equalities and Diversity Manager, on the progress of the Advice Review.

Six consultants had been approached, three had expressed an interest in the contract and two were shortlisted for interview on the 20th and 24th January, 2006.

From the two consultants interviewed Peg Alexander of Smile Consultancy of Leeds, was selected and the contract to deliver the review was within the budget from March, 2006.

A request was also made for an Elected Member to be nominated to sit on the Steering Group to oversee the project and its completion by May, 2006.

Resolved:- (1) That the consultant selection of Peg Alexander of Smile Consultancy of Leeds, be approved.

(2) That the payment of £8,000 for the contract from the I.C.I.B. budget be approved.

(3) That Councillor Burton be nominated to sit on the Steering Group to oversee this project.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion Delegated Powers Meeting
2.	Date:	27th February 2006
3.	Title:	Rural Strategy
4.	Programme Area:	Chief Executive's Department

5. Summary

In response to the Year Ahead Commitment (7) to commence work on a Rural Strategy, this report and the attached paper (appendix 1) outlines how the Council is currently addressing the 'rural agenda' and the main rural policy challenges.

The paper also puts forward key priorities that will need to be addressed when developing the Rural Strategy itself, in order to improve the economic, environmental and social well-being of areas of Rotherham that face rural issues.

6. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion Delegated Powers Meeting is asked to:

1. Discuss the report and position statement.
2. Agree to the development of a Rural Strategy based on the recommendations set out in section 7 of the position statement, to be delivered by end of May 2006.
3. Agree that all Programme Areas will need to be involved in developing the Rural Strategy, and that a steering group should be established, chaired by the relevant Cabinet Member.
4. Agree to receive a further report in April 2006 outlining progress, and presenting a draft Rural Strategy.

7. Proposals and Details

RMBC's Year Ahead Statement for 2005-06 set out a commitment to commence work on a Rural Strategy. The Strategy is to be completed by June 2006. A key milestone is to establish where RMBC's current policy and practice is in relation to the national and regional rural policy agenda and identified local needs. A Position Statement, outlining national policy developments, a review of RMBC's policy and practice, and the issues that are being considered in developing the Rural Strategy, is attached at appendix 1.

Both the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy highlight the part rural nature of the Borough, and contain a number of objectives that specifically address rural issues. Furthermore, all seven shared Priority Themes include broad issues that have a rural impact. The Achieving, Proud and Sustainable Development themes are particularly relevant to the rural agenda. Furthermore, the refreshed Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy also addresses deprivation in rural parts of the Borough.

In 2004, the Government published its own Rural Strategy, the overarching aim of which is to ensure that rural policy has sustainable development as an outcome, by integrating and balancing environmental, social and economic considerations at every stage. A range of programmes and initiatives have been rolled out across the English Regions to address identified priorities. For example, each Government Office for the Region is now required to put in place an agreed plan to address the needs of rural communities in its area. In the Yorkshire & the Humber region, the Government Office has produced a Rural Evidence Base to underpin the regional plan. In addition, all Government bodies are now required to 'rural proof' their policy and practice to ensure that the needs of rural communities are taken into account.

At the national level, increased emphasis is being placed on the need to address rural issues. For example, the CPA process will look at how local authorities address rural needs. Therefore, the Position Statement highlights areas where improvements can be made, including the need for rural performance measures, an agreed commonly accepted understanding of what is meant by Rural Rotherham, improved focus on economic development in rural areas, and the need to build 'rural proofing' into the policy development process.

The analysis of RMBC's approach to rural issues reveals a range of activity, including:

- steps being taken to ensure services are more readily available in rural areas
- strategic work to enhance and protect the Borough's rural environment and biodiversity
- action to promote tourism and create jobs in rural areas
- interventions to support rural transport

- developments to give rural communities a bigger say in the issues affecting their lives

In taking forward the development of the Rural Strategy it is recommended that the Council:

- establishes an agreed definition of what is meant by Rural Rotherham. This should be undertaken through consultation with relevant organisations and individuals. However, it is recommended that the 'Bradford Model' be used as the basis of the consultation (see appendix 2 of Position Statement)
- identifies the needs and concerns of people living in Rural Rotherham through engagement with rural communities, representative bodies and partner organisations
- establishes strong links to key trends, best practice and other opportunities in national policy development, as set out in the Position Statement
- sets out what the priorities are to address national policy developments and the needs and concerns of Rural Rotherham
- produces an action plan outlining how it will address and fund the priorities
- addresses the issue of Rural Service Standards for rural communities, with a view to developing a Rotherham Rural Service Standard
- addresses the issue of 'rural proofing', to ensure that the needs of Rural Rotherham are built into decision-making and service planning
- explores how rural deprivation and discrimination can be addressed through the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, area planning, neighbourhood charters and other strategies

This work will be led by the Chief Executives Department. However, it will be important to engage all Programme Areas, Parish Councils, Area Assemblies and other partners in the process. The timescale for completion of the Rural Strategy is June 2006, with consultation being carried out during April 2006.

8. Finance

The development of a Rural Strategy, with agreed rural priorities, will enable the Council to make more effective use of mainstream

expenditure and tackle the key rural issues in the Borough (see appendix 3 of the Position Statement). It will serve to influence:

- the Council's corporate budget planning process by identifying the agreed priorities and projects where RMBC financial support is sought
- future external funding regimes in the Borough
- the allocation of grant aid to voluntary and community sector organisations.
- targeting resources towards communities of interest and geographic communities
- the Local Area Agreement and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Although the Council has identified revitalising rural communities as an aim, without clear strategic priorities or mechanisms for measuring progress, it will be difficult for the Council to demonstrate its impact.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Community Strategy and Corporate Plan: Both the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy highlight the part rural nature of the Borough and contain a small number of objectives that specifically address rural issues. Furthermore, all seven shared Priority Themes currently include broad issues that have a rural impact. The Achieving, Proud and Sustainable Development themes are particularly relevant. The Rural Strategy will be aligned to the shared Priority Themes.

Other Policies and Strategies: Other key documents also address the rural agenda, notably the Regeneration Plan and the Cultural Strategy. The *Rotherham Deprivation Study* has stated that targeting disadvantage in rural areas is likely to involve a thematic approach, such as vulnerable older groups in rural areas.

Equalities Issues: In developing the Rural Strategy, the Council will explore how rural deprivation and discrimination can be addressed through the NRS and other strategies

Performance Indicators: The Position Statement highlights the need for performance indicators to measure progress on revitalising rural areas. The Rural Strategy will include performance indicators to measure the progress of each objective.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Background papers:

- *Rural White Paper – Our Countryside, the Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England*, DEFRA, November 2000
- *Lord Haskins' Rural Delivery Review: A report on the delivery of government policies in rural England*, October 2003
- *The Rural Strategy*, DEFRA, July 2004
- *A Rural Evidence Base for Yorkshire & the Humber*, Government Office for Yorkshire & the Humber, 2005
- *Rotherham Deprivation Study*, OCSI 2005

Consultation:

Once agreement has been reached to move forward with the development of the Rural Strategy, a programme of consultation will be developed to enable us to gauge the public's and partner's rural priorities.

Contact Names:

- Colin Bulger, Head of Policy & Partnership, Chief Executive's Department, extension 2737 colin.bulger@rotherham.gov.uk
- Andrew Fellows, Policy Officer, Chief Executive's Department, extension 2789 andrew.fellows@rotherham.gov.uk

RMBC Rural Position Statement

1. Introduction

This position paper outlines the key national and regional issues affecting rural policy development in Rotherham. It covers rural definition, looks at the profile of Rural Rotherham and examines how RMBC is addressing service provision, strategy development and involvement/inclusion in Rural Rotherham. In line with the Corporate Plan commitment, the paper sets out key issues that will need to be addressed when taking forward the development of a Rural Strategy.

The paper illustrates the complex nature of Rotherham. The Borough has strong urban and rural dimensions, and it is timely that this paper is being considered at the same time that work is being undertaken on producing a Town Centre Social and Environmental Well-Being Action Plan. It also follows and is aligned to the refresh of the Corporate Plan, Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

2. Rural Rotherham

Much of Rotherham could be said to be rural, comprising a complex mix of towns, villages interspersed with large areas of open countryside. However, defining exactly what is and isn't 'rural' in Rotherham and the UK more generally, has long proved problematic, with various models used by academics and government. By the late 1990s, there was concern within Government that the lack of a consistent definition was hindering policy development. A Government backed review highlighted significant weaknesses in existing definitions, and recommended a new model based on settlements.

Using this definition (see appendix 1), about 53% of the Borough is rural or semi-rural in nature, (comprising 24% Town & Fringe; 9% Village and 20% Hamlets and Isolated dwellings). However, this model doesn't provide an easy to understand definition, as it based on statistical units called 'Super Output Areas' that don't necessarily relate to identifiable local communities. A simpler definition has been developed by Bradford City Council, which classifies rural settlements as Rural Service Centres, Dispersed Settlements and Rural Villages. Details of how this model can be applied to Rotherham are included at appendix 2.

Another widely used definition is the total amount of land in agricultural production. This was illustrated in the Yorkshire and the Humber *Rural Evidence Base*, and again on this basis, just over 50% of the Borough is rural, covering 14,594 hectares (from a Borough total of 28,560 hectares). The majority of land is graded as 'very good quality agricultural land' (Grade 2) or 'good to moderate quality agricultural land' (Grade 3), capable of growing a wide range of arable and horticultural crops, although the dominant farm type is cereal.

The Borough's part rural nature has been recognised by national and regional organisations, such as Yorkshire Forward and Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Consequently, Rotherham benefits from rural funding programmes, such as agricultural elements of Objective 1 and rural transport programmes, as well as urban funding.

According to the *Yorkshire & Humber Rural Evidence Base*, around 10% of Rotherham's population live in rural areas. The *Rotherham Deprivation Study* shows (see table below) that 24,000 people live on the fringe of urban areas, and 3,000 in areas that are more isolated. The Census provides the most up to date and accurate estimate of the number of people employed in 'rural occupations', with a figure of around 800 [approximately 0.8% of people aged 16 to 74 in employment] employed in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing in 2001, spread across the Borough.

Affluence and quality of life are generally higher in Rural Rotherham, with people having a higher standard of health, a lower fear of crime and better educational qualifications than their urban counterparts. Unlike some parts of the country, housing affordability is not a major problem in Rural Rotherham. In addition, the quality of life in Rural Rotherham continues to attract migrants, as evidenced by the move of population from the town centre to the more rural parts of the Borough (between 1991 and 2001 there was a 1.5% population increase rural/semi-rural areas, compared to a 2.6% fall in urban/sub-urban areas over the same period). Overall, the index of multiple deprivation 2004 shows the rural parts of the Borough are, in general, less deprived.

However, there are pockets of acute deprivation in Rural Rotherham. For example, three rural Super Output Areas (Treeton West, Thurcroft South-West and Thurcroft Central & Brampton) come in the top 20% most deprived nationally, while Anston & Woodsetts and Wales were designated as priority wards in the rural communities element of the South Yorkshire Objective 1 programme and the former Rural Priority Area Programme. Furthermore, deprivation can be found in the midst of affluence, within a single household in a rural village, and can, therefore, be more isolating. The fact that there is a significant level of deprivation across the Rural Rotherham, can be illustrated in the table below (classifications are based on the Government's new rural definition).

Table 1: Indicators of disadvantage by rural-urban classification

Classification	Population	Income Deprived		Employment Deprived		Limiting Long Term Illness		No Qualifications	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Urban > 10K Less Sparse	220,959	40,566	18.4	19,069	14.9	49,813	22.5	59,044	42.2
Town & Fringe – Less Sparse	24,320	2,809	11.5	1,593	11.1	5,168	21.3	5,849	37.7
Village, Hamlet & Isolated Dwelling	2,896	203	7.0	169	9.6	629	21.7	693	36.4

Source: OCSI 2005 (from ODPM 2004, Census 2001, ONS 2005)

Whilst it is clear that higher levels of deprivation are found in urban areas, Rural Rotherham has significant deprivation, with levels of 'limiting long-term illness' and 'no qualifications' only just below those in the more urban areas. Levels of employment deprivation are also around two-thirds of that found in urban areas.

Deprivation can be masked by apparent affluence in Rural Rotherham. For example, 85% of households in Anston & Woodsetts own a car, but this means that **15%** do not, and have to rely on public transport to access services/jobs. Furthermore, many services are some distance away from Rural Rotherham. This is illustrated in the table below, which shows access to commonly used local services, in comparison to our South Yorkshire neighbours:

Table 2 access to service - % of households under 2km from local services

	Cash machine	Bank	Job Centre	Library	Petrol Station	Post Office	Secondary School	Super market
Barnsley	74.5	46.9	18.6	56.2	76.4	96.6	41.5	78.2
Doncaster	88.4	58.8	3.3	55.1	75.6	90.5	26.3	46.8
Rotherham	82.9	55.1	3.4	52.9	85.3	97.1	37.4	63.0
Sheffield	74.0	13.4	8.9	11.9	16.6	90.6	60.9	16.1

Source: Yorkshire & Humber Rural Evidence Base, 2005

3. National and regional policy context

National context: Since 2000, rural issues have moved up the agenda of the Government. The publication of the Rural White Paper (RWP) in 2000 can be seen as the beginning of the change agenda. However, the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001, brought the rural agenda into sharper focus, and provided a major catalyst for change, including the creation of DEFRA.

Rural White Paper – in November 2000, the Government published the RWP, *Our Countryside: the future – a fair deal for rural England*. The RWP identified key challenges affecting rural areas including:

- falling agricultural incomes
- a change in the nature of rural employment
- lower than average rate of business start-ups
- the loss of rural services, including shops, post offices, banks and pubs
- limited access to public transport
- increased isolation
- a change in the character of rural communities, resulting from the in-migration of older and wealthier people
- rising house prices and limited social housing
- a dilution of countryside character and a decline in wildlife and biodiversity

The RWP set out a range of measures aimed at addressing these challenges. They included safeguarding rural services, ensuring affordable homes, supporting rural transport, regenerating market towns, supporting rural businesses, revising planning guidance to promote biodiversity, and introducing the 'quality parish council' initiative and 'rural proofing'. Local authorities were identified as having a lead role to play in delivering/supporting the delivery of this agenda. Ultimately, the policy vision set out in the RWP was one of sustainable rural communities:

- a **living** countryside, with thriving rural communities and access to high quality public services
- a **working** countryside, with a diverse economy giving high and stable levels of employment
- a **protected** countryside in which the environment is sustained and enhanced, and which all can enjoy
- a **vibrant** countryside which can shape its own future and with its voice heard by Government at all levels

Lord Haskin's Rural Delivery Review – in 2003, Lord Haskins delivered the Rural Delivery Review. In the face of criticism about its performance, the Haskins' Review had been established by the Government to make recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness of rural policy and service delivery.

Haskins recommendations centred on the separation of policy development from service delivery, bringing delivery closer to customers by devolving power to regional and local organisations, reducing the number of organisations involved in rural service delivery, improving the coordination of services, and improving customer focus. Of particular relevance to local authorities are the recommendations that:

- Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) should play a key role in the devolution of the Government's rural economic and social agenda
- local authorities and local partnerships should have the main responsibility for delivery of schemes and services to rural communities ... and should be given the necessary flexibility to address local needs

Rural Strategy 2004 – through the Rural Strategy, the Government accepted all 33 of Haskins' recommendations. It acknowledged that there was a need for a streamlined approach to rural delivery, based on targeting need, partnership working and putting customers first. The Rural Strategy was also set within the framework of the Government's public service reform agenda, which focuses on devolution to the front line, flexible service delivery arrangements and expanding choice.

Specific actions (many of which have been progressed) from the Rural Strategy included:

- joint work between DEFRA, the DTI, the Small Business Service, RDAs and Business Links to improve the business advisory service in rural areas
- a review of planning policy on 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'
- devolving decision-making on economic and social regeneration policies to RDAs, to ensure that the needs of rural people are addressed through regional-level strategies
- establishing regional Rural Priority Boards, which includes local government representation, to improve the co-ordination of rural delivery and ensure strong rural proofing of policies and services
- exploring the role of Local Area Agreements in delivering rural priorities
- extending the principles of rural proofing into the inspection process
- delivering the Quality Parish initiative
- rationalising funding programmes, from around 100 rural funding schemes to three major funding programmes linked to DEFRA's strategic priorities

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill – the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Bill was published in May 2005, and is intended to implement key elements of the Rural Strategy 2004.

A key outcome of the Bill will be the creation of Natural England (the HQ of which will be in Sheffield), which unites in a single organisation the responsibility for enhancing biodiversity and landscape, with promoting access and recreation.

NERC will also establish the Commission for Rural Communities, as part of the Countryside Agency, to act as an independent advocate, adviser and watchdog for rural people. Its role will be to ensure that policy makes a difference to people living in rural areas. A particular focus will be on tackling social exclusion.

Other initiatives – linked to the Government's rural policy agenda are a number of national programmes and initiatives:

Rural proofing – the Government made a commitment in the RWP to ensure that policy takes account of rural circumstances and needs. At a national level, rural proofing is a mandatory part of the policy process. If carried out effectively, policy makers should systematically:

- consider whether the policy is likely to have a different impact in rural areas, because of particular rural circumstances or needs
- make proper assessment of those impacts
- adjust policy, where appropriate, so solutions to meet rural needs

Government Departments and Government Offices for the Regions (GOFRs) are required to report annually on how their policies have been rural proofed.

Rural Service Standard – first published as part of the RWP, the Standard links to the commitment to ‘rural proofing’. It gives people in rural areas an understanding of what services that they can expect. Reviewed in 2004 to ensure that it tied in with the Rural Strategy and the Government’s public service reform agenda, the Standard now has 11 core criteria, covering issues as diverse as education, support for older people, access to ICT, rural post offices, healthcare and public transport (see appendix 4 for full details).

Rural Delivery Pathfinders – eight pathfinders (one per region outside London [the Humber sub region, excluding Hull, has been chosen in the Yorkshire & the Humber region]) have been selected to develop innovative ways to devolve delivery closer to rural communities. The role of the Pathfinders is to test practical ways to improve local delivery, tackle disadvantage, help underperforming economies and ensure that the natural heritage is protected – all within locally agreed outcomes.

Quality Parish Councils – a central proposal of the RWP, the Quality Parish Council scheme was launched in March 2003. Through the scheme, all parish councils are encouraged to reach the standards of the best. Achieving quality parish status demonstrates that the council has met certain minimum standards expected from an effective, representative and active parish council. RMBC is working with parish and local councils in Rotherham to develop a local parish charter, which will play a central role in achieving Quality Parish status.

Common Agricultural Policy: From April 2005, the reform of CAP began to have an impact on the farming community and the rural environment. According to DEFRA, the reforms simplify the application arrangements for subsidy payments by replacing ten payment schemes with one new single payment. Farmers will have greater freedom to farm to the demands of the market, as subsidies will be decoupled from production. At the same time, environmentally friendly farming practices will be better acknowledged and rewarded.

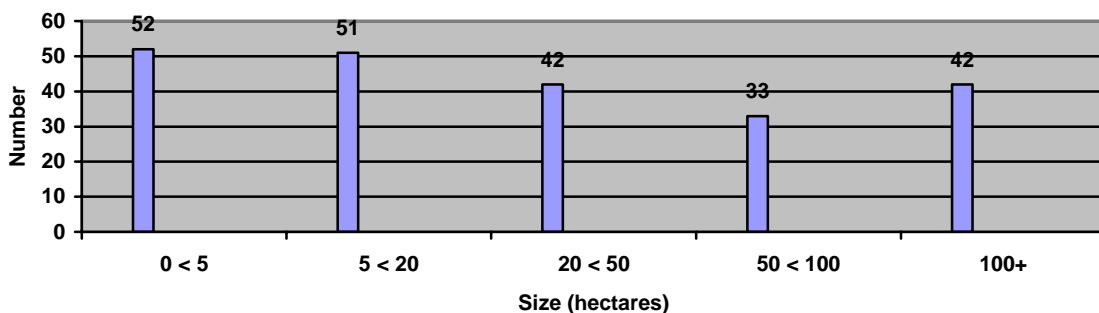
A study undertaken by the Central Science Laboratory (CSL) on behalf of Yorkshire Futures has investigated the likely socio-economic impacts of CAP reform on the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors in Yorkshire and the Humber region. The study found:

- there are likely to be reductions in land use, the number of farm holdings and employment (both direct and ancillary) in key sectors, including cereal and dairy

- small farms will generally benefit more from CAP reform than medium sized and large farms, which are likely to reduce in their size and/or production level (in the cereal sector, less productive and, therefore, less profit-generating land is likely to be taken out of production)
- considerable environmental impact is expected, with an improvement in soil nutrient, a decline in soil erosion and a decline in water pollution
- considerable declines are expected in the beef and sheep sectors

Although the study looks at the region as a whole, the impact of the CAP reforms is likely to be felt locally, as Rotherham has a mixture of farm sizes, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 3 Farm Size (Agricultural and Horticultural Census data June 1999)



The findings from CSL's research suggest that Rotherham's small-to-medium sized farms (65% are less than 50 hectares) will benefit from the CAP reforms. However, 35% are medium-to-large units, and the dominant farm type in Rotherham is cereal. Both of these categories are expected to see a decline in production and employment.

Regional Context: With the publication of the Rural Strategy, the Government placed regional structures at the heart of the rural agenda. Haskins recommended separation of policy from delivery, while the Government's public service reform agenda focuses on devolution. In the Yorkshire & the Humber region, these two influencing factors have manifested in Yorkshire Forward and the Government Office for Yorkshire & the Humber (GOYH) being given an enhanced rural delivery role.

Role of Yorkshire Forward – in line with the public service reform agenda, responsibility for delivery of rural economic and social regeneration has been devolved to RDAs, and Yorkshire Forward now leads on achieving the rural objectives of the 10-year Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

The RES focuses on 'creating a broader and stronger economic base for rural communities': ensuring that rural communities are not only attractive places to live and visit, but that they attract jobs and investment. Market towns are a key focus of the RES, while delivering targeted business support and tackling rural access and exclusion are also identified as priorities.

In addressing the development of market towns, Yorkshire Forward has established the Renaissance Market Town initiative. Launched in January 2003, RMT is a ten year plan to support sustainable small towns by ensuring that they are places where people want and are able to live, work, invest and visit. The objective of RMT is to generate sustainable development through the development of an ambitious town

vision that is translated into an action plans with prioritised projects. RMBC is engaged in on-going discussions with Yorkshire Forward over the potential for a RMT in the Borough.

Role of GOYH – the key role of GOYH is to lead on modernising rural delivery, by developing and implementing a Regional Rural Delivery Framework – the *Yorkshire & the Humber Rural Framework* (YHRF). The purpose of the YHRF is to achieve better results on the ground, improve access to funds and to help rural areas fulfil their full potential.

GOYH has established a steering group to oversee and support the development of the Framework, and the first version is expected by March 2006. It will take the form of an 'action plan', comprising of a series of key interventions and initiatives.

Significant progress has already been made on developing the YHRF. In particular, the *Y&H Rural Evidence Base* was launched earlier this year, to help shape the understanding of rural priorities. Alongside this, GOYH published the Y&H Rural Priority Themes. These were developed from existing plans and strategies, the *Rural Evidence Base* and widespread regional consultation, which RMBC took part in. The priorities have been categorised using the Government's priorities from the Rural Strategy 2004:

Economic and Social Regeneration:

- **Rural Business Development** – encourage enterprise and innovation within new and established rural businesses, and to provide a co-ordinated support infrastructure that helps them adapt to change
- **Employment, Education and Skills Training** – develop and encourage participation in quality learning opportunities, and to support rural businesses in workforce development
- **Market Towns** – support market towns as hubs for the rural economy and as service centres, providing locally based employment opportunities
- **Sustainable Tourism** – promote rural Yorkshire and The Humber as a high quality 'sustainable tourism' destination

Social Justice for All:

- **Access to Services** – ensure that rural communities are characterised by high levels of inclusion and equitable access to quality services recognising demographic trends
- **Rural Transport** – understand and addresses transport needs in rural areas through private, public and voluntary sector provision, to promote rural regeneration and tackle social exclusion
- **Rural Housing** – understand and address housing need in rural areas, recognising and tackling issues of fuel poverty
- **Rural Communities** – promote social cohesion, encourage and support the engagement of rural communities and the active roles that they can play

Enhancing the Value of our Countryside:

- **The Natural Environment** – conserve and enhance the region's rural biodiversity, its distinctiveness, and the quality of its natural and built environment
- **Promote a 'functional landscape'** – where development draws on and sustains the natural, cultural and built heritage of the region's rural areas

Attention has now moved on to examining the delivery of the priorities. Task and Finish groups have been established in each sub-region for each priority theme. Their role is to look at activity already underway, how it could be improved and what the barriers are.

In addition to developing the YHRF, GOYH has responsibility for ensuring effective rural proofing of most Government policies, strategies and initiatives in the Region. It also has an ongoing role in helping to build capacity in the voluntary and community sector, and from April 2005, took on the Countryside Agency's role of working with the voluntary and community sector in rural areas, particularly on addressing rural social exclusion.

South Yorkshire Sub-Region – the South Yorkshire Partnership (SYP) provides the focus for sub-regional activity by bringing together the South Yorkshire partners, along with representatives of GOYH and Yorkshire Forward. However, RMBC is currently engaged in exploratory discussions with other key partners across the sub-region, under the auspices of the Yorkshire Rural Community Council, to look into setting up a South Yorkshire Rural Partnership. This body, once established, will act as the focus for rural partnership working across South Yorkshire.

The South Yorkshire Sub-Regional Investment Plan (SRIP) is a key output of the SYP, and provides the strategic framework for economic development across the county. Theme 5 of the SRIP 2004/09 focuses on the “Built and Green Sustainable Environments (Urban and Rural) Meeting Expectations of a Modern High Value Economy and Providing Distinctive Quality of Life”. Through this theme, partners are looking at how to maximise ‘green’ assets, whilst enhancing and conserving the environment, in order to capitalise on investment and develop a joined-up response to the priorities identified within the RES. In particular, the focus is on how South Yorkshire’s environmental assets can be integrated more fully into the overall economic strategy. Actions proposed, include developing waterway corridors to promote rural renaissance.

4. RMBC’s approach to rural issues

The Council is addressing the rural agenda from three main directions:

- strategic support for rural communities, which includes a focus on sustainable development
- provision of services
- community engagement/inclusion

Strategy: The touchstones of policy development in Rotherham are the Community Strategy and RMBC’s Corporate Plan. These core documents have been aligned to ensure that partners are working towards a shared vision based on seven Priority Themes – Achieving, Alive, Fairness, Learning, Proud, Safe and Sustainable Development.

Consultation on the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy highlighted a number of the issues relevant to Rural Rotherham. For example:

- supporting the rural economy
- provision of public transport to employment areas
- recreational facilities for young people out of school hours
- support for localism in decision-making
- the need for environmental improvements

The Community Strategy provides a Borough-wide vision, and identifies the strategic priorities of partners. The Community Strategy highlights the part rural nature of the Borough, and highlights issues such as transport connectivity between rural communities and new employment opportunities. Priorities with a rural dimension include:

Achieving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a strategy to ensure local centres complement the offer in the town centre • stimulate enterprise, creativity and innovation across the economy, in both urban and rural communities, to create new and sustainable opportunities for wealth creation • promote attractive, viable alternatives to the private car, and develop a wide choice of integrated transport options for the whole borough, including rural areas • develop a mixed rural economy to provide specialist shops, markets and events and ensure complementary local centres
Alive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create and sustain opportunities for individuals to be involved in a wide range of high quality physical and sporting activities
Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop effective responses to meet the needs of Rotherham’s increasingly diverse and ageing community, including exploring the shape of future services • ensure that all people in Rotherham fully benefit from the social, economic and environmental progress made through the opportunities created and available
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take advantage of new technology and culture and leisure activities to maximise learning and development
Proud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broaden and widen engagement, and eliminate barriers to participation in civic, voluntary and community life and decision making • develop local democracy at a neighbourhood level, devolving powers and resources and increasing opportunities for engagement • support borough-wide initiatives that promote strong and cohesive communities, and encourage dialogue and understanding • develop stronger and more positive relationships between people from different backgrounds, breaking down barriers and building mutual trust • celebrate cultural diversity, and encourage and support individuals and communities to share their different cultures and experiences • provide opportunities for people and communities to celebrate their achievements and progress
Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • harness resources to enhance the environment and general appearance of neighbourhoods in response to this being a top priority of local people • promote a “Neighbourhood Management” approach to service delivery, community participation and strategic development
Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain social progress that recognises the needs of everyone, reducing inequalities within the borough, and between the borough and rest of the country • continue to protect and enhance environmental assets and habitats, reducing levels of air pollution and promoting biodiversity

As with the Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan highlights the part rural nature of the Borough and contains a small number of objectives that specifically address rural issues. However, there are many objectives within the Plan that, although having a wider community impact, will need to be addressed in ‘rural proofed’ ways in rural areas. These are set out in the table below:

Theme	Priority	Objective
Learning	Provide life-long learning opportunities for all Rotherham people	Increase participation in lifelong learning opportunities for adults primarily targeting those with qualifications below level 2
	Parents have access to family learning opportunities at key points throughout their child's school years.	
	Maximise children and young people's potential	Providing innovative out-of-hours learning opportunities for young people aged 5-18
Achieving	Support sustainable transport	In accordance with the South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan, deliver an integrated transport system which is accessible, sustainable and promotes economic, social and environmental well being
	Revitalise rural areas	Improve economic, social and environmental wellbeing in rural Rotherham
		Establish a network of customer service centres across the borough by appropriate utilisation of new and existing facilities
Alive	People feel good	Increase the number of adult residents and young people participating in cultural activity who feel it improves their quality of life
	Celebrate culture	Further develop the use of country parks, urban parks and other leisure and cultural offerings
Safe	Ensure clean, green and well-maintained neighbourhoods	Increase the percentage of residents who are satisfied that 'their area' is kept clear of vandalism, graffiti and rubbish
	Ensure communities are free from anti-social behaviour, crime, drugs misuse and fear of crime	Reduce through preventative and enforcement measures the incidence of anti-social behaviour
		Reduce the perception of fear of crime within neighbourhoods
Proud	Promote active citizenship and democracy	Support parish and town councils in achieving quality status
	Develop strong sustainable communities	Ensure that each Community Partnership has the capacity to deliver activity beneficial to the communities
	Ensure involvement in local decision -making	Ensure that Rotherham people are able to influence decisions and feel confident their views will be listened to and where possible acted upon
Sustainable Development	Maintain social progress that recognises the needs of everyone	Ensure that all fully benefit from the social, economic and environmental progress
	Ensure equal opportunities	Implement the provisions of the Rotherham Biodiversity Action Plan and integrate into relevant council plans
Fairness	Encourage the development of an inclusive and cohesive borough	

Although the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy are *the* core documents, there are a number of other key strategies and plans that address rural issues.

Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy – it aims to tackle the inequalities that exist between the most deprived communities and the rest of Rotherham. By focusing on deprived neighbourhoods, the NRS aims to address root causes and use resources in the most effective way to target service delivery. The NRS also identifies communities of interest, who live in all parts of the Borough. The *Rotherham Deprivation Study* has stated that targeting disadvantage in rural areas is likely to involve a thematic approach, such as vulnerable older groups in rural areas. The NRS is currently being refreshed.

Regeneration Plan 2004/07 – demonstrates how RMBC will contribute to the regeneration of the Borough. It describes ‘developing support for the rural economy’ as a key action.

Local Development Framework – replacing the Unitary Development Plan, the LDF will address strategic land use and sustainable development issues in all parts of the Borough, including rural areas.

Future Perfect – Rotherham’s Cultural Strategy describes culture as a tool for positive change, including rural renaissance. The strategy, which is currently being updated to align with the Community Strategy, highlights how rural areas contribute to social objectives, including job creation through tourism. It identifies a number of key economic, social and environmental issues that affect rural areas, including the development of tourism infrastructure and maintenance of the Borough’s rural environment. It also details the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with Rotherham’s countryside (see appendix 3).

Corporate Housing Strategy 2003/6 – identifies people living in rural areas as a priority group for improved tenant participation.

As indicated above, revitalising rural areas has been highlighted as a priority in the Corporate Plan. In taking this forward, Council officers are working to protect, conserve and enhance the countryside and the viability of rural areas through the promotion of sustainability. Current priorities include:

- coordinating the development and implementation of a Sustainability Appraisal for the Rotherham Local Development Framework
- delivering Rotherham’s Biodiversity Action Plan, and undertaking biodiversity mapping to enable natural habitats to be identified and monitored
- establishing a Landscape Character Assessment as a tool to guide the determination of planning applications, and inform other strategies
- developing a South Rotherham Rural Economy Eco-Tourism Study, with a view to approaching Objective 1 and Yorkshire Forward for funding. The study would explore the area’s potential to deliver a sustainable tourism product that takes advantage of the potential opportunities, in a way that recognises the sensitivity of the heritage landscape in South Rotherham
- working with the farming community to promote agri-environment schemes and countryside stewardship
- ongoing support for South Yorkshire Community Forest

However, there is only a limited amount of specific activity taking place to support economic development in rural parts of the Borough. The Council's focus, in line with the findings from consultation, is on business development in urban areas and the two strategic economic zones (the Dearne Valley and MI Technology Corridor). The draft Employment and Workforce Development Plan regards employment inactivity as essentially an urban issue, particularly in the neighbourhood renewal areas. In addition, there are only a limited number of initiatives which focus on social and cultural developments in rural parts of the Borough.

However, some projects have an impact on the rural economy. For instance, developments at Dinnington should benefit the surrounding rural areas of south Rotherham. In addition, a number of projects focus on the potential of tourism in south Rotherham. These include:

- restoration of the Chesterfield Canal
- the tourism strategy has promoted rural tourism in south Rotherham and other rural areas of the Borough. For example, the Rotherham Walking Festival and the Churches Tourism Initiative based around the heritage of village churches in Harthill, Aston, Thorpe Salvin and Todwick
- the Yorkshire Entertainment Sensation (YES) project at Rother Valley Country Park could generate 2,700 jobs. Although classed as urban fringe, it is of an altogether different scale of magnitude to the type of project that normally takes place in the countryside. Subject to planning permission, in a green belt location, it is being actively supported by RMBC for the perceived economic benefits that it would bring to the Borough

Access to transport can be a particular problem for rural communities, and the Council works closely with South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE) to develop public transport links in rural areas. The Council is an active supporter of Rotherham Community Transport, which provides vital links to people in rural Rotherham, and is involved in the South Rotherham Rural Transport Group. A significant success for RMBC and SYPTTE is the development of the Quality Bus Corridor between Worksop and Rotherham and the new Dinnington Interchange.

Although Programme Areas work well together on particular projects, there isn't a formal Council-wide level forum for developing the Borough's approach to revitalising rural areas. In addition, officers in Programme Areas have stated that they are unclear how rural issues feed into the Local Strategic Partnership.

Services: Programme Areas provide a range of universal and customer specific services that are available equitably in all parts of the Borough. For example, domestic waste is collected from all households across the Borough to the same standard, while people assessed as 'in need' of domiciliary care receive an appropriate level of care regardless of where they live.

However, accessing many Council services, such as those available from council offices and leisure facilities, can be problematic for people living in Rural Rotherham, particularly those who rely on public transport. This group includes people who are disadvantaged through disability, low income and family circumstances. The Council has taken/is taking steps to improve access to services. Examples include:

- the provision of peripatetic services, such as mobile libraries
- establishing a network of customer service centres across the Borough through the use of new and existing facilities
- ensuring a wider range of services available through ICT

However, the issue of access can be compounded for people in the rural north, east and south of the Borough who may personally relate more closely (and have easier public transport access) to service centres in neighbouring local authorities. This is especially apparent in the south of the Borough, from where people are unlikely to regularly visit Rotherham Town Centre. This is a problem for the Council, as perceived isolation from services and the urban core can lead to disconnection with the democratic process and create problems of community cohesion. Findings from *Rotherham Reachout* highlight that many people feel that the Council and its partners marginalise the needs and priorities of Rural Rotherham and overstate those of urban Rotherham.

Community engagement, social inclusion and equalities: The Council works closely with others, including our partners in the voluntary and community sector, to support community engagement, social inclusion and equalities. The refreshed NRS, and the emerging Corporate Community Involvement & Consultation Framework and the Social Inclusion Strategy underpin the Council's approach, and will need to address engagement, inclusion and equalities in rural areas.

There is, however, significant engagement/inclusion activity already taking place in Rotherham's rural communities. For example, involvement in the decision-making process is being encouraged through Area Assemblies, Community Planning and Parish Planning process.

The seven Area Assemblies operate across the Borough, with those in the north and south taking in significant rural areas. Twenty of the Borough's forty community-planning areas have developed community plans. Both of these mechanisms give local people an opportunity to influence priorities in their area.

In addition, Rotherham has a network of 29 Parish and Town councils (most of which cover rural areas). The councils vary greatly in size and resource, but all deliver local services. In particular, the majority operate or financially assist village/community halls and green spaces, which support a wide range of cultural activity, and make a significant contribution to strong, sustainable and cohesive communities.

The Government believes that Parish and Town Councils can provide strong local leadership, and should work in partnership with principal authorities to improve the quality and range of services available. In 2005, a conference between RMBC and all Parish and Town Councils in Rotherham looked at how to improve joint working. Twenty-four Parish and Town Councils confirmed their commitment to developing a joint Parish Charter, and it was agreed that the Yorkshire Local Councils Association would arrange a working group from the Parish and Town Councils to work with RMBC. It is envisaged that the Charter will:

- set out a basic statement of mutual rights and responsibilities
- promote and embed joined-up working between the two tiers that will underpin public confidence in local democracy

- provide a framework for service devolution and financial arrangements

This work is ongoing, and alongside it, RMBC is also supporting work on the Quality Parish Council initiative.

RMBC has a strong commitment to equalities, with the Corporate Equality Strategy and Action Plan (CESAP) setting out the broad framework that the Council uses to address equality, diversity and community cohesion. In particular, it sets out what the Council will do in its role as a community leader and service provider.

Although the CESAP identifies communities of interest who face disadvantage, it does not directly refer to discrimination and disadvantage in rural communities. This is important, because nationally, for example, there is evidence that Black and Minority Ethnic people living in rural areas face high levels of racism, but because of small BME populations, have limited access to support networks. For example, the Pakistani population in rural parts of Rotherham is 0.1%, compared to a Borough average of 1.9% and 17.2% in the inner area. In Rotherham, we have in place a Race Equality Scheme that aims to ensure that the Council meets its duty to promote race equality. It is important that this is addressed in all parts of the Borough.

Furthermore, other communities of interest can face disadvantage and discrimination in rural areas due to isolation, and difficulties accessing services.

5. How is Rotherham performing?

The straightforward answer is that we do not know, as we do not undertake rural proofing, and have no specific rural performance measures in place. At the same time, increased emphasis is being placed on the need to address rural issues. For example, the CPA process will look at how local authorities address rural needs. In addition, support from external funding will be limited in the absence of clear rural priorities. It is important, therefore, that we put in place a strategy to address the needs of Rural Rotherham, and ensure the effectiveness of policies across the Borough.

However, as indicated in the section above, Rotherham has made good progress on addressing the needs of its rural communities:

- key strategy documents highlight rural issues, in particular the Corporate Plan includes 'revitalising rural areas' as a priority
- steps are being taken to ensure services are more readily available in rural areas
- strategic work is being undertaken to enhance and protect the Borough's rural environment, promote tourism and create jobs in rural areas
- developments are taking place to give rural communities a bigger say in issues affecting their lives
- Programme Areas work in a joined-up way on key strategic issues affecting rural areas
- transport access is beginning to be addressed
- the Council works well with our partners to improve the quality of life in rural communities

- work is progressing on the Renaissance Market Town initiative

These actions need to be brought together in the Rural Strategy. The Strategy also needs to address issues where there is scope for improvement. For example:

- there needs to be a commonly accepted understanding of what we mean by Rural Rotherham across the Council
- 'rural proofing' needs to be built into the policy development process, ensuring that rural concerns are taken into account
- the Council has an objective of 'improving the economic, social and environmental well-being in rural Rotherham', but there are currently limited specific performance measures in place to monitor progress
- economic development in rural areas needs to be examined
- there is a need to develop a borough-wide 'forum' which focuses on rural areas
- greater clarity is required on how rural issues feed into the Local Strategic Partnership
- social exclusion and discrimination in rural areas needs to be targeted

6. Conclusion – the way forward

The Year Ahead Statement has identified the development of a Rural Strategy as a key commitment. In taking this work forward, it is recommended that a group, chaired by the lead Cabinet Member, be established to steer the development of the Strategy. The Strategy itself will need to:

- establish an agreed definition of what is meant by Rural Rotherham to ensure a consistent understanding across RMBC
- identify the needs and concerns of people living in Rural Rotherham through an effective consultation and community involvement plan
- identify key trends, best practice (in particular the lessons from Rural Pathfinders) and opportunities in national policy development
- set out what the Council's priorities are to address national policy developments and the needs and concerns of Rural Rotherham
- contain an action plan outlining how the Council will address and fund the priorities
- address the issue of Rural Service Standards for rural communities, with a view to developing a Rotherham Rural Service Standard
- address the issue of rural proofing, to ensure that the needs of Rural Rotherham are built into decision-making and service planning
- explore how rural deprivation and discrimination can be addressed through the NRS and other strategies

Key issues that will need to be considered include:

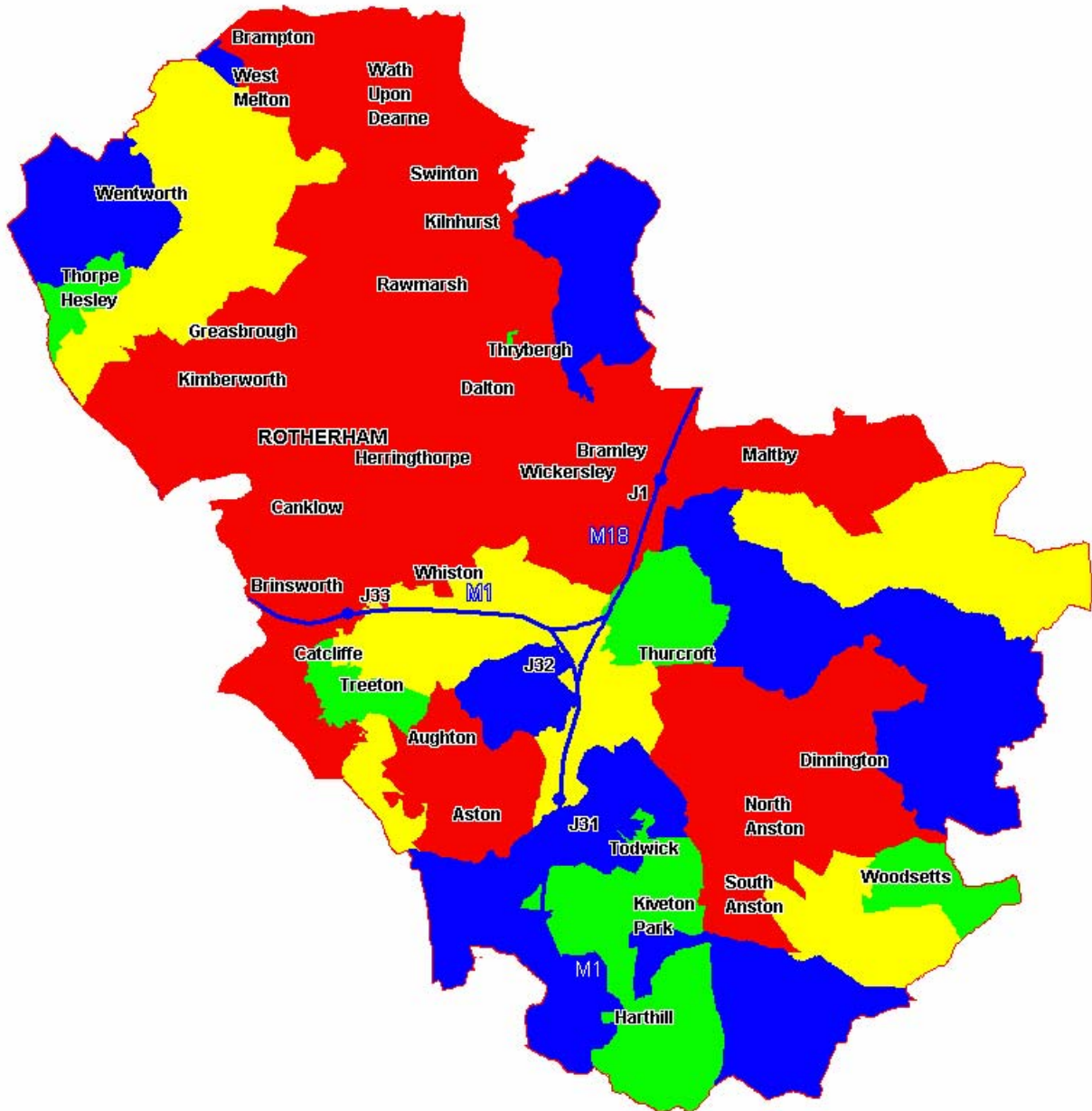
- **Linking the Rural Strategy with other strategies.** In particular, ensuring alignment with the Community Strategy. Other key strategies include the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Social Inclusion Framework, the Regeneration Plan and the Sub-Regional Investment Plan
- **Ensuring an effective consultation and community involvement plan,** drawing on Parish Plans and Community Plans and exploring the need for a rural forum

- **Establishing an agreed definition for Rural Rotherham**, based on the Bradford model

Alongside the development of the Strategy, the Council should continue its work to support rural communities and improve customer access. In particular, the Council should:

- build on its customer service achievements, and focus on how service delivery can be improved for people living in rural areas
- explore how people living on the boundaries of the Borough can access Rotherham services through neighbouring local authorities
- embed rural proofing into the policy-making process to ensure that policy and practice takes into account the needs of rural communities
- further explore the role of peripatetic services and ICT access
- continue to work in partnership with other service providers to explore issues such as co-location

RURAL AND URBAN AREA CLASSIFICATION 2004



Rural and Urban Classification 2004 at Census Output Area Level

Yellow	Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings - Less Sparse	(12)
Green	Town & Fringe - Less Sparse	(72)
Red	Urban >10K - Less Sparse	(725)
Blue	Village - Less Sparse	(21)

Rural Rotherham

Rural Villages

Barrow
 Brampton Common
 Brampton en le Morthen
 Brookhouse
 Carr
 Dalton Magna
 Firbeck
 Gildingwells
 Guilthwaite
 Hardwick
 Harley
 Harthill
 Hooper
 Hood Hill
 Hooten Levitt
 Hooten Roberts
 Laughton Common
 Laughton en le Morthen
 Letwell
 Morthen
 Nether Haugh
 Ravenfield
 Scholes
 Slade Hooton
 Spittal Houses
 Springvale
 Stone

Thorpe Salvin
 Todwick
 Treeton
 Ulley
 Upper Whiston
 Wentworth
 Woodall
 Woodsetts

Dispersed Settlements

Aston (including Aughton and Swallownest)
 Greasbrough
 Thorpe Hesley
 Thrybergh
 Thurcroft
 Wales/Kiveton Park

Rural Service Centres

Maltby
 Dinnington (including North Anston/South Anston
 and Throapham)

Urban Areas - Dearne Valley

Dearne Valley: Swinton / Kilnhurst, Wath Upon
 Dearne, Brampton
 Rotherham core: includes Rawmarsh, Bramley,

Rural Service Centre:

Population of 10,000 or above, surrounded on at least three sides by open countryside.
 Provides the following services to other settlements:

- Shopping
- Education – children and adult
- Banking, finance and other professional services
- Leisure services and socialising opportunities
- Emergency services
- Health services

Acts as a public transport hub providing access to other rural and urban communities.

Dispersed settlement:

Historically were able to operate independently of other communities
 Population of less than 10,000, but greater than 3,500
 Surrounded on at least three sides by open countryside

Rural village:

Population on less than 3,500. Few or no facilities.
 Surrounded by open countryside

National Rural Service Standards 2004

1. By 2006, all rural LEAs to have at least one full-service-type Extended School offering a core of services, including health and social care, childcare, study support, parenting support, adult education and family learning, ICT access and arts and sports facilities.
2. By March 2006, Sure Start children's centres will be established in the 20% most disadvantaged areas, providing good quality childcare with early education, family and health services and training employment advice, and offering services to at least 650,000 local children and their families.
3. Presumption against closure of rural schools: published guidance requires that the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities is taken into account in considering closure proposals.
4. Improve the quality of life and independence of vulnerable older people by supporting them to live in their own homes, where possible, by:
 - increasing the proportion of older people being supported to live in their own homes by 1% annually in 2007 and 2008; and
 - increasing by 2008 the proportion of those supported intensively to live at home to 34% of those being supported at home or in residential care.
5. All schools will have broadband connectivity by 2006. By the end of March 2004, the proportion stood at 60%.
6. Formal requirement on the Post Office to maintain the rural network of post offices and to prevent any avoidable closures of rural post offices until 2006.
7. By December 2005, all hospital appointments will be booked for the convenience of the patient, making it easier for patients and their GPs to choose the hospital and consultant that best meets their needs. By December 2005, patients will be able to choose from at least four to five different healthcare providers for planned hospital care, paid for by the NHS.
8. All patients, including those living in rural areas, can expect to be offered an appointment to see a primary care professional within 24 hours or a GP within 48 hours.
9. To ensure that everyone who wants it has access to the internet by 2005.
10. Emergency services:
 - The NHS ambulance service is required to respond to immediately life-threatening calls within eight minutes in 75% of cases, irrespective of location. Other emergency calls that are not immediately life-threatening should be responded to 95% of the time within 14 minutes in urban areas and 19 minutes in rural areas.)
 - With the introduction of Integrated Risk Management plans, each fire authority is now responsible for determining: the number of appliances sent to an incident; and target times for attendance. This applies to the whole range of calls to which the Fire and Rescue Service is called and is not limited to their response to fires.
 - Each police force sets response times locally and has targets that they deem appropriate to reflect the circumstances of their area.
11. We have set a target for the proportion of the rural population living within about 10 minutes' walk of an hourly or better bus service to increase from 37% to 50% by 2010, with an intermediate milestone of 42% by 2004.

SWOT Analysis of Rotherham's Countryside – taken from *Future Perfect, Rotherham's Culture Strategy*

Strengths:

- Strong sense of identity & community
- Designated country parks & nature reserves
- Established access to countryside & woodland resources
- Strong delivery partnerships already in place
- Strong voluntary sector
- Good location in relation to transport links
- Green belt status protects remaining countryside
- Traditional country estates still well represented
- Good uptake & range of agri-environment schemes
- Strong cultural key wildlife, historic features & habitats
- Strong cultural identity represented through landscape character and settlement patterns
- Farming and other land management occupations still well represented in most rural communities
- Proximity to centres of population
- Extensive network of footpaths and bridleways
- Wide range of historical features
- Inexpensive commercial property
- Range of reasonably priced family attractions
- Rotherham Walking Festival

Weaknesses

- Below average earnings
- Rural deprivation leading to social exclusion, poor health, poor housing & unemployment
- Falling farm incomes
- Average economic size of holdings is small
- Poor environment/derelict land
- Tenancy constraints for on-farm diversification & agri-environment uptake
- Fragmented wildlife habitats
- Poor access to capital to diversify
- Habitats degraded by recent period of intensification of land management & insufficient agri-environment funds
- Many farmers & landowners have no experience of woodland management
- Weak property market

Opportunities

- Integrated, increased aid packages from Europe & UK
- Growing demand for access, sport, recreation & countryside pursuits, education, heritage and tourism
- Key high-growth sectors, such as tourism
- Opportunities for agricultural diversification
- Improvements in public transport
- Integrate activity to achieve Biodiversity Action Plan
- Market towns
- Reversing negative aspects of modern agriculture
- Scope for new woodlands to increase areas available for public access & recreation and deliver biodiversity benefits
- Consumer demands for animal welfare, food safety & landscape, nature conservation, environmental protection & clear provenance will increase
- Rural tourist accommodation & attractions in certain locations & niche markets
- Livestock and/or crop products for energy, industrial, medicinal uses
- Protection by European Directives
- Increase skills base through training
- Organic/low input/ integrated farming systems

Threats

- Declining & ageing communities
- Declining rural services, e.g. shops, schools & banks
- Failure to prepare for changes resulting from information revolution & uptake of new technology
- Inappropriate development
- Inappropriate recreational activities, e.g. motorcycling
- Negative attitudes to education & training
- Climate change
- Requirement to comply with new legislation, e.g. health & safety, animal welfare & accreditation schemes with associated costs.
- Species & habitat loss
- Falling farm asset values
- High dependency of agricultural businesses on farm subsidies
- Inability to maintain landscape infrastructure