

REGENERATION AND ASSET BOARD

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

Date: **Wednesday, 14 February 2007**

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 later in the agenda as a matter of urgency.
3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17th January, 2007. (copy attached) (Pages 1 - 7)
4. Matters arising
5. European Social Fund - National Operational Programme 2007-2013. (report attached) (Pages 8 - 19)
Economic Strategy Manager to report.
 - to inform the Board of the Council's response to the consultation.
6. Annual Business Inquiry Results. (report attached) (Pages 20 - 25)
Research and Spatial Analysis Officer to report.
 - to note the content of this report and the key points.
7. Barker Report. (report attached) (Pages 26 - 45)
Director of Planning and Transportation Service to report.
 - to present a summary of the recommendations.
8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC
The following items are likely to be considered in the absence of the press and public as being exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended March 2006) (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular individual (including the Council)):-
9. Dinnington Business Incubation Centre. (report attached) (Pages 46 - 51)
Project Officer/Partnership Implementation Officer to report.
 - to consider potential funding available for this project and the next steps.
10. 49-52 Doncaster Road, Dalton. (report attached) (Pages 52 - 55)
Valuation Manager to report.

- to seek approval to the sale of these properties.
11. Land at Fir Close, Wath. (report attached) (Pages 56 - 60)
Valuation Manager to report.
 - to seek approval to the sale of the land.
 12. Former Park Road Infant and Comprehensive School Annexe, Wath. (report attached) (Pages 61 - 64)
Strategic Property Manager to report.
 - to consider land disposal.
 13. Land at Clough Road, Masbrough. (report attached) (Pages 65 - 68)
Strategic Property Manager to report.
 - to consider land disposal.
 14. Greasbrough Road, Parkgate. (report attached) (Pages 69 - 73)
Director of Asset Management to report.
 - to consider land disposal.
 15. Capital Receipts Update. (report attached) (Pages 74 - 80)
Strategic Property Manager to report.
 - to update the Board.

For information:-

16. Minutes of the Town Centre Development Project Board held on 18th January, 2007. (copy attached) (Pages 81 - 83)
17. Minutes of a meeting of the Task and Finish Group re: Members' Suite held on 23rd January, 2007. (copy attached) (Pages 84 - 87)
18. Date, time and venue of next meeting:
WEDNESDAY, 21ST MARCH, 2007 at 10.00 a.m. at the Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.

REGENERATION AND ASSET BOARD
Wednesday, 17th January, 2007

Present:- Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors Ellis, St. John, Wardle and Wyatt.

Apologies were received from Councillor Hussain.

110. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6TH DECEMBER, 2006

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Board held on 6th December, 2006.

Resolved:- That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

111. MATTERS ARISING

Reference was made to the Terms of Reference of the Regeneration and Asset Board.

It was considered that, as the Board had been operating now for 18 months, a review of the Terms of Reference would be timely,

112. ROTHERHAM TOWN CENTRE - CONTROLLED PARKING ZONES AND RESIDENTS' PARKING

Further to Minute No. 157 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Development Services held on 27th November, 2006, consideration was given to a report presented for information, relating to the progress with regard to an extension to the existing Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) and Residents' Parking in and around the town centre.

Details of the proposed further consultation about the scheme and the necessary traffic regulations were set out in the report.

An explanation was requested of the allocation of Residents/Visitors Parking Zones permits.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and decision of the Cabinet Member noted.

(2) That the Head of Planning and Transportation be requested to re-word and clarify the criteria in respect of the allocation of Residents/Visitors Parking Zones permits.

113. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended March 2006) (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular individual (including the Council)).

114. REPLACEMENT OF THE LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Manager, Libraries, Museums and Arts, relating to the need to replace the existing Library Management System, which was becoming increasingly unfit for purpose.

It was explained that the system dealt with book ordering, processing, and book recovery etc which was essential to the library management system.

It was pointed out that the Council was now out of contract with the existing supplier. Also the existing system was now obsolete and the on-going maintenance agreement with the current supplier was becoming increasingly unsupportable and uneconomic.

Over the last year, in partnership with RBT, a tendering exercise had been undertaken to identify a preferred supplier and costs.

Reference was made to:-

- The market testing which had been carried out
- Previous budget savings
- Estimated cost of the new system
- the unreliability of the existing system and management information
- Proposed funding over a five year period, including ongoing capital and revenue
- Implementation and maintenance of the new system

Full details of the on-going capital and revenue costs, including for hardware and infrastructure (capital); software (capital); implementation (capital) and annual support (revenue).

The total cost of the replacement system was detailed and it was noted that additional costs included outstanding payment (covered in existing budgets) and replacement of library counters which would require additional capital funding.

Resolved:- (1) That the replacement of the library management system, with the implementation beginning this financial year, be supported.

(2) That support be given the provision of initial capital funding from the Minor Strategic Investment Block to support the procurement and implementation of the library management system.

(3) That support be given to further capital and revenue funding, as detailed in Section 8 of the report submitted, to support the ongoing implementation and maintenance of the system and any necessary alterations to library buildings to facilitate the implementation of the library management system.

115. BROOKFIELD PARK, MANVERS - LAND ACQUISITION FOR TRANS PENNINE TRAIL

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Principal Project Officer, relating to a proposal for the construction of a new section of the Trans Pennine Trail to be located along the northern boundary of the above site between Dearne Road and Mexborough Road, Manvers.

Details of the required land acquisitions (approximately 4 hectares) and current lease arrangements were set out in the report.

It was pointed out that the new link would need to be Disability Discrimination Act compliant.

Funding had been made available through Yorkshire Forward's Derelict Land Grant/Land Reclamation Programme – Trans Pennine Trail Completion (Phase 5 RMBC). The cost of construction and initial maintenance was included in the overall approved grant, together with provision for maintenance for an initial five years.

Resolved:- That approval be given for the acquisition of the land referred to, subject to the terms as set out in the report now submitted.

116. ROTHERHAM WORK AND SKILLS BOARD/DWP CITY STRATEGIES

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Senior Economic Strategy Officer, relating to the progress made on the development of an employer led Work and Skills Board for Rotherham, as part of the DWP City Strategy Pathfinder initiative.

It was reported that the Pathfinder City Strategy areas were required to create an employment partnership – or consortium – to provide the drive and focus for cross-agency activity at a local level, with the aim of significantly increasing employment rates and ensuring more disadvantaged people can be helped to find and progress through work. It was pointed out that City Strategies can cover one local authority area, or involve neighbouring authority areas. The Rotherham Board would be part of a wider South Yorkshire Consortium.

It was proposed that the Head of Human Resources would represent Rotherham Council.

Reference was made to the links with the Council's Regeneration agenda

and Employment Plan.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress made on the establishment of Rotherham Work and Skills Board be noted.

(2) That the terms of reference and proposed membership be agreed in principle.

117. ROTHERHAM ECONOMIC REGENERATION FUND (RERF)

Further to Minute No. 62 of the meeting of the Regeneration and Asset Board held on 18th October, 2006 and Minute No. of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Development Services held on 22nd January, 2007, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Programmes Manager, detailing the mid-year position of the Rotherham Economic Regeneration Fund.

It was noted that the report detailed both expenditure and output achievements and that only projects with planned activity during this period were included.

It was pointed out that as at the end of September, 2006 the fund was underspent and this was reflected in the under-achievement against planned outputs.

Details of the specific projects which were underspent, together with the reasons why, were set out in the report.

It was reported that the Knowledge Diffusion project was changing the way it was being delivered, which was now via ADS Lighting, Keepmoat/Bramhall Construction, Rotherham Chamber/Jobsmatch with Sheffield Hallam University.

Members of the Board commented on:-

- Big Screen Partnership
- Westgate Demonstrator Project
- Brampton Business Centre
- Academy of Construction Trades
- Magna

Clarification was given of the way in which the Fund was used to secure external funding and it was pointed out that RERF was always used in the last instance when other sources had been utilised.

Reference was made to the value for money of RERF (i.e. £7 for every £1).

Resolved:- (1) That the information set out in the report be noted.

(2) That the Town Centre and Markets Manager be asked to submit to a report to a future meeting to update the Board on the progress of landscaping around, and provision of a wrap for, the Big Screen.

118. MAGNA CONFERENCE AND EVENTS SPACE - JOINT AGREEMENT FOR DELIVERY

Further to Minute No. 109 of the meeting of the Regeneration and Asset Board held on 18th January, 2006, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Partnership Implementation Officer, relating to the progress on the delivery of the Conference and Events Space project under the joint legal agreement with Magna Trust.

It was noted that the project was fully funded by Objective 1, Yorkshire Forward and SRB6.

The development of the conference and events space would meet a confirmed market demand, and would achieve the agreed South Yorkshire Destination Management Pilot for Tourism growth targets in South Yorkshire.

It was reported that construction work had commenced on 19th June, 2006. The work had progressed well and completion was on target for February 2007.

The good working relationship between Magna, Rotherham Construction Partnership and the contractor was highlighted.

Resolved:- That the report and the progress on delivery of the Magna Conference and Events Space project under the joint legal agreement between RMBC and Magna Trust be noted.

119. LAND AT BENNETT STREET, KIMBERWORTH

Further to Minutes Nos. 56 and 128 of meetings of the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods held on 25th July, and 16th October, 2006 (respectively), consideration was given to a report, presented by the Housing Market Renewal Team Leader, requesting consideration of the disposal of the above site for the development of "move-on" accommodation.

A plan highlighting the area of land under consideration was made available at the meeting. It was pointed out that the site had been identified in the Neighbourhoods' review of garage sites.

The Board was asked to consider discounting the land value in order for the proposed scheme to be financially viable.

Developer proposed to build aspirational, high quality, Eco-Homes (houses and apartments). The anticipated start on site was January,

2007.

Reference was made to:-

- the need for this type of accommodation
- the social and economic benefits
- consultation which had already taken place
- nomination strategy

The Board was advised that Bennett Street was the first site being considered for “move-on” accommodation and that two further sites – one in Bramley and one in Aston - would be coming to the Board for consideration.

Resolved:- (1) That the option to dispose be approved, and negotiations in respect of the land transfer, as detailed in the report now submitted, be initiated.

(2) That the Head of Legal Services completes the necessary transfer documentation, and registers title to the land.

(3) That nominations to the “move-on” properties be made following an agreed and robust assessment process, approved by the partner agencies, including the Supporting People Team and Community Housing Services.

120. LAND AND PROPERTY BANK - CAPITAL RECEIPTS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Strategic Property Manager, updating the Board of changes to the forecast of capital receipts accruing to the General Fund resulting in a revision of the Council's Capital Programme.

Resolved:- That the position on the current status of the Capital Programme be noted.

THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM IN ORDER TO PROCESS THE ITEM REFERRED TO.

121. CAPITAL FUNDING FOR WORKS TO SUPPORT THE CORPORATE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION BUDGET.

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Head of Asset Management, relating to a bid for funding from the minor strategic capital pot (allocated for repairs) to fund the essential repairs to the corporate office accommodation.

Reference was made to essential health and safety works in the main offices plus alterations to Civic Building to accommodate the cooling plant

to provide cooling to the ITC server room, and to fire prevention works. The bid would also include money for works to the print room.

It was confirmed that the proposal had been discussed with Corporate Finance and agreement in principle had been given.

Resolved:- That approval be given to the allocation of funds from the Minor Strategic Capital Fund to support the repairs element of the office accommodation budget, as detailed in the report now submitted.

122. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Board be held on Wednesday, 14th February, 2007 at 10.00 a.m. at the Town Hall, Rotherham.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT

1.	Meeting:	Regeneration and Asset Management Board
2.	Date:	Wednesday 14th February 2007.
3.	Title:	European Social Fund (ESF) – National Operational Programme 2007-13
4.	Programme Area:	Environment and Development Services.

5. Summary

This paper informs members of the Rotherham MBC response to the recent consultation on the draft ESF Programme 2007-13. As requested at the meeting of the Board on 6th December 2006

6. Recommendations

That members:

- 1 Note the report and RMBC's response to the consultation**

7. Proposals and Details

Background

ESF is Structural Funds money from the European Commission supporting activity that will improve employment opportunities and develop human resources. It must also contribute towards the Lisbon Agenda outcomes of growth, jobs and innovation.

ESF has been available in South Yorkshire for the last 6 years as part of the current Objective 1 Programme. A new Programme is now being developed to cover the period 2007-13.

As an ex-Objective 1 area South Yorkshire receives a ring-fenced allocation of 165 million euros (approx. £110 million at current exchange rates). This spend is front-loaded in the Programme with £96 million profiled to be spent by the end of 2010.

ESF monies are managed at a national level, with each Region developing a regional ESF strategy led by the Regional Skills Partnerships, which in the case of Yorkshire and the Humber is located at the LSC in Bradford.

The programme has 2 main priorities:-

- **Extending employment opportunities** – focuses on improving employability and skills of unemployed and inactive people and tackling the barriers to work faced by hard to reach communities and groups
- **Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce** - improving qualifications and skills for those with no or low qualifications. Also developing managers and workers within SMEs.

It is expected that ESF activity will link closely with activity funded under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme 2007-13, which also seeks to promote the Lisbon Agenda, ensuring that maximum impact is achieved by these monies.

The Programme will be also expected to respond to the recommendations of the Leitch Review, published in December 2006, which sets out the skills mix the UK should aim to achieve by 2020 in order to support economic growth and productivity as well as social objectives.

As a “phasing-in area”, South Yorkshire can complete activities from the 2000-06 Objective 1 Programme that continue to be eligible for funding

The Consultation Process

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department for Education and Skills (DfES) consulted widely on the draft ESF programme, with comment being sought on specific questions. This consultation process included taking a paper and the consultation questions to this Board on 6th December 2006. Issues raised at that meeting have been included in the response, although no further comment was received after the meeting.

A corporate response for the Council was submitted on 22nd January 2007, having been approved by CMT. A copy of this response is attached as an appendix to this report.

Although the response is from RMBC, input was also sought from partners through the Employability, 14-19 and Adult Learning Groups of the Rotherham Partnership

The main points in the RMBC response, which incorporated the previous comments from this Board, were:-

- Although the proposed activities are broadly in line with sub-regional and local priorities, such as those set out in the Rotherham Employment Plan. In order for the Programme to meet the specific issues and needs of South Yorkshire, it must be managed and delivered at a sub-regional, rather than national/regional level.
- There is an urgent need for an evaluation of the current Objective Programme, so its finding can be used to inform the new ESF programme.
- Due to the high level of complementarity close links need to be ensured between the ESF Programme and Priority 3 (Connected Communities) of the ERDF Programme.
- With the majority of spend loaded toward the front of the Programme, will there be sufficient funding from partner organisations (LSC and Job Centre Plus) to co finance activity particularly in first 2 years of the Programme
- South Yorkshire will be looking for specific support for people seeking higher level qualifications (NVQ level 3+), rather than the usual ESF focus on basic/lower level skills
- The Programme needs to be able to fund projects that deliver NEETS prevention strategies, rather than focusing on young people who are already NEETS which seems the case at present
- ESF needs to build on innovative work already piloted in Rotherham, such as the Stepping Stones project. It must also link closely with the City Strategies work and the development of Work and Skills Boards, which is currently underway.

8. Finance

Structural Funds have to be “matched” with other monies. As with the current Objective 1 programme the sub-region will seek to co-finance the majority of money at source with the budgets of major partners such as the LSC, and Job Centre Plus.

Co-financing organisations will have responsibility for bringing together ESF and the required domestic match funding, and for contracting with partners. National Government anticipate that there will be sufficient domestic funds within LSC and Job Centre Plus to co-finance ESF priorities. However, local providers are already highlighting that this may not be the case. In particular the new ESF programme contains initiatives to support 14-19 year olds. In the current Objective 1 Programme match funding for 14-19 activity has been provided directly from schools and Children and Young People’s Services. This issue has been raised with the South Yorkshire Partnership and GOYH.

The new ESF Programme could be used for continuation and or expansion of existing initiatives within the Borough such as Stepping Stones and JOBMatch.

Under the current Objective 1 programme Rotherham MBC has so far secured £9.2 million of ESF funding for 14-19 activity

9. Risks and Uncertainties

ESF is a competitive programme which organisations have to bid for against set criteria.

As the programme is heavily skewed towards spend in the early years of the programme it is essential that projects are developed and ready to commence as soon as the programme is officially launched. This now appears likely to be Summer/Autumn 2007, although organisations can start spend prior to this date, but at their own risk.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

ESF funded activity will contribute to a number of key objectives under both the Achieving and Learning themes of the Community Strategy, these include:-

- Maximise economic and other opportunities to reduce disadvantage and raise quality of life and living standards in the most deprived communities.
- Reduce the number of working age adults lacking essential skills – reading, writing numeracy & ICT.
- Address the skills shortage which is a growing concern for the business community in the Borough. Particularly in higher level skills sectors.
- Create specific initiatives to maximise the engagement and participation of particular targeted groups or disadvantaged geographical areas.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Draft ESF Operational Programme for England in 2007-13, available at www.esf.gov.uk
- Regeneration and Asset Board paper of 6th December 2006 titled “European Social Fund – National Operational Programme 2007-13”

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**EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND IN ENGLAND AND GIBRALTAR 2007-2013:
CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM.**

Note: Question indicated by a * symbol are mandatory.

Deadline for response: 22 January 2007

Name:*	Paul Woodcock
Organisation:*	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Address:*	The Eric Manns Building, 45 Moorgate Street, Rotherham
County:*	South Yorkshire
Postcode:*	S60 2RB
Email:*	Paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?*

Individual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation is it a:

Not Applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Departmental Public Bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business or Employers Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private Company	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private Sector Training Provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional Development Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>
Further Education College	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional Skills Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government Department	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sector Skills Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher Education Institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade Union	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning and Skills Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary or Community Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please Specify below.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Employment or Regeneration Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Please indicate if your response is an official response from your organisation.*

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If your response is an official response from an organisation, please say who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

Please indicate the region in which you or your organisation is based.*

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	<input type="checkbox"/>	North West (not Merseyside)	<input type="checkbox"/>
East of England	<input type="checkbox"/>	South East	<input type="checkbox"/>
East Midlands	<input type="checkbox"/>	South West (not Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gibraltar	<input type="checkbox"/>	South Yorkshire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
London	<input type="checkbox"/>	West Midlands	<input type="checkbox"/>
Merseyside	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yorkshire and the Humber (not South Yorkshire)	<input type="checkbox"/>
North East	<input type="checkbox"/>	National	<input type="checkbox"/>

Did your organisation receive any ESF funding in 2000 – 2006?*	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

You may answer as many or as few questions as you wish.

Question 1: What are your views on the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the English labour market and/or the labour market in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly?

(a) English labour market

Generally we agree with the analysis of strengths and weaknesses and would highlight the following issues that are of particular relevance for Rotherham:

- Influx of labour from the EU, particularly accession countries such as Poland.
- Barriers to work that are excluding people from our deprived areas and hard to reach groups, i.e. low skills and benefit dependency.
- High numbers of Incapacity Benefit and Sickness Disability Allowance claimants, a high proportion of who have been on the register for 12+ months.
- Relative low wages/salaries in Rotherham and South Yorkshire.

(b) the labour market in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

N/A

Question 2: What are your views on the strategy for using the ESF programme to support the relevant EU, national and regional objectives and policies?

(a) Please make any comments on the strategy (excluding Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly)

From an EU and national point of view, we do feel that the draft programme is sufficient to support the requirements of the Lisbon agenda and National Strategic Reference Framework. However, to ensure clarity and value for money, we would recommend that any actions to be co-financed are aligned with local needs at the strategic level, rather than just regional/national/EU objectives. To this aim, we are looking for Sub-Regional priorities, management and delivery arrangements to be provided for South Yorkshire.

The Leitch Review raises issues around the relationship between local authorities and LSCs, which will have relevance for co-financing arrangements in relation to ESF (see response to Question 8 below).

It is also suggested that tender documentation and subsequent monitoring ensure that there is alignment between ESF funded work and local 14 - 19 and NEETS strategies.

Within the Regional ESF Strategy, which is still to be written, South Yorkshire is looking for specific support for people seeking higher level qualifications (NVQ levels 3+).

(b) Please make any comments on the strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

N/A

Question 3: What are your views on the proposed indicative activities and indicators for each of the six priority areas?

(a) Priority 1 – extending employment opportunities (excluding Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly)

We welcome the new emphasis in Priority 1 on supporting young people to enter working life and to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. However we note that output and result indicators refer only to participants aged 14 - 19 not in education, employment or training (NEETS). We support the aim to simplify the operational programme and suggest that accordingly indicators are defined

flexibly and that these indicators should be programme rather than project indicators.

This approach to indicators will enable additional NEETS prevention strategies and activities to be supported as part of an overall holistic programme and thus reduce the numbers of young people becoming NEET at all.

The four South Yorkshire 14 - 19 partnerships believe that a sustained prevention strategy is required to enable a long-term reduction in NEETS and that it is inefficient and more costly to only act to rectify the situation once a young person has become NEET.

We would further recommend that a general young people output indicator is included to reflect the initiatives to reform vocational routes and develop awareness of work and employability skills.

(b) Priority 2 – developing a skilled and adaptable workforce (excluding Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly)

The proposed activities seem to be broad enough to enable delivery of sub-regional and local priorities and are in-line with Rotherham's strategic documents (e.g. the Employment Plan). However, as stated previously it is imperative that South Yorkshire has the flexibility at a sub-regional level to regularly review the priorities and how they are managed and delivered.

(c) Priority 3 – technical assistance (excluding Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly)

We recommend that funding is be made available for local management structures to ensure effective targeting and management of the ring-fenced sub-regional ESF allocation for South Yorkshire, in order to build on the demonstrably successful Objective 1 Programme.

There is an urgent need to carry out evaluation of the Objective 1 programme and disseminate key findings to all stakeholders. Are there any lessons to learn or good practice from the technical assistance provided for the Objective 1 South Yorkshire Programme?

There is also a need for performance management to be supported by an effective data collection process in order for achievement of programme targets to be accurately measured. Such a data collection process doesn't currently exist for all areas of activity.

(d) Priority 4 – tackling barriers to employment (Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly only)

N/A

(e) Priority 5 – improving the skills of the local workforce (Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly)

only)

N/A

(f) Priority 6 – technical assistance (Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly only)

N/A

Question 4: In view of the limited funding available, what do you think should be the themes for innovative activity to extend employment opportunities and develop a skilled and adaptable workforce?

For Priority 1, key sub-regional and local themes are as follows:

- develop infrastructure to deliver a new curriculum for 14-19s across providers – link to skills gap/priority growth sectors
- development of brokerage model for part-time employment aimed at young people aged 16 and above, including expansion of existing volunteering model
- support for NEETS
- initiatives to increase enterprise/entrepreneurial skills, including expansion of Youth Enterprise programmes and development/introduction of a vocational qualification in “enterprise” and a social enterprise curriculum model
- delivery of short, intensive return to work programmes for adults
- specific programme around pathways of opportunity for BME communities, from engagement to higher education
- build on innovative work piloted within Rotherham, such as Stepping Stones (an innovative local approach to getting local people into work) and JOBMatch (a sub-regional approach to working with investors and companies whose vacancies are then sourced locally) and other good practice examples from the Objective 1 Programme
- Build on the City Strategies work and the development of Work and Skills Boards within South Yorkshire

For Priority 2, key sub-regional and local themes are as follows:

- joint professional development opportunities for employers and teaching staff linked to new work-related qualifications/Specialised Diplomas
- further development of the Lone Parent, Disability and BME Vocational Cluster Groups and expansion of Cluster Group model to address “hard to reach” SMEs and growth sectors
- focus on higher skills linked to growth sectors
- general focus on NVQ 3+ as LSCs can already deliver bulk of NVQ 2
- the development of an accessible pathway of learning and training opportunities to level 3 & 4 qualifications (academic and vocational) for both employed and

economically inactive learners via, for example, use of e-learning and new media.

- ESOL project for employed people, particularly economic migrants, that supports access to training for a minimum standard of literacy for the workplace.
- retail or Leisure 'Academy' to help develop a pool of potential employees that will respond to the increase in work opportunities from local regeneration projects.

All activity needs to be underpinned by quality Information Advice & Guidance support and engagement activity, building on existing ICT infrastructure investment and utilising voluntary and community sector as appropriate. Look to develop 'Virtual' IAG service that links to local employment opportunities and complements the Digital Region project.

Question 5: What are your views on the proposed roles of Regional Skills Partnerships and Regional ESF Strategies?

- **Regional Skills Partnership** - Decisions made centrally (i.e. at regional level) do not necessarily reflect local priorities. A local delivery element is important and this could come through the Work and Skills Boards as outlined below.
- **Regional ESF Strategy** - The Yorkshire & Humber ESF Strategy will include a specific section on South Yorkshire as a phasing-in area, but we need to ascertain who will be leading on this work and how RMBC can contribute? Local Work and Skills Boards have a key role in determining priorities. They will report to an overarching South Yorkshire Work & Skills Boards Consortium, which will collate sub-regional views and feed into the Regional Skills Partnership.

Question 6: What are your views on how the equal opportunities cross-cutting theme should be implemented?

We are supportive of this cross-cutting theme, as this is an approach we have also adopted in Rotherham – for example for our Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS). We would recommend this theme looks at the following communities of interest - BME communities, deprived children and young people, disabled people and their carers, vulnerable older people and their carers.

There is a need to ensure, at appraisal stage, that these cross-cutting themes are addressed by projects.

Question 7: What are your views on how the sustainable development (including environmental sustainability) cross-cutting theme should be implemented?

We are also supportive of this cross-cutting theme, and we would recommend that existing good practice is disseminated for potential projects to consider.

Question 8: Do you have any views on the proposed implementation arrangements?

As already stated, we would welcome in South Yorkshire, sub-regional management and implementation arrangements (as has been the case with Objective 1). In addition we would also recommend the following:-

- the agency undertaking regional management of the ESF programme will need to set up transparent and consistent processes and procedures for approving projects etc. Due to front-loading of programme in South Yorkshire there is a need to ensure that systems are in place as soon as the money is available.
- again, with the heavily front-loaded funding profile in mind, there is a concern about there being sufficient funds for co-financing/match funding, particularly at the beginning of the programme.
- given the high degree of complementary activity, there is a need to ensure close links are maintained between the ESF and ERDF programmes and particularly Priority 3 (Connecting Communities) of ERDF. Priority 3 is to be managed/delivered locally (local authority level or lower), while ESF appears to be national/regional, giving possibility of conflicting aims.

Question 9: Do you have any comments on the ESF strategy for Gibraltar under Priorities 1, 2 and 3?

The information you send us may need to be passed to colleagues within the Department for Work and Pensions and published in a summary of responses received in response to this consultation along with a response from the Government.

Because of the Freedom of Information Act (2000), all information contained in your response, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure. By providing personal information for the purposes of the public consultation exercise, it is understood that you consent to its disclosure and publication.

If this is not the case, you should limit any personal information which is provided, or remove it completely. If you want the information in response to the consultation be kept confidential, you should explain why as part of your response, although we cannot guarantee to do this. We cannot guarantee confidentiality even if your IT system claims it automatically. The contact to discuss this is Tony McMahon whose details are below. More information about the Freedom of Information Act can be found on the website of the

Department for Constitutional Affairs –
<http://www.dca.gov.uk/foi/guidance/exguide/index.htm>

Please indicate if you want the details in your reply to be kept confidential.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain why.

How to respond

The consultation will end on 22 January 2007. We look forward to receiving your response before that date if at all possible. Please respond using the on-line response form on the ESF website at www.esf.gov.uk. Alternatively you can send this word document version, as well as any queries, to:

Tony McMahon
European Social Fund Division
DWP/DfES Joint International Unit
Room N2
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Sheffield
S1 4PQ

Email: esf.feedback@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

RMBC – REPORT TO REGENERATION AND ASSET BOARD
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1.	Meeting:	REGENERATION & ASSET BOARD
2.	Date:	14th February 2007
3.	Title:	ANNUAL BUSINESS INQUIRY RESULTS
4.	Directorate:	ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

5. Summary

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has recently released the results of the 2005 Annual Business Inquiry survey. This employer survey covers the number of jobs (recorded at the location of an employees workplace) held by employees within a district, broken down by sex, full / part-time, and industry. It also measures the number of workplaces in a district and their size, in terms of employees, broken down by industry. This report looks at the latest position in Rotherham and the changes since the start of the survey in 1998.

6. Recommendations

Regeneration & Asset Board notes the content of this report and the following key points:

- **following several years of large increases in employee jobs within the borough data for 2005 indicates little change during the year**
- **since the beginning of the ABI in 1988 employee jobs in Rotherham have increased by over 29%, over three times the national rate and double the rate of the next best performing authority in South Yorkshire**
- **over 5,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Rotherham since 1998 but this has been more than offset by significant increases in other sectors, particularly in the banking, finance and insurance sectors and in the public sector**
- **extra jobs have been split almost equally between men and women but the majority of positions filled by women have been part-time**
- **Rotherham continues to rely more heavily on large companies for employment compared to the national average**

7. Proposals and Details

The Government's Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) produces estimated data, on a workplace basis, of the number and types of jobs, the number of workplaces and size of businesses, and a breakdown by industry. Although the ABI is a survey and will therefore be subject to a degree of variance (particularly at small area level), it is the best official source of job numbers and businesses within an area and is invaluable in demonstrating general trends, particularly over longer periods of time.

The 2005 results indicate that Rotherham has experienced little change in the number of employee jobs located in the borough after several years of substantial rises. Figure 1 below shows how the number of jobs has increased since the beginning of the ABI in 1998 (all figures are rounded to the nearest 100).

Figure 1.



Source: Annual Business Inquiry, NOMIS Crown Copyright

This apparent stagnation in the number of jobs in Rotherham could be partly due to natural variances in the yearly data caused by the sample size used in the ABI survey but may also be a sign that jobs growth is slowing as local employment rates (although these are measured on a residence basis) have approached the national average. Table 1 below compares Rotherham's rate of increase with the other South Yorkshire authorities, the region and nationally.

Table 1.

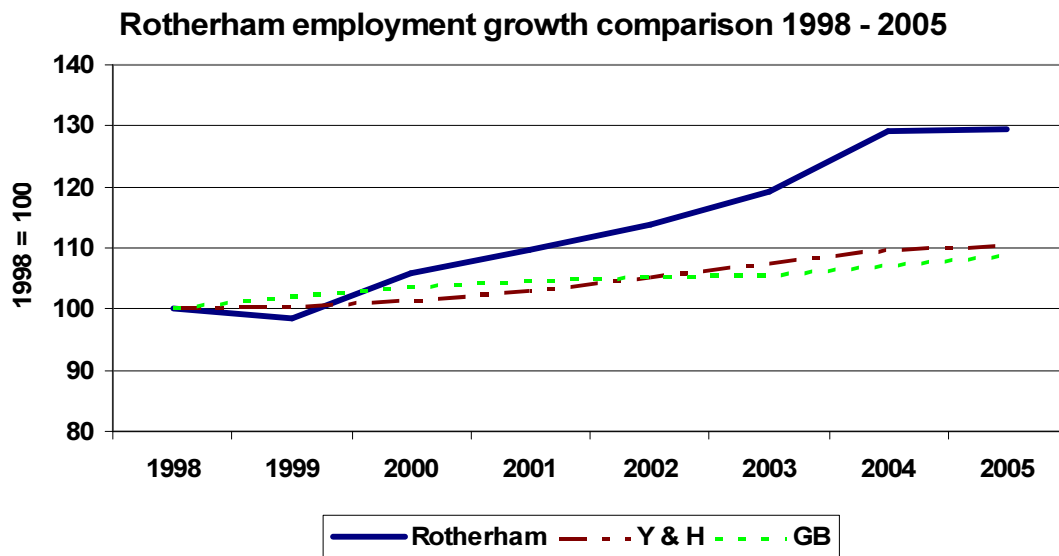
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	% Increase 98 - 05	Last year 04 - 05
Rotherham	80,900	79,700	85,600	88,800	92,000	96,400	104,600	104,700	29.4%	0.1%
Barnsley	71,500	69,500	72,200	69,300	73,700	74,500	75,100	74,200	3.8%	-1.2%
Doncaster	105,100	97,700	101,200	100,400	105,600	107,700	111,200	113,900	8.4%	2.4%
Sheffield	223,800	218,800	224,500	231,400	233,700	239,700	246,700	255,500	14.2%	3.6%
South Yorkshire	482,500	466,800	484,600	490,000	505,000	518,200	537,500	548,200	13.6%	2.0%
Yorks. & Humber	2,049,700	2,057,400	2,078,100	2,113,900	2,154,500	2,199,400	2,249,400	2,262,400	10.4%	0.6%
Great Britain	24,355,000	24,827,400	25,214,600	25,490,300	25,593,700	25,710,600	26,067,500	26,503,100	8.8%	1.7%

Source: Annual Business Inquiry, NOMIS Crown Copyright

Rotherham has seen a smaller increase over the year 2004 to 2005 than regionally or nationally. Sheffield, and to a lesser extent Doncaster, have seen steady increases in job numbers although Barnsley has actually recorded a fall in jobs over the year.

However the last years data must be set against the significant increases seen in Rotherham since 1998 - a rise of 29.4%, well above the national (8.8%) and regional (10.4%) rates of increase as shown in Figure 2, and over double the rate of Sheffield, the next best performing district in South Yorkshire.

Figure 2.



Source: Annual Business Inquiry, NOMIS Crown Copyright

This increase has not been uniform across all sectors, with falls seen in the number employed within manufacturing (-5,000) but offset by large increases in the public sector (administration, education & health) and service sectors (banking, finance, insurance and other services). The manufacturing sector remains more important in Rotherham (16.1%) compared to the national average (11.1%) but the public sector (24.6%), distribution, hotels and restaurants sectors (23.9%), and banking, finance and insurance sectors (17.3%) now employ more staff within the borough. The employment changes since 1998 within each broad industry sector in Rotherham are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

INDUSTRY:	1998	2005	Change	% Change
Agriculture & Utilities	900	1,300	400	44.4%
Manufacturing	21,900	16,900	-5,000	-22.8%
Construction	4,700	6,400	1,700	36.2%
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	19,800	25,100	5,300	26.8%
Transport and communications	4,300	7,000	2,700	62.8%
Banking, finance and insurance	8,700	18,100	9,400	108.0%
Public administration, education & health	17,900	25,700	7,800	43.6%
Other services	2,700	4,200	1,500	55.6%
TOTAL	80,900	104,700	23,800	29.4%

Source: Annual Business Inquiry, NOMIS Crown Copyright

The new employee jobs in Rotherham have been split almost equally between men and women with 61% being full-time positions. However the majority of positions filled by women have been part-time – a full gender and full/part-time split is shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

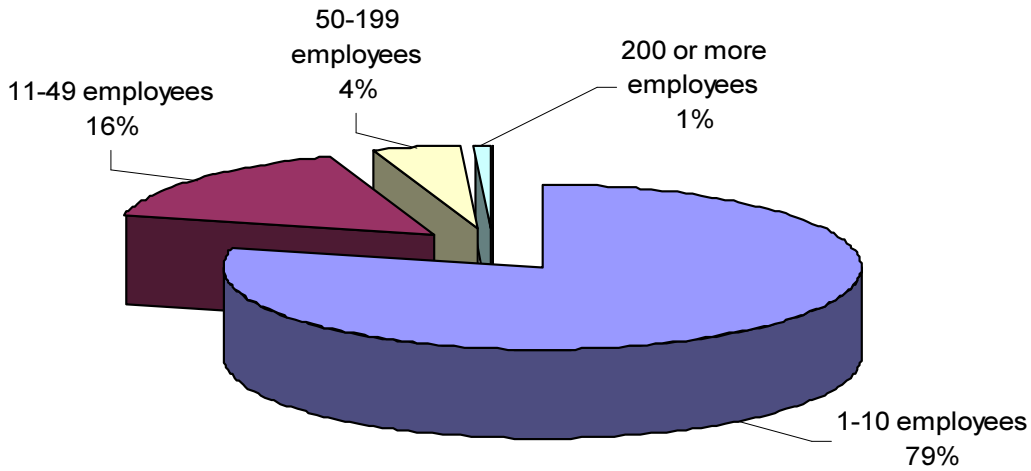
GENDER / FULL & PART-TIME	1998	2005	Change	% Change
Male Full Time Workers	37,100	46,900	9,800	26.4%
Male Part Time Workers	5,100	7,400	2,300	45.1%
Female Full Time Workers	19,100	23,800	4,700	24.6%
Female Part Time Workers	19,600	26,600	7,000	35.7%
TOTAL	80,900	104,700	23,800	29.4%

Source: Annual Business Inquiry, NOMIS Crown Copyright

In Rotherham, as in Great Britain, the vast majority of businesses are small. In 2005, 79% of businesses in Rotherham employed under 11 people, 16% of businesses employed between 11 and 49 people, 4% employed between 50 and 199 people and only 1% employed 200 or more staff.

Figure 3.

Breakdown of Rotherham Businesses by size (number of employees), 2005

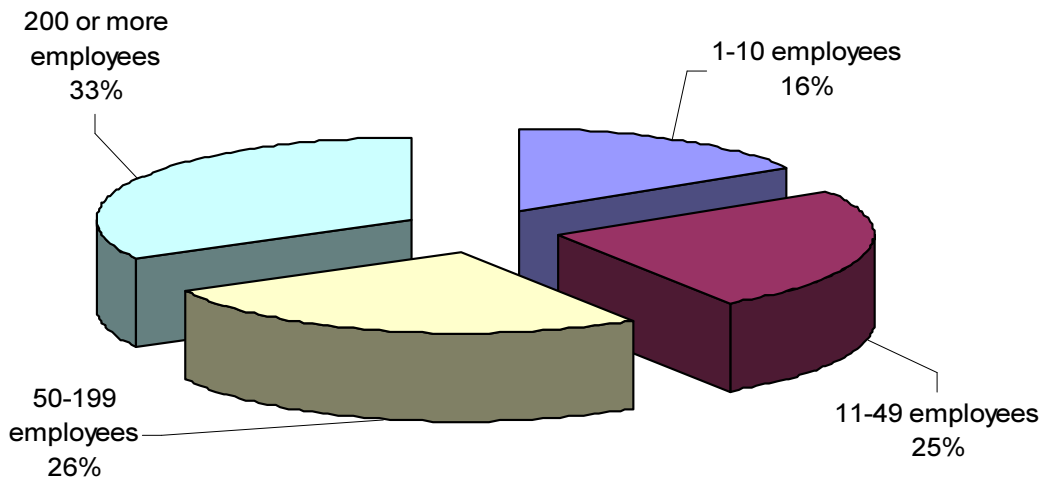


Source: Annual Business Inquiry, NOMIS Crown Copyright

These large firms (200 or more staff) did however account for 33% of employment in Rotherham compared to 16% employed in small businesses (fewer than 11 employees).

Figure 4.

Share of Employment in Rotherham by size of business, 2005



Source: Annual Business Inquiry, NOMIS Crown Copyright

This highlights Rotherham's heavier reliance on large companies for employment compared to the national average – in Great Britain large companies (employing 200

or more) accounted for just 30.6% of employment (33.1% in Rotherham) with small companies (those employing less than 11) accounting for 20.6% of employment (16.2% in Rotherham).

8. Finance

None.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

As the ABI is a survey (although with comprehensive coverage), when looking at a local authority the size of Rotherham it must be appreciated that all figures will be subject to a degree of variance. It is important to take this into consideration when comparing one year's data with another – more important is to consider the trend over a longer period of time.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This has links to the Community Strategy themes of:
Achieving – increasing the number of local jobs is a key measures of progress under this theme. Increasing the number and variety of jobs in Rotherham will help to reduce levels of economic inactivity and unemployment, reduce the need for outward commuting, and encourage more people of working age to remain within or move to Rotherham.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Office for National Statistics – Annual Business Inquiry 2005
Background information about the ABI is available from the following article:
http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/articles/ref/ABI_lmt_may2000.pdf

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ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Regeneration and Asset Management Board
2.	Date:	14th February 2007
3.	Title:	Summary of the Barker Report
4.	Directorate:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

In December 2005 the Chancellor and Deputy Prime Minister Commissioned a review of the planning system in England, with the following terms of reference;

To consider how, in the context of globalisation, and building on the reforms already put in place in England, planning policy and procedures can better deliver economic growth and prosperity alongside other sustainable development goals. In particular to assess;

- ways of further improving the speed and efficiency of the system
- ways of increasing the flexibility , transparency and predictability that enterprise requires
- the relationship between planning and productivity, and how the outcomes of the planning system can better deliver its sustainable economic objectives
- the relationship between economic and other sustainable development goals in the delivery of sustainable communities.

The final report produced by Kate Barker, was released in December 2006. The 200 page report includes 32 recommendations, which are summarised along with their implications for Rotherham in this report.

6. Recommendations

That the contents of the report are noted

The report is forwarded to Planning Board for information

7. Proposals and Details

The recommendations of the report are as follows;

Recommendation 1

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) should revise the policy framework for decision-making, in the context of the plan-led system, to make clear that where plans are out-of-date or indeterminate applications should be approved unless there is good reason to believe the costs outweigh the benefits.

One way of implementing this would be to make clear that where an application for development is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date provisions of the development plan, it should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where development plan provisions are indeterminate or where they are not up-to-date, the application should be approved unless there is a significant probability that the likely environmental, social and economic costs of the development will outweigh the respective benefits.

There are risks here with over simplifying the assessment of a proposal, and because the RRS is part of the development plan, the Assembly could be drawn into the debate about individual developments.

Recommendation 2

The Statement of General Principles should be revised to make clear that in determining planning applications due regard should be paid to the economic, social and environmental benefits of development, such as the benefits new development can bring through low average energy consumption, alongside other material considerations.

The issue of sustainability and climate change is rising up the agenda with the 2006 Climate Bill and the proposed addendum to Planning Policy statement 1 dealing with climate change. This recommendation is consistent with that thinking, and is supported

Recommendation 3

DCLG should update its national planning policy on economic development by the end of 2007. This should include:

- emphasising the critical role economic development often plays in support of wider social and environmental goals, such as regeneration;
- strengthening the consideration given to economic factors in planning policy, so that the range of direct and indirect benefits of development are fully factored into plan-making and

decision-making alongside consideration of any potential costs;

- emphasising the role that market signals, including price signals, can play in ensuring an efficient use of land, both in plan-making and in development management;
- requiring a positive approach to applications for changes to use class where there is no likelihood of demonstrable harm, to provide greater flexibility of use in the context of rapid changes in market conditions;
- making clear that where a Core Strategy is in place, decisions on commercial development should not be delayed simply on the basis of prematurity;
- ensuring that development in rural communities is not unduly restrained and allows for a wide range of economic activity; and
- ensuring that in general a more positive approach is taken to applications for tall buildings where they are of very high design quality and appropriately located, and where there is the transport infrastructure to support them.

These whole range of recommendations are very much market and commercial based, and there needs to remain a balance between promoting economic activity and ensuring that sustainability and environmental agendas are not weakened.

Recommendation 4

Wider planning policy should be made more responsive to economic factors. This should include:

- building on the more flexible approach to car-parking spaces for housing, by applying this less prescriptive approach to commercial development in place of the current national maximum standards per square metre of floor space;

This is not consistent with the approach advocated in PPG13(Transport), and other DFT guidance.

- ensuring that any review of heritage policy builds on the recent reforms of the Heritage Review, by emphasising the critical importance of viability and proportionality, and by facilitating modernisation that does not damage the historic or architectural significance of buildings;

The positive impact that historic buildings and environment can have on regeneration has been

recognised in the 2006 English Heritage/RICS study. Financial incentive are needed, not least of which the situation with VAT on repairs to historic buildings needs to be reviewed

- supporting the ‘town centre first’ policy and the impact and sequential tests that help to deliver it, but removing the requirement to demonstrate need (the ‘needs test’) as part of the planning application process; and
- if the Competition Commission concludes that there is a problem relating to the exercise of local monopoly power as part of its current grocery inquiry, to establish how best to address these issues, either through planning or through other means.

The removal of the needs test raises serious concerns, and may well undermine the key urban transformation agenda in the RSS, and impact on the ability of Councils to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of their centres. This recommendation is not supported.

Recommendation 5

The Government should engage more proactively at the policy development stage of European legislation with a potential planning impact. DCLG should resource and maintain close links with DEFRA, FCO and UKREP in particular, and other departments as necessary, in anticipating the domestic planning implications of emerging EU legislation. All departments should ensure that their negotiators take fully into account the implications of proposals for planning legislation, policy and the resulting outcomes for future development. Additions to existing domestic regulation should be avoided except where needed to address remaining areas of market failure. Where possible, transposition should use existing regulatory mechanisms.

Agreed

Recommendation 6

Regional and local planning authorities should make planning for economic development a higher priority. To achieve this there should be:

- better integration of the Regional Economic Strategies (RES) and Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), including enhanced alignment of timescales and compatibility of evidence bases, so that the RES can fulfil its role of informing the RSS. The Secretary of State should have regard to RES policies as part of her adoption procedures for the RSS;

- policies that set out how the drivers of productivity (competition, investment, skills, innovation and enterprise) will be supported. Care should be taken to ensure that plans represent the interests of small firms and potential new entrants to the market (who may not be in a position to engage with the plan);
- policies that focus, wherever possible, on desired outcomes rather than imposing the means of delivering those outcomes – for example in terms of climate change – the outcome should be to reduce the carbon footprint with the best means being flexible;
- stronger link between plans and infrastructure provision, so that there is greater confidence that the infrastructure necessary to deliver large development will be in place;
- a marked reduction in the extent to which sites are designated for single or restricted use classes – the need to ensure provision for live-work units is relevant in this context;
- where employment land needs to be separately designated, ensuring that employment land reviews are conducted regularly, making full use of market signals, so that there is a suitable range of quality sites which provide for all sectors and sizes of firm; and
- delivery of the Government’s objective of avoiding rigid local landscape designations in the context of a robust network established at national level.

These recommendations appear sensible, but care need to be taken with the last point.

Recommendation 7

Local authorities should be encouraged to work together in drawing up joint development plan documents and determining planning applications where there are significant spillovers which are likely to spread beyond the boundary of one authority. In the medium term, consideration should be given to how the London model, where strategic planning application powers are being granted to the Mayor, could be applied elsewhere.

Joint working is essential, and in the South Yorkshire context there are a number of issues which are being developed jointly between Rotherham and Sheffield. In terms of governance, arrangements are being considered in the City Region context, but the mayoral model has been rejected by the Leaders. This recommendation is however, consistent with the recommendations of the Government White paper.

Recommendation 8

The Government should make better use of fiscal interventions to encourage an efficient use of urban land. In particular, it should reform business rate relief for empty property and consider introducing a charge on vacant and derelict brownfield land. This reform could be considered in the context of the broader set of issues in relation to local government finance being examined by the Lyons Inquiry. In parallel with the introduction of the proposed Planning-gain Supplement, the Government should consult on reforms to Land Remediation Relief to help developers bring forward hard-to-remediate brownfield sites.

No issue with this recommendation, although the debate about PGS and how it should be used has it been concluded. This is consistent with the aim of focussing development on urban brownfield land. Some of the other recommendations in the report are not consistent with this approach, in particular the next recommendation on relaxation of the green belt.

Recommendation 9

In the light of growing demand for land and the need to ensure that areas of high public value (such as sites with important or endangered wildlife) or areas at higher risk from flooding due to climate change are adequately protected:

- regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should review green belt boundaries as part of their Regional Spatial Strategy/Local Development Framework processes to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate, given the need to ensure that any planned development takes place in the most sustainable location;
- local planning authorities should ensure that the quality of the green belts is

enhanced through adopting a more positive approach towards applications that can be shown to enhance the surrounding areas through, for example, the creation of open access woodland or public parks in place of low-grade agricultural land; and
- the Government should consider how best to protect and enhance valued green space in towns and cities. In this context, the Government should review the merits of different models of protecting valued open space, including the green wedge approach.

This is supported by the Assembly, as they see the green belt review in the

context of the transformation agenda for urban areas. It will need to be considered carefully, and part of the argument is whether this is best done at a local or regional level. This will need treating with caution, as certainly in South Yorkshire the green belt performs a very important function.

Recommendation 10

To improve the framework for decision-making for major infrastructure to support a range of objectives, including the timely delivery of renewable energy:

- Statements of Strategic Objectives for energy, transport, waste proposals (including energy from waste) and strategic water proposals (such as new reservoirs) should be drawn up where they are not in place presently. These should, where possible, be spatially specific to give greater certainty and reduce the time taken at inquiry discussing alternative sites. Regional Spatial Strategies and local plans should reflect these national Statements and indicate, in particular, where regional facilities are needed;
- a new independent Planning Commission should be established which would take decisions on major infrastructure applications in the above areas. Decisions would be based on the national Statements of Strategic Objectives and policies set in the Regional Spatial Strategy, Local Development Documents and other relevant considerations, including local economic, environmental and social impacts;
- the Planning Commission would be comprised of leading experts in their respective fields. Proceedings would be based on a streamlined public inquiry model, using timetabling to ensure timely decision-making. Full community consultation would be carried out and decisions would be taken in a fair, transparent and even-handed manner; and
- decisions which are of local importance only, including housing and commercial applications made under Town and Country Planning legislation, should continue to be made by the local planning authority. Where appropriate, and in order to ensure successful delivery of major commercial and housing development with national or regional spillovers, Government should consider the scope for greater use of delivery bodies such as Urban Development Corporations.

This has been the subject of much debate, and it is not clear how this would work in practice, and how it would relate not just to individual LDF's but also the RSS. The impartiality of the Commission, the thoroughness with which it deals with the issued, and the level of engagement will be paramount .

Recommendation 11

In order to ensure that this new decision-making model is effective the Government should:

- rationalise consent regimes to ensure that infrastructure projects of major significance can be treated holistically and that the independent Planning Commission can take all the necessary planning decisions (if more than one is still required) on a particular scheme. Environmental consents would, however, remain separate from planning consents and be the responsibility of the Environment Agency;
- critically examine whether there are smaller infrastructure decisions currently made at the national level that should instead be determined by the local planning authority, or by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal;
- end joint and linked decision-making so that large infrastructure applications, or applications made by statutory undertakers, which would previously have been decided by two or more Secretaries of State will be transferred to the independent Planning Commission for decision. Non-strategic applications will be determined by local planning authorities or by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal; and
- as an interim measure, all Government departments with responsibilities for planning decisions, should draw up timetables based on the DCLG model, for major applications decided by Ministers before the introduction of the independent Planning Commission and to ensure that decision-making is expedited in the short term.

The rationalisation of consent regimes is welcomed, as is the delegation of decisions to local level. The key issue here is that if there is an independent commission it should only deal with applications of significant regional or national importance.

Recommendation 12

Measures should be taken to limit Ministerial decision-making to only those cases

where there national or wider than local spillover effects and to reduce the time taken to decide planning applications made under the Town and Country Planning legislation. The Government should:

- review the Town and Country Planning call-in directions. This should involve and review other directions, in particular the Density, Greenfield and Shopping Directions and withdrawing them if no longer necessary. The overall aim should be to reduce significantly the number of cases referred to the Secretary of State for possible call-in;
- review the Town and Country Planning call-in policy by the end of 2007-08 and implement tighter criteria to the cases that are subsequently called-in following referral. Call-in should be used only in exceptional circumstances for those cases where significant national or wider than local issues are raised (particularly where there is no clear framework at the regional and local level to enable appropriate decision-making to be made). The aim should be to reduce the numbers called-in by 50 per cent by 2008-09;
- review the recovered appeals policy by the end of 2007-08 and so govern more strictly the appeals that are recovered, with the result that only those cases where significant national or wider than local issues are raised, are recovered for Ministerial decision;
- reduce the amount of time it takes to decide whether or not to call-in an application. In particular, the Government Office's secondary target of seven weeks should be reduced to no more than five weeks; and
- amend secondary legislation to remove the remaining categories of transfer excepted appeals: Listed Buildings in receipt of Grant Aid, Enforcement appeals accompanied by Environmental Statements, Tree Preservation Order appeals and Hazardous Substances appeals.

I would welcome a more streamlined process and the reduction in the amount of applications which the SOS will consider. Applications with a local significance should be determined at the local level. This is consistent with the White Paper.

Recommendation 13

The Government should consolidate the secondary legislation related to planning. A priority is to consolidate the General Development Procedure Order and its subsequent amendments – this should be undertaken in 2007.

Agreed.

Recommendation 14

There should be a substantial streamlining of national policy, delivering previous commitments. The Government should publish proposals by summer 2007. This should include consideration of the potential to remove some of the current range of Planning Policy Guidance and where necessary replace through an expanded PPS1. Any new policy should be consistent with the green paper principles of being strategic, concise and not mixing policy with guidance. Any new guidance should be published ideally alongside or otherwise within four months of publishing national policy. A desirable goal would be to reduce over 800 pages of policy to fewer than 200 pages.

Agreed, consistent with the White paper review of BVPI's

Recommendation 15

Local planning authorities and regional planning bodies should continue to develop their development plans as expeditiously as possible to provide a clear planning framework for decisions.

DCLG should urgently review the regulations and guidance behind the new plan-making system to enable the next generation of Development Plan Documents to be delivered in 18-24 months in place of the current 36-42 months, while ensuring appropriate levels of community involvement. Draft guidelines should be published by summer 2007, drawing on the views of other stakeholders including the Better Regulation Executive. This will involve:

- streamlining of Sustainability Assessment (SA) processes including removing or reducing requirements where a related higher tier policy has already been subject to SA and exploring how SA requirements can be streamlined for Supplementary Planning Documents;
- streamlining of Local Development Scheme processes to a short programme of intended development documentation by local planning authorities;
- refashioning the Statement of Community Involvement into a corporate 'comprehensive engagement strategy' along with removal of the need for independent examination, as proposed in the Local Government White Paper 2006;
- increasing the speed with which Supplementary Planning Documents can be delivered;
- regional and local planning authorities and Inspectors should ensure that regional and local plans deliver against the original objective of being short documents that do not duplicate

national policy;

- the removal of a formal requirement for an issues and options phase of plan-making, leaving the Preferred Options and Submitted stage. Preferred Options should be generated via effective and focused engagement with stakeholders, especially those vital to the delivery of the plan;
- a reform of the challenge provision so that if a plan or part of a plan is quashed in the Courts the plan can be amended without the plan-making process having to begin from the start; and
- ensuring that the new Examination in Public process enables an effective scrutiny and a testing of the evidence base of policy.

Local authorities should explore the potential for efficiency gains (which could be in excess of £100 million over a three-year period) to be reinvested in enhancing the quality of their planning service provision.

This is welcomed.

Recommendation 16

The Government should formally commit to the gradual unification of the various consent regimes related to planning following the proposed unification of scheduled monuments and listed building consents, and should set out proposals in 2007. One option would be to bring together the heritage and planning consents.

This is sensible, and has been considered several years ago.

Recommendation 17

The Government should, as a matter of priority, work with local planning authorities and other bodies such as the Better Regulation Executive to reduce substantially the information requirements required to support planning applications. The principle should be to move towards a risk-based and proportionate approach to information requests. Action should include:

- a review of the guidance on validating planning applications including the introduction of proportionality thresholds and the phasing of information required at different stages of the application process;
- the introduction of strict criteria to be fulfilled by Government, regional planning bodies and local planning authorities before any additional information requirements on applicants are introduced;

- an examination of the potential to raise the thresholds for EIA applications and limit the paperwork associated with Environmental Statements;
- a tighter enforcement of processes aimed at ensuring that resource transfers and training provision occur before other government departments implement policy via planning; and
- formal monitoring of progress based on representative samples of volumes of information, and associated costs, for like-with-like cases for both major and minor developments across a range of sectors. The first assessment should be published in 2009, benchmarking against 2006 volumes and costs.

The move to simplify the process, which over recent years has become more and more complicated and onerous on applicants is welcomed. This will reduce the burden on LA's and applicants but should also speed up the system.

Recommendation 18

There should be a rebalancing of the focus of planning on the cases that matter most, in line with the principles of risk-based regulation by:

- a widening of permitted development rights for minor consents by extending the 'impact' principle of the Householder Development Consent Review, so that in future only those cases where there will be non-marginal third-party impact will require planning permission, with the objective of an appreciable reduction in volumes of applications. This should be completed within the next two years; and
- the development of a voluntary new system of negotiated side-agreements between affected parties, so that where agreement can be reached a full planning application will not be required. This is likely to be most practical with smaller scale applications.

The permitted development rights should also be widened to help combat climate change. In particular, proposals to extend rights to domestic micro generation should be extended to commercial settings.

This will need careful consideration, as it is often householder applications which have a significant impact on people's lives and can be contentious. The Permitted development rights do need a significant review and there are many anomalies which need to be corrected. Clarification on domestic micro generation is welcomed.

Recommendation 19

The planning application system should be made more efficient so that high quality outcomes are delivered through a value-for-money process. This should include:

- more widespread use of pre-application discussions. Local authorities should charge for these only when this is unlikely significantly to reduce demand for the service;
- the roll-out of Planning Delivery Agreements (PDA) to ensure all applications are dealt with in a reasonable time frame. There should be a requirement for local authorities to offer these for large applications – revising the current thresholds for ‘majors’ by separating them from medium-sized applications would help here. Where a PDA has been agreed the application would be removed from the current national targets;
- a review of the statutory consultee arrangements to improve efficiency, to include consideration of the thresholds at which these bodies become involved with applications and better incentives to ensure a quicker response to enquiries;
- early engagement from statutory consultees such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and English Heritage. In particular, the Highways Agency should ensure that it adopts this approach rather than relying on late use of Article 14 holding powers; and
- speeding up the final stages of the application process, in particular by earlier negotiation of Section 106 agreements or use of tariffs, and discharging planning conditions.

Businesses should engage with pre-application discussions to enable issues to be identified at an early stage and ensure that they submit complete applications.

These are all sensible recommendations, and most are already current practice. PDA’s were raised in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, and seem sensible acknowledging that some applications are incredibly complex and require a longer timescale to deliver.

Recommendation 20

The Government should review current resource arrangements for local planning authorities, related authority services (such as conservation) and key agencies. This should take account of the efficiency gains to be derived from other recommendations. In particular it should explore:

- raising the £50,000 threshold for fee payments on a tapered basis;
- making it easier for applicants to pay for a premium service or to pay for additional resource/consultants to help process their application expeditiously, if this can be done in a manner that avoids anti-competitive effects; and
- maintaining a form of Planning Delivery Grant beyond 2007-08, ensuring some form of benefit for commercial speed and delivery outcomes alongside other goals.

Any fee increase should only be allowed on the basis of a clear mechanism for indicating the higher quality of service that will be delivered as a result.

These suggestions are welcomed.

Recommendation 21

The skills of decision-makers and others involved with the planning system should be enhanced and more effectively utilised. To achieve this:

- the Government should ensure continued funding for the Planning Advisory Service to promote continuous improvement, raise underperformance and facilitate joint working;
- the Government should work with the RTPI, TCPA and other bodies to ensure a continued focus on getting new entrants into the profession. Postgraduate bursaries funded by DCLG should be tied to a number of years of public sector service, so that a return is provided for the public purse;
- the Government should raise the status of the Chief Planner within local authorities, potentially on a statutory basis, to reinforce the status of the profession for all parties, including members;
- wider use of business process reviews and best practice guidance to ensure that the time of more qualified planners is freed up to focus on the most complex cases;
- Compulsory training for planning committee members, focusing resources in the first instance on new members, with increased training for officers; and
- the LGA and POS should establish a change management strategy/programme to help deliver culture change in local authorities.

These are welcomed, particularly bullet point three, given the significant cross cutting role that Planning performs. It's role as a core function should be strengthened, and this was also recognised in the 2004 PCPA and White Paper.

Recommendation 22

Local planning authorities should enhance the quality of service provided by their planning department through more effective interaction with external organisations, via:

- the introduction of more 'shared services' by local authority planning departments (or contracting to more efficient LPAs) to enable economies of scale and scope;
- increased use of outsourcing and tendering for development control services, so that private sector expertise is more effectively leveraged; and
- exploring the potential for greater use of accredited consultants to carry out technical assessments for selected tasks.

The Government should also expand the role of ATLAS both in scope, to remove bottlenecks in the delivery of large commercial development as well as housing developments, and in geographic range, so that the benefits of this model can be felt beyond southern regions.

Agreed, but it should be noted that there is a also a capacity and skills gap in the private as well as the public sector.

Recommendation 23

A robust system of performance management should be put in place to address continued poor performance, in line with proposals in the Local Government White Paper. DCLG should:

- conduct a review of measures to judge effectiveness of planning departments in the context of local government reform. A review should consider how best to measure the quality of service by the planning system, including consideration of development outcome measures and labour productivity figures, alongside a greater emphasis on customer satisfaction survey evidence. In addition, the end-to-end time taken to process the larger applications that fall outside current targets should be included in the DCLG annual publication of development management statistics;
- encourage the development of stronger sector-led support and intervention models;

- use the new performance framework to set improvement targets in the worst performing authorities; and
- encourage and, where necessary, direct local authorities that continue to underperform to tender their planning function, along the lines of the successful Urban Vision model or to contract with other more successful authorities to provide or share services.

For 2007-08, DCLG should require the chief executives of persistent poor performers to discuss improvement programmes with senior officials and, where appropriate, Ministers.

I would welcome qualitative measures as well as quantitative performance measures. The reliance on BVP111 customer satisfaction surveys is not appropriate as it does not tell the full picture, as they do not include the views of affected people, stakeholders etc, who will have a different view on the way an application or decision has been reached, than the developer or applicant.

Recommendation 24

Decision-makers should give higher priority to ensuring that new development has high design standards – both for function and appearance:

- design coding may be used strategically and carefully in the context of master-planning to assist good design. Care is needed to ensure that design codes do not become formulaic or exclude contemporary architecture so that innovation and originality are restricted;
- pre-application discussions should be acknowledged as one tool in ensuring good design;
- design champions with high-level skills and expertise should be encouraged at all levels;
- design review panels should be facilitated at the local level and integrated within the pre-application discussion process; and
- local planning authorities and Inspectors should be encouraged to turn down poorly-designed proposals, particularly where the costs of bad design will be high.

Rotherham not only has a Design Code, but a design champion. 136 Local authorities do not currently have a design champion. We welcome greater emphasis given to good design, not just in terms of the physical appearance, but also the functionality of the buildings, and their ability to adapt to different uses and requirements over time, such as envisaged by Lifetime home standards. It is important that requirement for higher quality design relates to

all development, given the other recommendations in the report relating to a more relaxed approach to commercial development.

Recommendation 25

DCLG should establish a planning mediation service to act as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism within the planning system. PINS should also explore further means of reducing the demand for the appeals system. This should include greater use of powers to charge for unreasonable behaviour leading to unnecessary expenses.

The principle is welcomed, although it may be difficult to deliver in practice.

Recommendation 26

The Department of Communities and Local Government should reduce the non-appeal demands made on the Planning Inspectorate. This should include working with local planning authorities to reduce both the number and the length and complexity of their Development Plan Documents, so that there is a reduction in the proportion of resources devoted to testing their soundness.

Agreed, in particular the soundness test for LDF documents need re-visiting. This will require a significant change, given current experience with progressing Core Strategies through the Planning process.

Recommendation 27

There should be a series of reforms to improve the efficiency of the appeals system. These should include:

- PINS setting out further proposals for how to increase the productivity of Inspectors, including ensuring appropriate use of support staff to free up Inspector resource;
- PINS being granted the right to determine the appeal route with a requirement to publish clear criteria for how this new power will be exercised; and
- DCLG revising regulations on appeal processes to reduce the potential for 'casecreep'. This would limit the issues and material considered to those that were before the local authority when it made its decision, subject to the Inspector retaining the power to ask for additional information as he or she sees fit in order to make a proper decision.

Agreed, but the Inspectorate also need to be tougher when deciding how

appeals are decided, as there is a reluctance to challenge an appellants request for a certain procedure, for example where relatively simple case are determined at a hearing, when they could be considered by written representations.

Recommendation 28

Issues relating to the resourcing of PINS should be explored by:

- considering the case for an additional £2 million of public funding for appeals, conditional on the overall proportion of PINS funding on appeal work not being scaled back and on the delivery of stricter performance targets;
- introducing new powers to allow PINS to recover wasted administrative costs; and
- the introduction of cost-recovery for foregone expenses as a result of withdrawn appeals, which could result in savings of up to £1.5 million per year, to be used for appeals.

Resources may be an issues but the same efficiency gain requirements should also be applied to the Inspectorate

Recommendation 29

As a result of the efficiency and resource measures outlined, the targets for appeals processing should be tightened to bring about a step-change in performance:

- the targets for 2007-08 should include a new requirement that 80 per cent of all written representations will be dealt within 16 weeks;
- the targets for 2008-09 should state that 80 per cent of written representations should be conducted within eight weeks and 80 per cent of all hearings within 16 weeks. Inquiries should be subject to bespoke timetabling, with 80 per cent conducted within 22 weeks; and
- from 2008-09 all appeals should be processed within six months. Where it proves necessary to extend this period, the Planning Inspectorate should make a public statement setting out the reasons for the delay (which may include appellants or other parties not being ready to meet timescales).

The setting of appropriate targets is welcomed.

Recommendation 30

That Government considers, in the context of the Lyons Inquiry into Local Government, further fiscal options to ensure that local authorities have the right fiscal incentives to promote local economic growth.

Agreed that this is a sensible approach

Recommendation 31

Business should make use of the potential to offer direct community goodwill payments on a voluntary basis, when this may help to facilitate development.

This needs treating with caution, as it appears very close to buying a planning permission, and goes against the advice in Section 106 of the Act and the Circular, in terms of contributions being reasonable, relevant to planning, related in scale and kind to the development proposed etc. It was to move away from just such unrelated community gains, that the Circular was revised.

Recommendation 32

That DCLG publish a progress report on delivery against these recommendations by the end of 2009, drawing on the views of key stakeholders and users of the planning system.

Agreed, and further reports will be presented as further guidance and consultation emerges

Conclusions

The Barker report includes some commendable recommendations in terms of streamlining the planning process, raising the bar on design, and improving the efficiency of the appeal process. However, there are a number of areas of concern as highlighted in the above commentary on the recommendations, in particular;

- The role and remit of an independent planning commission.
- The removal of the requirement to demonstrate need for major retail development
- The presumption in favour of development
- The introduction of community goodwill payments
- Relaxation of green belt policy

Over the coming months the Government will produce consultation documents that will start a dialogue on the implementation of these recommendations, some of which will be informed by the Lyons review of Local Government finance and the Comprehensive spending review. These will be reported to Members in due course

8. Finance

Not know at this stage

9. Risks and Uncertainties

None of the recommendations are certain at this stage,

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

These recommendations have an impact on the delivery of the aspirations in the Community Strategy ad Corporate Plan, in particular the Achieving and Safe themes, and the cross cutting theme of sustainability

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Barker report 2006

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