Present:- Councillor Hussain (in the Chair) and Councillor Burton.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

60. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11TH DECEMBER, 2007

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement held on 11th December, 2007 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

With regard to Minute No. 58 (Consultation on Improving the Process of Death Certification) a visit to Sheffield City Council had been arranged.

61. ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FUND 2006-7 AND REVIEW OF MEMBERS’ FLEXIBILITY TO CARRY FORWARD UNDERSPEND

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Paul Griffiths, Community Leadership Manager, which provided a summary of spending activity around the Elected Members’ Community Leadership Fund for the year 2006/07.

The report examined the first twelve months of the Members’ flexibility to carry forward any underspend from one financial year to the next.

During the financial year 2006/07 Members committed £20,163.50 representing 65% of the total budget allocation of £31,500, with Members choosing to carry forward £11,336.50 representing 36% of the budget.

Those Members carrying forward funding were surveyed and those eleven Members that carried forward their full allocation indicated that they had identified projects in their early stages of development requiring funding at a later date or had set aside funding to deal with any pressing or urgent issues that may arise.

In terms of 2007/08 the total spend as at 8th January, 2008 stood at £26,355.15, representing 35.4% of the total budget allocation. This compared with 44.4% of the budget spent at this time in the last financial year.

Reference was made to the Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” which advocated the further devolution of budgets to a local level. The Members’ Training and Development Panel
suggested that these proposals be examined in light of the implementation of the White Paper and consideration be given to the future role of the Community Leadership Fund. Whilst the increased allocation of £63,000 per annum for the Community Leadership Fund had been secured until the end of the financial year 2009/10, Local Authorities like Oldham delegated £3,000 per year to individual Ward Members with a further £3,000 per Ward to promote joint working.

Following presentation of this report to the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel, the focus group met on the 31st January, 2008, and several issues were raised. These included:

- The arrangement of a Members’ Seminar to consider the implications arising from the Local Government and Public Health Act 2007 for the Community Leadership Fund.
- To initiate a Scrutiny Review of the Community Leadership Fund and to examine if it was operating effectively.
- Review of the guidance issued to Members.
- Cheques for community groups to be sent to Members for them to present.
- For an annual report to be produced and presented to Area Assemblies.
- To indicate on the application form if monies from a Member were to be used as match funding.

A discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:

- Inflexibility of the fund and the need for further guidance around its operation.
- Publicity of the Community Leadership Fund to ensure community groups could access to prevent surplus going unused and for Ward Representatives to be informed of all community groups in their area.
- Deadline for the 2007/08 fund applications.
- Allocation of resources in other parts of the country.

Resolved:- (1) That the performance of the Community Leadership Fund for 2006/07 be noted.

(2) That the ability of Members to carry forward underspend from one financial year to the next be extended for a further year with a maximum carry forward of one year’s fund allocation (now £1,000) being imposed.

(3) That a Members’ seminar be convened to look at the implications of the Community Leadership Fund arising as a result of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007.
Further to Minute Nos. 39 and 55 of the meetings of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement held on 12th November and 10th December, 2007 respectively, consideration was given to a report presented by Tony Hermann, Communities and Organisations – Growth and Support (COGS), which provided an update on the work and summarised the findings of the Final Report now prepared by COGS.

COGS recommend a combination of Option C and Option B (a Neighbourhood Forum with Street Representatives for appropriate areas) and Option D (budget management).

Tony Hermann summarised the findings which were presented to the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Board on the 31st January, 2008 and explained the mechanics of the involvement for the pilot project and the year long implementation. A launch of the project would take place at a Conference in March, 2008, with proposed neighbourhood involvement sessions for would be forum members.

The structured process, learning events, forum meetings and management involvement links were detailed on the implementation plan that would be circulated to those present and which had been approved by the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Board.

Whilst there was a measured risk with this pilot project, sustainability of this model would be considered throughout and the neighbourhood level of governance supported by the Rotherham South Area Assembly Team.

A discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Inclusion of this model in the formal networks and links to the Area Assembly.
- Involvement of people and the influence of the process.
- Responses to local issues.
- Attraction of local people to the intensive structured forum meetings.
- Sustainability and involvement of local people at a local level.
- Elements of risk and its manageability and the numbers of people involved.
- Involvement of young people in the community.
- Long term planning, participation encouragement and representative suitability assessments.
- Relationship with the Area Assembly, Neighbourhood Charters and role of Street Representatives.
- Logistics of involvement and the networks of support.
- Overall aims and objectives of the pilot project at Eastwood and
Resolved:- That the Model of Neighbourhood Governance, Implementation Plan and the resource necessary to implement the model, as agreed by the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Board on the 31st January, 2008, be noted.

63. LINKS UPDATE

Resolved:- That this item be deferred to the next meeting when more information would then be available about the procurement process and ongoing arrangements.

64. FORWARD PLAN/WORK PROGRAMME FOR COMMUNITIES AND INVOLVEMENT

To assist with the forward planning process it was suggested that a timetable/programme be developed further.

Resolved:- That the forward work plan for Communities and Involvement be included as an agenda item for the next meeting.

65. 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves 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 relates to financial/business affairs).

66. 2008/2009 ICIB GRANT AID - LEGAL ADVICE SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report presented by Zafar Saleem, Community Engagement and Cohesion Manager, which sought authority to enter into grant aid contracts with a number of community legal advice and information services providers for the financial year 2008/2009 pending the outcome of the Scrutiny Review of Advice and Information Services.

Further information was provided on the discussions that had taken place amongst the Council and its partners, the Scrutiny Review of Advice Services which was recommended by the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee and the suggestions that funding for current projects be renewed for a further year.

The funding proposals for the four projects detailed in the report were outlined and the costs involved reported.
Resolved:- That the ICIB grant aid funding for community legal advice and information in the 2008/2009 financial year as detailed in the report be approved.

67. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next scheduled meeting of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement be now altered to take place on Thursday, 13th March, 2008 at 11.30 a.m.