

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL

Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham.

Date: Thursday, 12 June 2008

Time: 3.30 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.
3. Apologies and Communications.
4. Declarations of Interest.
5. Questions from members of the public and the press.

For Decision:-

6. Dates and Times of Future Meetings (list attached) (Page 1)
7. Representatives on Panels and Working Groups (report herewith) (Pages 2 - 3)
8. LGIU - Supporting Councillors - A Manifesto for Councils (report herewith) (Pages 4 - 9)
9. Draft Financial Inclusion Strategy (report herewith) (Pages 10 - 29)
10. Neighbourhood Renewal Fund – Transitional Funding (report herewith) (Pages 30 - 41)
11. Promoting Effective Written Communication and the use of Plain English within RMBC - Progress Report and Results of an Officer Audit (herewith) (Pages 42 - 45)

Minutes - For Information:-

12. Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 3rd April, 2008 (herewith). (Pages 46 - 52)
13. Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement held on 19th May, 2008 (herewith) (Pages 53 - 60)
14. Minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 28th March, 11th and 25th April, 2008 (herewith). (Pages 61 - 84)
15. Minutes of a meeting of the Members' Training and Development Panel held on 17th April, 2008 (herewith) (Pages 85 - 87)

**Date of Next Meeting:-
Thursday, 17 July 2008**

Membership:-

Chairman – Councillor Austen

Vice-Chairman – Councillor J. Hamilton

Councillors:-Cutts, Foden, Dodson, Johnston, Lakin, Littleboy, Mannion, Parker,
Pickering and Tweed

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL

DATES OF MEETINGS 2008/2009

AT 3.30 P.M.

17th July, 2008

11th September, 2008

23rd October, 2008

27th November, 2008

15th January, 2009

26th February, 2009

9th April, 2009

28th May, 2009

9th July, 2009

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL
2.	Date:	12TH JUNE, 2008
3.	Title:	REPRESENTATIVES ON PANELS AND WORKING GROUPS
4.	Programme Area:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE

5. Summary

Confirmation of memberships of the various Council sub-groups for the Municipal Year 2008-2009 is required.

6. Recommendations

- (1) to confirm existing membership where appropriate.**
- (2) to consider revised memberships where necessary.**

7. Proposals and Details

To consider membership of the following:-

a. Members' Consultation Advisory Group

Current Membership – Councillor Littleboy and Councillor Austen as substitute.

b. Health, Welfare and Safety Panel

Current Membership – Councillor Whelbourn and Councillor Foden as substitute.

To confirm Member and Substitute

c. Members' Sustainable Development Group

Current Membership – Councillor Akhtar – ***replacement required***

d. Members' Training and Development Panel

Current Membership – Councillor Austen

e. Looked After Children Sub-Group

Current Membership - Councillor J. Hamilton

Two Members required so to nominate an additional one.

8. Finance

None significant.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Memberships are required to ensure continuity of the Council's business.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Memberships are required to ensure continuity and progression of the Council's business

11. Background Papers and Consultation

None.

Contact Name : Lewis South, Democratic Services Manager
Ext 2055

lewis.south@rotherham.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL
2.	Date:	12TH JUNE 2008
3.	Title:	LGIU:SUPPORTING COUNCILLORS: A MANIFESTO FOR COUNCILS
4.	Programme Area:	Chief Executive's

5. Summary

The Local Government Unit (LGIU) has launched a manifesto asking local authorities to sign up to support and act on a dozen practical measures which could better support existing and future councillors. This was discussed by the Member Development Panel who have referred it to the Democratic renewal Scrutiny Panel.

6. Recommendations

Members are asked to consider whether to recommend to Cabinet that Rotherham MBC endorse the LGIU manifesto of support for councillors.

7. Proposals and Details

Following the publication of the Councillors Commission Report "*Representing the Future*" the Member Development Panel held a special meeting to consider its recommendations. (The minutes of that meeting appear earlier on the agenda of today's meeting).

The LGIU has also looked at the recommendations of the Commission and as a result has launched "*Supporting Councillors: a manifesto for councillors*". The manifesto (attached as Appendix A) comprises 12 action points which local authorities are asked to sign up to in order to "send a clear signal to government that councils are serious about the need to support councillors in order to continue to have effective government".¹

At its April meeting, the Member Development Panel considered the LGIU Manifesto and agreed to endorse the contents. Members of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel are now being asked to consider whether the twelve aims of the Manifesto are ones which this authority would wish to endorse and whether they would wish to request the Cabinet to support this.

8. Finance

Signing up to the manifesto in itself would have no financial implications although undertaking the twelve action points would have. However, some of these are already part of the work currently being undertaken by this Panel and as such already have financial provision.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Over the last five years this authority has worked to develop a culture of support and development for all Members. Signing up to the LGIU Manifesto could enhance this work.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act lays great emphasis on the community leadership role of the local councillor. This also ties in with the council's own "Proud" priority which emphasises how "Active Citizenship and democracy will underpin how Rotherham works... and there will be many opportunities for people to be involved in civic life and local decision making."

11. Background Papers and Consultation

LGIU: Supporting Councillors – A Manifesto for Councillors
Representing the Future: The Report of the Councillors' Commission
Minutes of the special meeting of the MDP on 6th February 2008

Contact: Sioned-Mair Richards, Scrutiny Adviser 01709 822778
sioned-mair.richards@rotherham.gov.uk

¹ Letter to all local authorities from Cllr Dave Wilcox, Chair LGIU



SUPPORTING COUNCILLORS: A MANIFESTO FOR COUNCILS

INDEPENDENT INTELLIGENT INFLUENTIAL

SUPPORTING COUNCILLORS: A MANIFESTO FOR COUNCILS

In promoting this manifesto the LGiU is asking all councils and councillors to implement our 12 action points

1

Promote greater awareness and understanding of what a councillor does so that more people know why they are needed and why they are important.

2

Provide information to all those who work closely with the council to know more about how councillors can get things done, and the limits of their powers.

3

Provide clear information that explains how to become a councillor and the responsibilities involved.

4

Provide training after elections so that members are able to become excellent councillors with a good understanding of the role and responsibilities.

5

Call upon government to revise the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity* so that councils can more actively encourage and better support councillors to communicate with the public.

6

Call upon government to ensure councillors and local government have all the powers and constitutional reforms they need to be able to get things done.

7

Develop mechanisms that devolve resources so that local councillors can effectively influence spending in their locality in line with their community leadership role.

8

Support the development and implementation of a charter containing minimum standards of support to help local councillors carry out their councillor responsibilities effectively.

* For more information on the Code see the LGiU publication, *The Right Side of the Law*

9

Develop with councillors a clear role definition which sets out the main functions and duties and typical demands of being a councillor. The role definition should also help to explain the councillor's role to the public.

10

Support the development of a voluntary national framework of allowances set by an independent panel. The panel should take into account differences in types and sizes of authorities and duties of councillors to benchmark allowances. Councils should consider the framework when setting their own allowances schemes.

11

Review arrangements for working with councillors so that councils adopt modern ways of working, including making best use of technology.

12

Work with businesses to help working councillors to manage their work/ council time better; work with local employers to support employees who become councillors as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes and to help them gain public recognition for it; and publicise the many skills that being a councillor brings to the workplace, to the local authority, to the employee and the benefits that this can bring to employers.

BY SUPPORTING AND ACTING ON THIS MANIFESTO YOU WILL HAVE:

- Ensured government listens and acts on the problems facing local councillors**
- Helped explain what a councillor does and why they are important**
- Helped councillors to represent their local constituents**
- Strengthened democracy and encouraged an excellent range of local candidates**

SUPPORTING COUNCILLORS: A MANIFESTO FOR COUNCILS

The LGiU has been campaigning with local government for almost 25 years. During that time the role of the councillor, as the locally elected representative of their community, has changed enormously. The job is now more time-consuming and complex than ever before. Despite that, for those that do it, it is hugely rewarding.

Helping people to get the services they need and want, making a real difference for the people they live and work amongst is satisfaction enough for some. However many younger and newer councillors are finding it more difficult to carry out the time-consuming voluntary work they do for the council and their political work because they just can't do it effectively alongside their work, home and family life.

The LGiU is urging government to make changes and has contributed to the work of the Councillors Commission report, *Representing the Future*, and the All Party Parliamentary Local Government Group's report, *The Role of Councillors*, on many of these issues.

Councils, as well as government and political parties, can help people to be active and effective councillors, which in turn supports local people to have an active role in the development and delivery of services in their community. Effective councillors are key to effective community engagement.

Signing up to this manifesto means supporting actions that would help make a real difference to existing and future councillors so that more people could seriously consider taking on the role. We believe it is the only way to ensure that local people have a really excellent choice in who represents them and how well communities are able to be represented.

For further information, please visit our website www.lgiu.gov.uk or contact Tracy Gardiner on 020 7554 2836 or email tracy.gardiner@lgiu.org.uk

LGiU

22 Upper Woburn Place
London WC1H 0TB
020 7554 2800
info@lgiu.org.uk
www.lgiu.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	DEMOCRATIC RENEWEL SCRUTINY PANEL
2.	Date:	12th June, 2008
3.	Title:	Draft Financial Inclusion Strategy
4.	Programme Area:	CHIEF EXECUTIVES

5. Summary

Financial exclusion is a major problem for Rotherham's communities, starkly illuminated by the stranglehold of doorstep lending on our estates, the spiralling numbers of debt problems being handled by the advice agencies and the abysmally low levels of financial literacy amongst both young and old.

Lack of access to financial services including affordable credit, face-to-face debt and money advice, and financial capability training leaves many of the most vulnerable members of society unable to fully participate in society and the economy. Tackling the problem in Rotherham through the implementation of the Financial Inclusion Strategy will have a significant impact on disadvantage across the borough and is a vital component of the action needed to break the cycle of disadvantage.

6. Recommendations

That the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel:

- notes and supports the work being undertaken by the Financial Inclusion Planning Group and outlined in the Financial Inclusion Strategy
- provides support for financial inclusion initiatives contained in the action plan
- suggests ways in which the Financial Inclusion Strategy can be more widely promoted and publicised, and incorporated in other strategies boroughwide
- agrees to receiving a further report during 2008 on the Financial Inclusion Action Plan
- request the Member Development Panel to include financial inclusion awareness training as part of the Member development Programme.

7. Proposals and Details

What is financial inclusion and why do we need it?

In Rotherham 24.7% of adults are at risk of financial exclusion. 14,680 adults have no bank account. 13,200 children live in workless households. The sub-prime lending market is worth an estimated £50 million a year, draining money, initiative and self reliance from our most deprived communities.

Rotherham's Financial Inclusion Strategy is designed to overcome some of these challenges. The strategy has been developed in response to the results of extensive consultation with a wide range of organisations currently working in Rotherham.

How far we've come

There is a Financial Inclusion Strategy Team of 15 people drawn from the financial inclusion network of 150+. It includes representatives from the public and voluntary and community sectors and currently meets monthly. It is responsible for drawing together the FI strategy and for securing funding for the appointment of a Financial Inclusion Manager (July 08).

There are already a number of initiatives underway:

- **Access to affordable credit and financial services**

Laser Credit Union provides low cost loans to financially excluded people through the Department for Work and Pensions Growth Fund. Laser also has a successful partnership with RMBC's Homeless Section and Robond to provide loans and bonds for homeless people to access private rented accommodation. There are plans to improve the accessibility of credit union services and also to expand the range of credit union and banking services available to include cash cards, direct debits and standing orders and savings products.

- **Advice provision**

The extension of the Financial Inclusion Fund will enable Rotherham CAB to increase its face to face debt advice service. Partnerships linking advice, financial capability training and access to affordable credit and financial services are in progress.

- **Financial capability**

Several partnerships are in place for the delivery of financial capability training including:

- Laser Credit Union, Barnsley and Rotherham CABx, Rotherham Children's Centres are running a series of financial capability sessions for vulnerable groups.
- Laser Credit Union is working with SY Probation HMP and YOI Doncaster, Northern Counties and South Yorkshire Housing Associations and Clifton School to raise awareness and skills amongst front line staff on financial capability.
- Rotherham Children's Centres and GROW have run a number of day events on financial inclusion.

- RAIN, Phoenix Enterprises and Cedr in running an Advising on Debt training course.

A representative from the Financial Services Authority (FSA) has joined the Financial Inclusion Strategy Team and we will be working with him to maximise the use within the community of FSA resources including:

- work in schools with the Personal Financial Education Group
- work with new parents, in particular promoting the FSA's guide for parents
- work with employees promoting a free educational programme

We also have working relationships with two major national initiatives: the Now let's talk money campaign (Department for Work and Pensions) and the Loan Shark Initiative

What we aim to do

The plan for 2008-2011

Some funding has been secured towards the project for 2008-2011 to employ a small team to implement the strategy. The major elements of the work are:

- Strategic
 - To raise awareness of financial exclusion and its negative impact on individuals and communities
 - To ensure that promoting financial inclusion is included in all policy areas across the borough
 - To co-ordinate activities aimed at increasing financial inclusion and to identify gaps in provision
 - To stimulate innovation and promote good practice
- Practical
 - To deal with all enquiries concerning financial inclusion
 - To expand the existing financial inclusion network (currently over 150 organisations and individuals) and promote better communication, joint working, sharing ideas and resources
 - To encourage partnerships to develop practical initiatives
 - To develop new projects

All of this will be undertaken within the context of working towards ensuring that the progress already achieved can continue beyond 2011.

Work is already underway on producing the action plan under the broad headings of: access to advice, financial services, and financial capability. The main components will be:

- Increased provision of face to face debt and money advice, particularly to vulnerable people
- Increased provision of affordable credit to financially excluded people
- Increased range of financial services, including savings and insurance, for financially excluded people
- Developing financial capability training programmes to be delivered through the financial inclusion network to both front line staff and vulnerable groups

What we need from the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel

Our achievements to date with limited resources have been encouraging. Our vision of what we hope to achieve in the future is clear, focussed and gaining momentum. We welcome your support for the strategy and its ambitions.

Lack of access to basic financial services leaves many of the most vulnerable people in our communities disenfranchised and socially isolated. It affects all aspects of economic and individual activity. We need to ensure that financial inclusion is recognised in all policy areas. This group's support in promoting financial inclusion would be welcomed.

We would welcome the opportunity to report to this group on the action plan later in 2008.

Funding is being sought to ensure that the project can go ahead as planned. Further resources will be needed during 2008-11 for specific initiatives some of which will require the involvement of council departments. We would welcome this group's support in developing and implementing these projects.

Awareness of financial inclusion and its negative impact is neither consistent nor universal. We would welcome the opportunity to run short sessions on this subject for elected members.

8. Finance

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Change in national, regional and local priorities

All the available evidence seems to suggest that financial inclusion will remain a priority for central government, and therefore also regional and local government, at least until the end of the current funding period which is March 2011. There is clear recognition of the implications of not acting now for the national and local economy and for individuals in terms of cost, hardship and disadvantage. Determining an exit strategy post 2011 is an important task for the project.

Failure to identify sufficient funding

Funding the appointments is a first step towards achieving significant progress in implementing the strategy. New initiatives, partnerships and projects will require additional funding. Failure to properly resource these may mean cutting or abandoning some work, which will in turn reduce the impact.

Failure of leadership and the network to drive the work forward

Valuing strong, energetic and flexible leadership qualities, ensuring rigorous management and monitoring and maintaining wide representation and involvement from all sectors is essential to laying the foundations for this innovative project.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Developing a Financial Inclusion Strategy in Rotherham is crucial for the economic, social and cultural development of the Borough. This report addresses the themes of Achieving and Proud in the Rotherham Community Strategy

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Background papers attached:

Draft Financial Inclusion Strategy: "Financial Inclusion in Rotherham 2008-2011"
HM Treasury: "Financial Inclusion: an action plan for 2008-2011", Dec 2007

Consultation process:

26.02.07	First Financial Inclusion Conference, Unity Centre, Rotherham
01.11.07	Second Financial Inclusion Conference, Unity Centre, Rotherham
19.05.07	Draft Financial Inclusion Strategy presented to Achieving Theme Board
08.01.08	Evidence presented to Scrutiny Review on Advice Services

Contact Name : **Jane Woodford** – Independent Consultant working on a three month contract (April – June 08) with Voluntary Action Rotherham for the implementation of the Financial Inclusion Strategy

Tel: 01709 836500 or 0114 2960925

Email: jane.woodford@rcuda.org.uk or jwoodford@hotmail.com

Financial Inclusion in Rotherham

2008-2011

Financial Inclusion in Rotherham: 2008-2011

Contents

Financial Inclusion in Rotherham: 2008-2011	2
Contents	2
1. Rotherham's Financial Inclusion Strategy	2
2. Background	3
3. Key objectives	4
4. What is financial exclusion?	5
5. Government strategy and commitment	6
6. Linkages to key local strategies	7
7. Principles underpinning the strategy	8
8. Building on success	9
9. Resource implications	11
10. Risks	11
Appendix 1 Organisations involved in financial inclusion	12
Appendix 2 Composition and terms of reference for FIPG	14

1. Rotherham's Financial Inclusion Strategy

Rotherham's Financial Inclusion Strategy aims to:

- Co-ordinate existing and develop new local services designed to tackle the effects of financial exclusion
- Stimulate and support innovative ideas in the delivery of interventions to overcome financial exclusion
- Promote and advocate for financial inclusion at local, regional and national level
- Identify, promote and share good practice amongst those working in the field

Financial inclusion is high on the national political agenda. We share the Government's vision which is for a society where individuals:

- are not denied **employment** because they do not have a bank account
- get the **best possible price** for the goods and services they buy
- have **bank accounts** and don't have to pay to access their money
- can easily **access affordable credit** (such as a credit union loan) for unexpected expenses
- can **save** to build assets as a further buffer against financial pressures
- can manage specific risks through **insurance** (e.g. house, car, health)
- are less likely to get into financial difficulties because they are **managing their money** more effectively
- are able to get **information, advice and support** and take early action
- have access to extra **specialist advice and support** where there is serious distress

Rotherham's financial inclusion strategy will develop and deliver interventions that help people overcome the problems of financial exclusion. As a result it will be easier for the people of Rotherham to find out where and how to access services and where to get help.

“For society as a whole, with more people able to participate in the labour market and the wider economy, and fewer people experiencing significant financial difficulty, financial inclusion brings real benefits. And helping the financially excluded – many of whom are the least well-off members of society – is an important way to promote social justice.”¹

2. Background

In Rotherham 24.7% of adults are at risk of financial exclusion. 14,680 adults have no bank account. 13,200 children live in workless households. For many this means increased costs, hardship and disadvantage and loss of opportunities. This creates barriers to employment, increases the risk of ill health and leads to substantial and continued social and financial isolation.

The sub-prime lending market is worth an estimated £50 million a year, draining money, initiative and self reliance from our most deprived communities.

Rotherham’s Financial Inclusion Strategy has been developed in response to the results of widespread consultation with a wide range of organisations currently working in Rotherham.

Work began in 2006 with a survey of organisations and individuals on interest, need and current involvement in financial inclusion. There followed a report which recommended the development of a Financial Inclusion Strategy for Rotherham. A consultation/information sharing event in February 2007 resulted in the formation of a Financial Inclusion Planning Group (FIPG) which drew together the initial draft strategy which, with significant support from the Rotherham Partnership Achieving Board, was agreed in May 2007. A further event in November 2007 continued to raise the profile of financial inclusion in the borough, further strengthened the network, stimulated new ideas and interest and provided a much needed forum for discussion, comment and sharing information about current activities.

A database now exists of over 150 organisations and individuals identified as either already engaged in or are interested in being involved in financial inclusion work². This forms the basis of a network through which future consultation, the development of initiatives and monitoring will be channelled.

Funding has been secured to ensure the creation of Financial Inclusion posts for the period 2008 to 2011, the key recommendation arising from the initial work of the FIPG³ in 2007. The focus of the work will be on coordinating and expanding the financial inclusion work that has already begun, identifying and promoting good practice, and motivating others to work together to achieve greatly improved levels of financial inclusion in the borough.

The key FIPG recommendations are:

- To secure funding for the appointment of a Financial Inclusion post(s)

¹ *Financial Inclusion: the way forward*, HM Treasury, March 2007

² Appendix 1 Organisations involved in Financial Inclusion

³ Appendix 2 Composition and terms of reference for FIPG

- There should be both a strategic and practical element to the work indicating the need for two posts, a manager and a project worker
- The financial inclusion work should be located within the voluntary and community sector and be hosted by Voluntary Action Rotherham
- The project should be for a minimum of three years
- The Financial Inclusion Planning Group should continue to oversee the project

Driving the work forward will require focus, resources, the backing and oversight of the network and the establishment of a thorough monitoring system. The action plan attached to this document is still to be expanded to include benchmarking and targets and there is clearly an ongoing need to identify funding sources to enable this and additional work to be progressed.

3. Key objectives

Key elements of the strategy and action plan are:

- 1. To maintain and develop the financial inclusion network.**
A database already exists that will need to be extended and maintained. Mechanisms for ensuring good communications and referrals between organisations and agencies will be necessary. Good practice, both in Rotherham, and nationally should be identified and applied locally.
- 2. To undertake ongoing research to identify gaps in services, and to promote existing services.**
Mapping existing services and gaps in services will be an ongoing exercise and will include developing strategies for improving provision. There will be an emphasis on improving communications, coordination and referral systems. We will focus on raising awareness of both the local level of need and the wider implications of financial exclusion and promoting the services already available.
- 3. To support the increase in advice provision.**
A shortfall in specialist debt, housing and benefits advice has already been identified. The mapping exercise will identify the level of need of this and other service requirements and provide data to aid the prioritisation of delivery.
- 4. To support the increase in and promotion of credit union services.**
Membership of a credit union is now available to all residents and workers in Rotherham Borough. The challenges posed by doorstep lenders and illegal loan sharks remain formidable. Credit unions already offer affordable credit to those whose alternatives are almost always very high cost, exploitative, and leading to a downward spiral into unmanageable debt and poverty. Credit unions also offer savings opportunities, which for many on low incomes is a new experience but which can be the basis for increasing self reliance and improved financial capability. Other services exist or are being developed, including life and other insurances, direct benefit payments, use of automated payment systems, direct debits and standing orders. There is considerable scope for extending the appeal and accessibility of credit unions to a much wider community than at present⁴.

⁴ Currently less than 2% of Rotherham's population takes advantage of credit union membership

5. To support the expansion of provision of financial capability learning opportunities.

Financial capability is about being able to manage money, keeping track of finances; planning ahead; choosing financial products; and staying informed about financial matters. Work currently underway includes raising awareness, introducing self help materials and running training sessions. This very positive initial step will be made more effective with better co-ordination, signposting and communication. Embedding financial capability awareness and training within other services will be addressed through the strategy.

6. To embed this strategy in other key local strategies, and engage with national strategies and campaigns.

Support for this strategy will be sought from across the borough and we will seek to embed this strategy and its elements in other key local strategies and plans.

We have already engaged with national strategies and campaigns including:

- Growth Fund (Department of Work and Pensions) – a partnership with Sheffield Credit Union to provide low cost loans to financially excluded people
- Face to face debt advice (BERR - Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform – previously Department of Trade and Industry)
- Now Let's Talk Money Campaign (Department of Work and Pensions)
- Financial Inclusion Beacon Scheme (we have links with the three current beacon authorities, Sheffield, Leeds and South Tyneside)
- Loan Shark Initiative (BERR).

4. What is financial exclusion?

The disadvantage that flows from poverty, debt and low income has become an ongoing issue for successive governments. The use of the term financial exclusion recognises that failure to engage in the financial world has a major impact on economic activity at national, regional, local and individual levels and also greatly exacerbates disadvantage and social isolation. The following quotes are taken directly from recent HM Treasury publications:

“Financial inclusion is about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access the financial services products needed to participate fully in modern-day society and the economy. Financial exclusion affects some of the most vulnerable members of society – extensive research has shown that those living on low incomes, and experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage, are most likely to be affected by financial exclusion. Tackling this problem, therefore, is an important part of social policy and social justice and action to break the inter-generational cycle of disadvantage.”⁵

A small but significant minority of people are unable to access even the most basic financial services and instead find themselves trapped outside the financial mainstream. For these people, financial exclusion causes extra costs and real disadvantage in three ways:

- *first, it makes day-to-day money management more difficult and expensive, and can make it harder to find a job;*

⁵ *Financial Inclusion: an action plan for 2008-11*, HM Treasury, December 2007

- *second, financial exclusion makes it harder for families to plan for the future and manage lumpy spending; and*
- *third, if things go wrong, financial exclusion makes people more vulnerable to financial distress and a spiral of debt, poverty and hardship.*⁶

CASE STUDY

Mobile Money - 200 years after the abolition of slavery

Sarah, a single mother of three, has multiple debt problems. She's been struggling with her finances for over ten years and debt and its related stresses have almost become a way of life for her. Almost all her debts are to non-mainstream lenders and total around £10,000. Sarah is a care assistant and relies on her car to get her to work.

Things have been particularly tough since her husband left last year. Around five years ago Sarah called Mobile Money through the Rotherham Advertiser who claimed "instant credit – no credit checks" and who were prepared to lend her money if she used her car as security. Sarah was so desperate for cash to pay bills and buy food that she didn't pay much attention to the interest rate or conditions. She received the loan in the form of a cash advance of £567. On the first of the following five months Sarah had to pay £93.38 with a final payment of £510.30 on the first of the sixth month. The total to be repaid would be **£977.20 back at an APR of 348.1%**

Sarah paid for five months but didn't have the £510.30 for the sixth month. Mobile Money insisted that the agreement must be rewritten or the car surrendered, which would mean being unable to work. This rewriting of the agreement has happened between two and four times a year for the last five years. Each time the last payment is set at such a high level that Sarah is faced with the choice of giving up the car or re-signing another agreement. The amount she has paid them is huge (unfortunately lost documentation makes an accurate calculation impossible).

Mobile Money use the Bill of Sale Act 1882 as the basis of these agreements. They make their money from taking as many steps as possible to ensure that the loan is rewritten or "churned" as it is known in the business. Repeat custom is where the real profit is. It is not illegal.

The impact on Sarah has been vast. Her marriage has broken down, she doesn't have enough money to feed her kids properly and they haven't had a holiday for over ten years. She also suffers from anxiety and depression that is linked to her debts.

5. Government strategy and commitment

The Government has, since 1997, taken action to tackle the problem of financial exclusion. In 2004, the national financial inclusion strategy was launched, backed by the £120 million Financial Inclusion Fund, which has helped provide hundreds of thousands of people with access to a bank account, affordable credit, and free money advice.

⁶ *Financial Inclusion: the way forward*, HM Treasury, March 2007

In the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2007, the Government renewed its commitment to financial inclusion, with a new fund of £130 million for 2008-11⁷ which is to be directed as follows:

- £76m for face to face debt advice. This project has already recruited and trained 500 debt and money advisors and helped over 66,000 people with their debt problems. Rotherham Citizens' Advice Bureau currently employs four staff to provide this service locally. In the previous round to May 08 the CAB managed £12,190,626 of debt of which £2,189,472 was arrears of payments.
- £38 m to increase consumer access to affordable credit through credit unions and other 3rd sector lenders. This consists largely of the Growth Fund which provides small loans, typically £500 or less made often to people who might otherwise be dependent on expensive or illegal alternatives such as loan sharks. The initiative also aims to increase the take up of basic bank accounts, and support initiatives such as free ATMs in low income areas. In Rotherham the Growth Fund is delivered through Laser Credit Union. The project has so far resulted in a doubling of the credit union's membership and a trebling of the credit union's loan book.
- £12m for "financial inclusion champions". This is to fund dedicated staff to work to promote financial inclusion locally with a focus on increasing the availability and awareness of home contents insurance for low-income people, in particular in areas affected by floods. The aim is to establish "champions" to work with local authorities, social landlords and the Association of British Insurers and focus on home insurance.
- £5m for prison-focused money advice in every region in England and Wales and working with Legal Services Commission and National Offender Management Service.
- £2m Saving for Christmas. This is an awareness campaign arising out of the Farepak collapse.
- Loan shark initiative extended. Dedicated teams are employed to increase awareness of alternative legal ways to borrow money and give victims of illegal lending the confidence to overcome fear and intimidation and report loan sharks. There will be increased prosecution of illegal loan sharks. This project now includes Rotherham.

6. Linkages to key local strategies

A Rotherham financial inclusion strategy should be seen within the wider strategic vision for the borough, which is set out in the Community Strategy. Improving the quality of life for people living in Rotherham underpins the strategic objectives spelled out in the Community Strategy.

The delivery of a financial inclusion strategy will support several of the broad objectives set out in the Community Strategy. In particular, it will directly help deliver the key partnership priorities:

- Maximise economic and other opportunities to reduce disadvantage and raise quality of life and living standards, particularly in the most deprived communities (*ACHIEVING*)
- Reduce the number of working age adults lacking essential skills (*LEARNING*)

⁷ *Financial Inclusion: an action plan for 2008-11*, HM Treasury, December 2007

Financial inclusion has been identified as an important issue in Rotherham's new Working Neighbourhoods Plan. This plan has been written as a result of recognition by the Rotherham Partnership that whilst the prosperity of the Borough is generally improving this has not materially impacted on our most disadvantaged communities. The Working Neighbourhoods Plan is a focused strategic approach that will genuinely address the gaps and needs around enterprise, employment and economic investment within these communities.

Our financial inclusion work will also support the delivery of the Local Area Agreement and the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. In the widest sense a co-ordinated financial inclusion approach will lead to stronger and safer communities, and help improve health. In particular, it will help address the LAA Cross Cutting objective of tackling and further reducing inequalities by putting in place actions to ensure that all communities are able to access financial services.

7. Principles underpinning the strategy

The principles which underpin this strategy are as follows:

- a) **Joint working** – The extension and strengthening of existing partnerships will exploit the value of co-operation, pooling resources, and sharing information and ideas. We aim to engage with the three key sectors: the voluntary and community sector, the public sector notably the Local Strategic Partnership and RMBC, and the private sector, particularly the banking industry and other financial services.
- b) **Communication** – Communication within and between organisations will be improved and we will develop more effective signposting systems. We will develop and expand the financial inclusion network and introduce a web based information forum.
- c) **Relevance** – To ensure widespread engagement and commitment and for the strategy to be effective and sustainable activities must be directly relevant to the organisations involved. Organisations will be encouraged to be responsible for areas of work that will both make an impact on financial exclusion and enhance and complement their role. The activities will reflect the issues raised by the network.
- d) **Practical, evidence based** – Initiatives will be practical and evidence based. We aim to build on and learn from the many innovations established in South Yorkshire and elsewhere.
- e) **Range** – There should be a wide range of projects – large, small, borough-wide, pilots in specific neighbourhoods, as part of national initiatives, long, medium and short term etc. Through immediate small scale successes, we will retain momentum, enthusiasm and maximise promotion and development potential, while still focusing on the grander, longer term goals.
- f) **Work in progress** – The strategy and the action plan require ongoing monitoring and review. Opportunities for consultation and membership of the network will be diverse, open and inclusive.
- g) **Regional** – Working with others active in the area of financial inclusion in South Yorkshire and beyond will build on existing opportunities and will strengthen and complement work in Rotherham.

8. Building on success

There are already a number of initiatives underway. Some are already wholly or partially funded. All require continued promotion, co-ordination, monitoring and support.

1. Access to affordable credit

- a. **DWP Growth Fund 2** – builds on Growth Fund 1 which has been delivered very successfully by Laser Credit Union. The Growth Fund provides affordable loans to financially excluded people.
- b. **Rent in Advance** – is a successful partnership between RMBC homeless section, Robond (Rotherham Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme) and Laser Credit Union to provide bonds and loans for homeless people to access private rented accommodation.
- c. **Banking services** – This is a proposed partnership between Rotherham Credit Unions and Halifax Bank of Scotland to provide bank account services (including cash card, direct debits etc) for credit union members.
- d. **Direct benefit payments** – This is where credit union members can have their benefits (including the new Housing Allowance) paid direct into their credit union account and their loan and savings payments deducted automatically.
- e. **Expansion of credit union services** – Discussions are underway for the use of Housing Offices as credit union collection points, the possible expansion of Rotherham Brought Together (RBT) Customer Service Centres to include a credit union presence, and the use of a swipe card for LA payments/rent/credit union payments.

2. Advice provision

- a. **Financial Inclusion Fund** – the extension to this fund has enabled Rotherham CAB to retain three debt caseworkers for the main FIF project and one debt caseworker for the FIF Disability project. The new fund means that there will be capacity to take on 800 new clients each year. Phoenix Enterprises has also delivered Financial Inclusion Fund debt advice through the Legal Services Commission.

3. Financial capability learning opportunities

- a. **Financial capability**
 - i. A partnership with Barnsley Citizens' Advice Bureau, Rotherham's Children's Centres, Laser Credit Union, and Rotherham Citizens' Advice Bureau will deliver financial capability training sessions to residents of **Chesterhill** (house clearance area) and surrounding area.
 - ii. A partnership between Rotherham's Children Centres, GROW and supported by Yorkshire Forward is putting on financial inclusion information days at Children's Centres in Rotherham.
- b. **Debt advice training course** – an Open College accredited course "Advising on Debt" will be run by Rotherham Advice and Information Network.
- c. **Eastwood and Springwell Gardens Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder** – this is a one year project for Laser Credit Union to employ a Development Worker on three initiatives:

- i. **schools work** – the aim is to create a long term link with Clifton Comprehensive School to provide information to pupils about credit unions, debt and money matters and financial capability
 - ii. **work with South Yorkshire Probation Services and HM Prison and Young Offenders Institution Doncaster** – this consists of awareness raising and training for staff, and promoting credit unions and basic bank accounts.
 - iii. **work with Registered Social Landlords** – further awareness raising and training for staff, this time with Northern Counties and South Yorkshire Housing Associations.
 - d. **Maximizing the use within the community of resources available from the Financial Service Authority (FSA).**
 - i. **Schools work** – The Personal Financial Education Group (PFEG) is delivering teacher training to secondary schools supporting the introduction of Financial Capability into the curriculum. The aim is to create links with all schools as they commence the teaching of Financial Capability.
 - ii. **New Parents** – The FSA’s guide for new parents is distributed to prospective new parents via midwives and to a wider audience via Children’s Centres. The aim is to maximize awareness of its availability and use through established media channels
 - iii. **Workplace** – A free educational programme for employees is run by the FSA. The aim is to identify and introduce suitable employers to the programme
 - iv. **Work with intermediaries** – Supporting the work with new parents and in the workplace, the FSA has produced training materials for those working with targeted groups. Training courses are also available for people working with groups such as those Not in Employment, Education or Training to help them deliver Financial Capability education. The aim is to ensure these groups are aware of, obtain and use the resources available
 - v. **Consumer Information** – All of the FSA’s work is supported with a range of consumer guides and website www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk The aim is to increase awareness and use of all of these free resources through partner organisations

4. **Now let’s talk money campaign/Financial Inclusion Champions**

The Department of Work and Pensions “Now let’s talk money” campaign has been active in the Yorkshire and Humber region raising awareness of the impact of financial exclusion and encouraging joint work and initiatives aimed at tackling it. The project will be replaced in July 08 by the Financial Inclusion Champions initiative which aims to engage Local Authorities more in financial inclusion, promote take up of the Growth Fund, and focus on increased take up of insurance especially home contents insurance.

5. **Loan shark initiative**

This initiative is funded through Central Government and is an additional resource for Rotherham Trading Standards Department. Its role is to raise awareness of illegal lending, secure prosecutions and help customers to access legal sources of affordable credit, face to face money advice and other forms of support. The initiative’s Financial Inclusion Partnership Officer works across the region and is actively involved with Rotherham’s Financial Inclusion Planning Group and other local organisations addressing financial exclusion.

6. Savings

- a. **Credit union savings account** – This new savings account is being introduced by Laser Credit Union in addition to the traditional dividend earning account, and will guarantee a competitive interest rate on savings over £750.
- b. **Savings Gateway** – This government initiative has been successfully piloted elsewhere and is to be extended nationally in 2010. It will provide cash incentives for financially excluded people to save regularly. Credit unions are well placed to become service providers.

9. *Resource implications*

Already some resources have been accessed for the projects mentioned, but more will be necessary to effectively deliver on this strategy, namely:

- a. Creation of Financial Inclusion posts with administrative support
- b. Maintaining an effective financial inclusion network
- c. Interagency and volunteer training
- d. Marketing and publicity
- e. Maintaining and expanding advice provision
- f. Maintaining and expanding access to credit union services
- g. Expanding and embedding financial capability training in other services

10. *Risks*

The main risks attached to this work have so far been identified as follows:

a) **Change in national, regional and local priorities**

All the available evidence seems to suggest that financial inclusion will remain a priority for central government, and therefore also regional and local government, at least until the end of the current funding period which is March 2011. There is clear recognition of the implications of not acting now for the national and local economy and for individuals in terms of cost, hardship and disadvantage. Determining an exit strategy post 2011 is an important task for the project.

b) **Failure to identify sufficient funding**

Funding the appointments is a first step towards achieving significant progress in implementing the strategy. New initiatives, partnerships and projects will require additional funding. Failure to properly resource these may mean cutting or abandoning some work, which will in turn reduce the impact.

c) **Failure of leadership and the network to drive the work forward**

Appointing the right people to motivate and inspire and bring together all those in a position to influence policy, provide funding, and to deliver services, advice, information and support on the ground will be key to the success of the strategy. The appointments process and the management and support structures will need to be rigorous and focussed to ensure flexibility, innovation and energy to flourish.

Appendix 1 *Organisations involved in financial inclusion*

2010 Rotherham
Academy for Community Leadership
Action Housing
Age Concern Rotherham
Apna Haq
Aston Methodist Church
Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce
Barnsley Citizens' Advice Bureau
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Business in Education South Yorkshire
Canklow Community Partnership
Catcliffe and Brinsworth Community Partnership
Children's and Young People's Services RMBC
Children's Health & Disabilities RMBC
Choices and Options
Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber
Churches Together in North East Lincs
Clifton Comprehensive School
Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Co-operative Bank
Danum Credit Union
Dearne Valley College
DebtCred
Dinnington Area Regeneration Trust
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Early Years, Childcare and Extended Services RMBC
Eastwood and Springwell Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder
Education Action Zone
Financial Inclusion Services (Yorkshire) Ltd
Financial Services Authority, Financial Capability, Retail Themes
GROW
Halifax Bank of Scotland
HMP and YOI Doncaster
High St Centre, Rawmarsh
Homeless Link
Illegal Money Lending Team
Jobcentre Plus
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council
Laser Credit Union
LH Consultancy
Maltby Sure Start
Mental Health Services
Mind
National Children's Homes Bridges Project
Nord Anglia Lifetime Development
Northern College

Now Let's Talk Money Campaign
Personal Finance Education Group
Phoenix Enterprises
Rawmarsh Sure Start
Refugee Housing Association
Rethink
Ricochet
Robond
Rookwood Bail Hostel
Rotherfed
Rotherham & Dearne Valley/Central Methodist
Rotherham Advice and Information Network
Rotherham Advocacy Partnership
Rotherham Asylum Project Team
Rotherham Central Children's Centre
Rotherham Citizens' Advice Bureau
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
Rotherham Disability Information Service
Rotherham Homeless Project
Rotherham Local Strategic Partnership
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Rotherham Primary Care Trust
Rotherham Welfare Rights & Money Advice Service
Rotherham Women's Refuge
Rothersave Credit Union
Ryton Credit Union
SCOPE Rotherham Day Service
Sheffield Citizens' Advice Bureau
Smile Consultancy
South Yorkshire Police
Rotherham SureStart
Swinton Community Partnership
The Hope of Rotherham Christian Church
Thomas Rotherham College
Together for Regeneration
Voluntary Action Rotherham
Wath upon Dearne Community Partnership
Wheels to Work
Winterhill City Learning Centre
Workers Education Association Rotherham
Yorkshire Forward
Youthstart

Appendix 2 Composition and terms of reference for FIGP

The Financial Inclusion Planning Group consists of approximately 12 representatives from a number of organisations including RMBC, the Local Strategic Partnership, housing services, health services, mental health, children and young people's services, credit unions, the advice sector, the Financial Services Authority, Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform and the Department of Work and Pensions. The aim is to expand the range of organisations represented. The structure of the FIGP has been refined to incorporate three subgroups which reflect both national and local objectives: access to affordable credit, face to face debt and money advice and financial capability work. Membership of the subgroups is open to those active in the field and aims to focus on the practical application of our strategic objectives.

Members of the FIGP

David	Bagnall	Housing Income Controller	2010 Rotherham Ltd
Annette	Cassam	Chief Executive	Rotherham Citizens Advice Bureau
Aileen	Chambers	Childcare Sustainability Manager	Early Years, Childcare and Extended Services
Michael	Clark	Proud Theme Manager	Rotherham Partnership
Joanne	Dearnley	Local Partnership Manager	Jobcentre Plus
Anthony	Dockray	Acting Manager	Rotherham Welfare Rights & Money Advice Service
Keith	Dodson	Head of Business Development	Voluntary Action Rotherham
Ruth	Fletcher-Brown	Public Health Specialist	Rotherham Primary Care Trust
Mike	McAughtrie	Stakeholder Manager	Now Let's Talk Money Campaign, Department of Work and Pensions
Diane	Moseley		
Glynis	Sharpe	Financial Inclusion Partnership Officer	Illegal Money Lending Team, Trading Standards Dept, Birmingham City Council
Christine	Staniforth	Housing Income Controller	2010 Rotherham Ltd
Jeff	Wharfe	Achieving Theme Manager	Rotherham Partnership
Ian	Willans	Employer Relationship Officer	Financial Services Authority
Jane	Woodford	Independent Consultant	

Terms of reference for FIGP

Purpose, Role and Responsibilities

The Financial Inclusion Planning Group (FIGP) will co-ordinate the activities of the partners to help achieve the actions agreed in the Financial Inclusion Strategy Action Plan. The group will work to develop specific proposals aimed at increasing financial inclusion and liaising with members of the network to secure agreement for their implementation.

The FIGP will co-ordinate the delivery of the three main identified strands of work which together will form the focus of the financial inclusion strategy:

1. Access to debt/money advice

Developing and implementing a strategy to co-ordinate advice provision, specifically benefit/money/debt advice, across the city to ensure that resources are maximised and services are complementary. Encouraging the greatest level of co-ordination across the network in advice and related work especially where it involves vulnerable groups and individuals.

2. Access to affordable credit and banking services

Developing and implementing a strategy to increase access to appropriate affordable credit and banking services primarily, but not exclusively, through an integration and expansion of credit union facilities.

3. Financial capability

Developing a programme of community based education for all age ranges to support improved financial capability.

Consultation and engagement, diversity and equality

The development of all three work strands will need to include consultation and engagement with people living or working in the borough and will address diversity and equality considerations by including provision for those working directly with groups vulnerable to predatory and exploitative lending and financial exclusion.

Economic and regeneration impacts

In addition to the social impact of financial exclusion on individuals and communities the FIPG will prioritise consideration of issues which can impact on regeneration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and assess the economic effects on these neighbourhoods and the borough economy. The planning group will work with and co-ordinate the efforts of members of the network in securing funding for initiatives which will assist in taking forward the aims of the strategy.

Accountability

The work of the planning group will be reported within Voluntary Action Rotherham, the Rotherham Local Strategic Partnership and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. Minutes of meetings will be made available to members of the network and publicly on the VAR's website.

Meetings

The FIPG will meet bi-monthly and subgroups covering the three work strands will meet as appropriate to assist in the development of initiatives.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel
2.	Date:	12th June, 2008
3.	Title:	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund – Transitional Funding
4.	Directorate:	Chief Executive's Department

5. Summary

In December 07 RMBC was notified that it did not qualify for Working Neighbourhoods Funding due to the improvement in our comparative position within the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007, however, as a previous NRF area it will receive transitional funding over 2 years of £2.95m.

RMBC Cabinet have agreed a number of transitional themes and a process for the commissioning of this transitional funding

6. Recommendations

That panel members consider and comment on the Commissioning process for NRF Transitional Funding.

7. Proposals and Details

The NRF Accountable Body team within Chief Executive's will co-ordinate the new commissioning process, which is captured at annex A – Draft Commissioning Plan. Theme Board proposals will be drawn together, implemented and monitored through this team. Discussions with partners through the Chief Executive Officer Group of Rotherham Partnership have stressed the importance of developing a transparent and accountable process, clearly separating the roles of partners between that of governance and priority setting and the process for identifying the most appropriate delivery organisations.

Much of the process has been drawn from learning from previous rounds of NRF and in particular the findings from an internal evaluation of the 2006-08 round and the findings of this Scrutiny Panel. Key issues which have been addressed through the new round include:

- Clear roles and responsibilities within the process
- Clear, open and transparent processes and timetables
- Fair procurement processes, with open tendering in place where possible
- Focus on specific areas of priority rather than covering a wide range of issues
- Roles of elected members and area assemblies
- One single process

It is worth noting that Annex A is still in draft form and whilst it has already been considered by Cabinet and Rotherham Partnership, it is very much an evolving document and a further draft is due to be produced shortly. This can therefore take on board comments from this Scrutiny Panel.

8. Finance

Rotherham will receive £2.95m transitional funding over two years and will receive no further NRF or WNF. It has been clarified with Government Office that within the carry forward requirements of the Area Based Grant it is possible to spend the allocation over 3 years.

This paper also contains proposals to roll the Community Cohesion element of the Area Based Grant into this commissioning process.

Financial Summary:

E,E &FI	PCSOs	VCS Devpt	Area Based	Community Cohesion	POYP	Total
£1.4m	£0.25m	£0.46m	£0.46m	£0.54m (ABG)	£0.38m	£2.95m (TF) £0.54m (ABG)

9. Risks and Uncertainties

This mostly relates to the issues of uncertainty around how the funding will be allocated and the delivery organisations that will be commissioned to deliver within the framework.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The commissioning process will focus on key elements of the community strategy, in particular the Achieving, Safe and Proud themes.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

WNF guidance

Contact Name : Deborah Fellowes, Policy and External Affairs Manager, ext 2769, email Deborah.fellowes@rotherham.gov.uk

Annex A

Rotherham Partnership Commissioning Plan

2008-2011

5th Draft 17th April 2008

Introduction.

“Commissioning is the process of specifying, securing and monitoring services to meet people’s needs at a strategic level. This applies to all services, whether they are provided by the local authority, NHS, other public agencies, or by the private and voluntary sectors.”

The above definition of commissioning is from the Audit Commission and is adopted in RMBC’s Corporate Commissioning Framework. This plan outlines a commissioning process drawn from the framework and has been guided specifically by the checklist contained within it. It also draws on learning from previous commissioning processes; NRF 2006-08 and Childrens Fund. It has also taken into account the findings from the recent evaluation and scrutiny review of the NRF Programme 2006-08. Finally it has been developed in consultation with the relevant funding bodies, in this case Yorkshire Forward and GOYH.

The aim is to provide the following:

- A streamlined light touch process
- Transparency regarding how the funds are allocated and how providers are identified.
- Development of projects which continue the impetus created by the NRF programmes and reduce the requirement for continued funding.
- Identification of delivery that will be the most efficient and manageable within the tight timeframe available.
- Evaluation of impact to be built into the process from the outset.

Funding Streams.

The funding streams covered by this commissioning plan are as follows:

1. Area Based Grant 2008-2011 – Community Cohesion £540,000, Preventing Extremism £361,000 (subject to approval), WNF/NRF Transitional Funding £2,950,000.
2. ERDF – Priority 3 approximately £8,000,000 (figure to be confirmed).

Guiding Principles.

Partners have identified some key principles that should guide the development and implementation of the individual programmes of activity. These key principles have been identified to ensure that activity meets the overall aims outlined above.

- **Impact:** Activity will address agreed priorities with a clear, logical link between the activity and impact on the priority outcomes. In particular there will be a demonstrable impact on agreed indicators (either from the 198 or locally defined ones). This will be evaluated from the outset.

- **Best Practice:** The proposals will build on activities within previous rounds of NRF, Objective 1, SRB and SRIP that have been shown to have had success and developed models of good practice. There will be no more funding for Rotherham under either of these streams therefore the emphasis will be on consolidating their legacy and ensuring that good practice is embedded in future service delivery.
- **Partnership:** The proposals will be developed and implemented in partnership via the Theme Board structures outlined. Lead Theme Boards would be expected to identify the involvement and role of partners.
- **Sustainability:** It is a fundamental requirement that activities supported will be sustainable in the longer term. See comments in Best Practice – pilot activity and/or one-off “projects” will only be considered if the activity starts to address gaps in existing provision and has a very clear forward strategy.
- **Value for Money and Efficiency:** As the Accountable Body for the transitional funding, Rotherham MBC has the responsibility to make final decisions regarding the allocation of the funds. It must therefore implement a programme management regime which ensures value for money and will also have a responsibility to audit expenditure within the programme. The Accountable Body Team within the Chief Executive’s Office will be responsible for ensuring that projects comply with all requirements and for managing the overall programme. The ERDF funding will be the subject of a contract with Environmental and Development Services within RMBC therefore the contract for Theme 1 will be managed through this route.
- **Equity:** This is a targeted commissioning approach therefore it is inevitable that direct contracting with providers of projects will take place. It also important that all such decisions are open and accountable and that a clear rationale exists. Where there is any doubt tendering or bidding processes will be used and a fair distribution of resources will be crucial. Finally it is important that projects do not inadvertently create or re-inforce any inequalities. In order to assess this an equalities impact assessment will be incorporated into the process at both theme and project level.

The Commissioning Strategy.

The strategy for commissioning activity has been based on partners identification of 6 themes, drawn directly from the Community Strategy and LAA. In addition each of the 6 themes helps to deliver elements of specific strategies or plans within the Rotherham Partnership structure. The aim is to develop these into discrete programmes of activity to operate flexibly over the three year period. A summary of these can be found below.

Theme 1: Employment, Enterprise and Financial Inclusion			
Community Strategy Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote innovation, enterprising behaviour, competitiveness and sustainability (Achieving) • Promote business start ups, growth and inward investment (Achieving) • Maximise employment opportunities for all by supporting disadvantaged people into work (Achieving) 		LAA Indicators: Existing LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new start business located in RMBC owned business centres or registered with Business Link South Yorkshire • Number of IB claimants into work for at least 16 hours per week for 13 consecutive weeks as measured by Rotherham Phoenix Centre New LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall employment rate • Working age people on out of work benefits • VAT registration rate 	
Proposed 3 year allocation: £1.4m (TF) £8m ERDF (subject to YF bidding process)	Lead Theme Board: Achieving	Supporting Theme Board: Learning Work and Skills Board	Key Strategies or Plans: Working Neighbourhoods Plan Economic Masterplan ERDF Priority 3 Prospectus
Theme 2: VCS Development			
Community Strategy Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the means for citizens, the VCS and business to influence decision making (Proud) • Support a thriving, sustainable and diverse Voluntary and Community sector (Proud) 		LAA Indicators: New LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality • Environment for a thriving third sector 	
Proposed 3 year allocation: £0.46m (TF)	Lead Theme Board: Proud	Supporting Theme Board:	Key Strategies or Plans: Voluntary Sector Strategy

Theme 3: Area Based Budgets			
Community Strategy Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the local environmental quality of our neighbourhoods (Safe) • Provide the means for citizens, the voluntary and community sector and businesses to influence decision making (Proud) • Build and support responsive and cohesive communities through neighbourhood management arrangements (Safe) 		LAA Indicators: Existing LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of residents reporting via survey that various forms of anti-social behaviour are either a 'very big' or 'fairly big' problem • Number of incidents of fly-tipping as recorded on Flycapture database • Number of incidents of graffiti as reported to RBT's CRM database New LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of principal roads where maintenance should be considered • % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality • Perceptions of anti social behaviour 	
Proposed 3 year allocation: £0.10m (TF) development fund £0.36m (TF) Area Assemblies	Lead Theme Board: Safe	Supporting Theme Board: Proud	Key Strategies or Plans: Closing the Gap Area Based Plans
Theme 4: Community Cohesion			
Community Strategy Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and support responsive and cohesive communities through neighbourhood management arrangements (Safe) • Promote understanding, respect and belonging within Communities and the Borough (Proud) 		LAA Indicators: Existing LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of residents reporting via survey that various forms of anti-social behaviour are either a 'very big' or 'fairly big' problem New LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of anti-social behaviour • % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their area 	
Proposed 3 year allocation: £0.54m (ABG) £0.33 (Preventing Extremism)	Lead Theme Board: Cohesive Communities Partnership (Proud)	Supporting Theme Board: Safe	Key Strategies or Plans: Community Cohesion Strategy
Theme 5: Positive Opportunities for Young People			
Community Strategy Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote understanding, respect and belonging within communities and the Borough (Proud) • Create specific initiatives to 		LAA Indicator: New LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People's participation in positive activities • % of people who believe people 	

maximise the engagement and participation in learning of people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods		from different backgrounds get on well together in their area	
Proposed 3 year allocation: £0.38m (TF)	Lead Theme Board: Proud	Supporting Theme Board: Alive Safe Proud CYP Board Learning	Key Strategies or Plans: CYP Plan
Theme 6: Police Community Safety Officers			
Community Strategy Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle and reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour (Safe) • Reduce the fear and perception of crime (Safe) 		LAA Indicators: Existing LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of residents reporting via survey that various forms of anti-social behaviour are either a 'very big' or 'fairly big' problem New LAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of anti-social behaviour • Adult re-offending rates for those under probation supervision • Assault with injury crime rate • First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 	
Proposed 3 year allocation: £0.25 (TF)	Lead Theme Board: Safe	Supporting Theme Board: Safer Rotherham Partnership	Key Strategies or Plans: Community Safety Strategy

Methodology.

This section explains fully and clearly the process that will be used to commission activities, which has been divided into six separate stages.

Stage 1 – The development of theme based plans. A standard format has been developed for this to ensure that a consistent approach is developed for all six themes (Template 1). It should be noted, however, that Theme 1 is for a substantially larger amount of money than any of the other themes and requires compliance with Yorkshire Forward's bidding, appraisal and contracting processes. For this theme, therefore, a full business plan will be developed. The theme plan will provide further details on the assessed need for the theme and the proposed objectives and activities to address this. It also contains the commissioning options which are to be used (see Stage 2).

Stage 2 - The development and agreement of commissioning options. This is a key issue for the Commissioning Plan, in order to enable transparent and effective decisions to be made on delivery. To provide some guidance a set of three potential and most likely options have

been developed. These are outlined below. In developing these options Template 2 will be completed to ensure that decisions are transparent.

Option 1 – There is need to commission a very specific project which may involve the continuation of existing provision or the assessment completed in template 2 has identified an obvious single delivery agency within the partnership. The project will therefore be contracted directly with that agency.

Option 2 – There is a need to commission a very specific project but there are a number of organisations identified by the partnership as potentially able to deliver. This would involve devising a tender list of all potential organisations, issuing a tender brief and evaluation of responses.

Option 3 – A more general activity or range of activities has been identified but specific ideas and proposals for delivery are invited. An open bidding process would therefore be appropriate, inviting proposals from a wide range of partners.

Clarity should be provided in the theme based plan about the criteria on which the decision to pursue one or more of these options has been based. Clear timetables for implementing the options should also be devised and publicised.

Stage 3 – Appraisal of proposals. A two stage flexible appraisal process will be used to fit into the commissioning options used.

- Stage One – Expression of interest. A single advertisement will identify all of the areas within the themes that will be inviting tenders or bids and expressions of interest will be sought. This stage will also include an organisational check for all organisations external to the Council, this will be used to identify initial ideas and their viability as well as crucially to determine the capacity of the organisation to deliver on contracts of this nature.
- Stage Two – Full project appraisal . Stage One will result in the identification of organisations capable of delivering viable project/service proposals within each theme. Stage two will be required of all projects who are successful at stage 1 to provide an assessment in terms of value for money and ability to deliver against the commissioning and theme plans.
- For commissioning option 1 this will be done for the identified organisation, for options 2 and 3 it will be used to assess bids competitively.
- All appraisals will be considered by an independent appraisal panel, within an agreed scoring framework.

Stage 4 – Contracting. Once a project has been appraised and received approval a contract will be issued. This will be RMBC's standard agreement with a schedule of conditions appended. This schedule will be drawn from the appraisal document in terms of value, milestones, outputs and outcomes. In most cases this contract will be held by the Chief Executives Office, however, in the case of Theme One it may be held by EDS, as they will be entering into a contract with Yorkshire Forward for the ERDF funding.

Stage 5 – Monitoring and Review. Once projects have been approved and are in delivery stages it is crucial that this is reviewed regularly and reported back within Rotherham Partnership structures. Monitoring information based on the outputs and outcomes specified within the original appraisal document and the contract for the project will be pulled together on a quarterly basis and reported accordingly. All projects will be tracked via Rotherham MBC's Bidtrack database.

Stage 6 – Evaluation/Impact Assessment. Upon completion of delivery a full independent evaluation of the impact of the themed plans and the individual projects/services within it will be carried out.

Roles and Responsibilities.

To ensure that any decisions taken regarding the allocation of this funding are transparent and fully accountable, this section clearly identifies the roles of the various Rotherham Partnership and Rotherham MBC structures and the responsibilities of key officers charged with delivering the commissioning plan.

Rotherham Partnership:

1. Chief Executive Officer Group

This group will work on behalf of the Rotherham Partnership Board to oversee the commissioning process, including:

- Approval of Commissioning Plan and Theme plans
- Ensuring that there is a clear rationale for all recommendations and decisions being taken.
- Receive quarterly monitoring and progress reports.

2. Theme Board.

Proud (including the Cohesive Communities Partnership), Achieving and Safe are the three Theme Boards charged with overseeing the commissioning process within each of the themes. Their roles are:

- To bring partners together to identify priorities and actions
- Oversee the development of theme based commissioning plans
- Identify commissioning options, with clear rationale
- Oversee any bidding or tendering processes required
- Oversee the establishment of appraisal panels (in partnership with the Accountable Body)
- Oversee the delivery of the theme plan according to timescale and report to CEO Group
- Monitor the ongoing delivery of relevant projects and the outcomes achieved

3. Partnership Board.

- Receive regular progress reports throughout commissioning process.
- Receive report from CEO Group on finalised commissioning and theme plans.
- Receive six monthly monitoring and progress reports on delivery of the whole programme.

RMBC:

The Council is the Accountable Body for the funding and as such must ensure that it is allocated fairly and in accordance with strategic and community priorities.

1. Cabinet

- Approval of overall plans for spend. Due to the nature of the commissioning process this will involve reporting progress at regular intervals to Cabinet.
- Receive six monthly monitoring and progress reports on delivery of the whole programme.

2. Area Assemblies

- Determine the activities for the Area Based Budget Theme via their devolved budgets.
- Consultees on the other themes.

Appraisal Panels

These will be independent panels established for the purposes of this commissioning process. They will comprise neutral parties with specific knowledge or expertise at a senior officer level, who have previously had little or no involvement in the process. It will also include elected members. They will make recommendations to both RMBC and Rotherham Partnership structures as appropriate.

Officer responsibilities.

Responsibilities	Transitional Themes					
	Employment, Enterprise and Financial Inclusion	VCS Development	Area Based Activity	Community Cohesion	Positive Action for Young People	PCSOs
Theme Board Manager: Development of theme based Commissioning Plan Establishing and supporting Appraisal Panels as appropriate Overseeing ongoing progress and monitoring of	Jeff Wharfe	Michael Clark	Mark Ford	Michael Clark	Michael Clark	Mark Ford

plan						
Lead Officer: Provide specific theme based expertise and advice to TBM in developing plan.	Simeon Leach	Waheed Akhtar/Carol Adamson	Jan Leyland	Waheed Akhtar/Carol Adamson	Simon Perry	Jason Harwin
Support Officer: From Accountable Body team to provide advice and support in ensuring the plan is developed, appraised, contracted and monitored effectively	Deborah Fellowes Michael Holmes	Andrew McGarrigle	Ian Squires	Andrew McGarrigle	Michael Holmes	Ian Squires

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL
2.	Date:	12th June 2008
3.	Title:	PROMOTING EFFECTIVE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AND THE USE OF PLAIN ENGLISH WITHIN RMBC – PROGRESS REPORT AND RESULTS OF AN OFFICER AUDIT
4.	Directorate:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S

5. Summary

This paper presents the result of an RMBC officer audit regarding the Council's use of the Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark, and presents further recommendations to develop the approach to plain English in line with best practice.

6. Recommendations

Members are asked to:-

- **Note the summary comments made by RMBC Service Directors in the audit carried out by the Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing to determine the extent to which the Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark has been adopted across Strategic Directorates.**
- **Support the use of these outcomes in a further audit involving Elected Members, including one-to-one meetings with Cabinet members to learn from their experiences.**
- **Endorse the principle of plain English champions in each directorate, and the launch of a councilwide "Junk the Jargon" campaign.**
- **Note the progress made in other areas, and request a further progress report in two months' time.**

7. Proposals and Details

a) Crystal Mark Audit

Following the February meeting of the Scrutiny Panel, an audit was carried out of all Service Directors, seeking their responses to the following:-

The Crystal Mark was introduced by the Plain English Campaign in 1990 as the Campaign's official Seal of Approval and is now the standard to which organisations strive in producing information for the public.

Has your service ever considered adopting the Crystal Mark?

If yes:

- did you proceed to formally adopt the standard?*
- when did you do this?*
- which service areas did it cover, or have you used it on an ad hoc basis on specific documents publications?*
- how much did it cost?*
- do you still retain the standard? If not, why not?*

If no:

- what was the reason for the decision? Was it funding related?*
- Would you support the prioritisation of central budgets to allow the Council to pursue corporate membership of the Plain English Campaign and associated links with the Crystal Mark?*

Around 12 responses were received and can be summarised as follows. A nil return from Service Directors is likely to reflect a lack of knowledge of/investment in Crystal Mark:

- Some historic investment in Crystal Mark, eg People and Service First customer service information (2001 – 2004); Licensing Service within Neighbourhoods (2006).
- Any activity in the past has been around accreditation for specific documents, which is now likely to have expired.
- The general view was that although in principle accreditation is worthwhile, it does not warrant the expense involved.
- One comment suggested that at times, the limited use of jargon may be acceptable – some members or officers may feel patronised if the concept of plain English is taken too far.
- Very little support for prioritising resources to fund activity relating to the Plain English Campaign/Crystal Mark at a time when budget efficiencies are required.
- Neighbourhoods and Adult Services use their Learning from Customers group to quality check documents, leaflets and other publications to ensure they are easy to understand and jargon-free. This also ensures the customer perspective is reflected in the end product.

- There were suggestions that the Council could develop its own internal accreditation processes, using the communications expertise which already exists.
- The development of officer skills is critical. Whilst the communications teams have an important part to play, they have insufficient resource and should be treated as “technical support”. Providing plain English advice on a relatively small number of significant documents is not the issue – a poor standard of writing on a day-to-day basis is the main problem.

It is recommended that the results of the audit are now used as the foundation for a further audit of Elected Members’ own experiences, by the Internal Communications Officer, including one-to-one discussions with Cabinet members.

b) Plain English Resources – RMBC Intranet

Work has already been carried out on the Communications section of the intranet, to improve advice, guidance and practical help on written communications, including plain English. This includes Know Your Audience, Writing for Colleagues and Councillors, Writing Tips. Cabinet Report Writers’ Guide and Accessible Communications. This and further work would be launched as part of the campaign described below.

c) Junk The Jargon Campaign

A councilwide campaign could be launched to spread the message across all service areas to remind everyone of the need to use plain English and take responsibility for their own communications. This should be backed by elected members/senior officers and have a specific launch event/photocall, backed up with posters, information on the intranet home page (see above), team briefings and Unite articles and updates.

The campaign could also include the celebration of National Plain English Day in December, with articles, quizzes, competitions, prizes, etc.

d) Plain English Champions

Members may wish to consider the inclusion of the role of plain English champions within the work of the existing directorate communication leads. This would support the comments made by Service Directors regarding the further development of internal processes.

8. Finance

There are no specific financial implications of the actions outlined in this report. Further consideration will need to be given to any recommendations around Crystal Mark following the audit of elected members’ views.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It is unclear at this stage whether individual services or directorates would have the required funding to take forward further work with the Plain English Campaign.

10. Policy and Performance Aenda Implications

Best practice indicates that effective communication is an integral part of policy-making, business planning and service delivery, and therefore supports all elements of the community strategy/RMBC vision themes – Learning, Achieving, Alive, Safe, Proud, Fairness and Sustainable Development.

The translation of complex issues into clear, concise information which is relevant and accessible to local communities is critical in ensuring Rotherham citizens feel fully informed about life in the Borough, and in the delivery of strong, sustainable communities.

Officers should ensure a similar approach to the reports and other information provided to elected members to ensure they are fully briefed on relevant issues to support them in the decision-making process.

Also, the Local Government Reputation campaign outlines 5 specific communications activities which can have a marked and positive impact on a council's reputation and public satisfaction with its services – including communicating effectively with staff to help them become advocates for the Authority.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

**Management Competency Framework 2007, Strategic HR, RMBC
Plain English Campaign website, www.plainenglish.co.uk
Local Government Association/IDeA Reputation Campaign**

**Tracy Holmes, Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing
Extension 2735, tracy.holmes@rotherham.gov.uk**

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL
Thursday, 3rd April, 2008

Present:- Councillor Whelbourn (in the Chair); Councillors Austen, Dodson, J. Hamilton, Littleboy, Pickering and Sangster.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Currie, Cutts, Foden, Johnston and Mrs. H. Cahill, Mrs. A. Clough, Father Haynes, Mrs. M. Morton, Mr. R. H. Noble, Ms. C. Tomlinson, and Ms. T. Yaseen,

Also in attendance:- Debbie Heath (V.A.R. Representative) and Mr. D. Morton (Parish Council Representative)

In addition representatives from other Scrutiny Panels were also in attendance and included:-

Councillors McNeely, G. A. Russell, P. A. Russell and Swift and Jean Dearden, Vicky Farnsworth, Janet Mullins, Kiran Saleem and Keith Stringer.

73. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman thanked all the co-optees for their participation and contribution to the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel now their two year membership had come to an end. Organisations would again be contacted and nominations sought for the next two years, which the Scrutiny Panel would consider.

Councillor Stonebridge was also organising a "Members Only" event on the 25th May, 2008, commencing at 11.00 a.m. to identify and prioritise the work programme for Scrutiny for the next municipal year. This Scrutiny Panel needed to start thinking about what work it would like to consider.

The Scrutiny Panel were now reminded that the minutes of meetings of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement were now included as part of the agenda pack. Any items of interest to this Panel should be directed to the Scrutiny Adviser.

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

75. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public and press.

76. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT 2008-2011

Consideration was given to a report presented by Vince Roberts,

Partnership Manager, and Michael Clark, Partnership Officer, and a presentation which set out the current position with regard to the development of the new 2008/2011 Local Area Agreement.

An emerging list of indicators, taken from the National Outcome and Indicator Set, that could form the basis of the second Local Area Agreement 2008/2011 were included as part of the report.

The presentation drew specific attention to:-

- The Local Area Agreement and the Current Position.
- The 198 National Indicators.
- The Process.
- Picking the right Measures.

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

- Area Assembly input into the National Indicators.
- Achievement of targets and progress still to be made in the current Local Area Agreement.
- Issue of resources and ability to cope with an increasing number of Indicators.
- Description of Indicators and what they actually measure.
- Assault with injury crime rate and the inclusion of domestic violence in the figures.
- Buy into the Local Area Agreement by the Council, the Government and other partners.
- Duty to involve and responsibility for involvement across the Council.
- Achievement of Target 152 and whether to seek a more challenging target in say Target 173.
- Proud Target 1, the risks and the challenges facing this.
- Receipt of additional resources to assist with achievement of targets.
- Relationship of the National Indicators with the refresh of the Community Strategy.

The Scrutiny Panel wished to monitor the National Indicators and requested that they be provided with updates on a six monthly basis.

Resolved:- (1) That the emerging list of potential Indicators that could form the basis of the 2008-2011 Local Area Agreement be noted.

(2) That consideration be given to whether Target 152 should be replaced by the more challenging Target 173 and for a response to be provided to the Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel in writing.

(3) That the direction in negotiating the Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 and the further steps to completing the work be agreed.

(4) That an update report be provided on the Local Area Agreement in six

months time.

77. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Chairman welcomed Diane Douglas, Environment and Development Services' Equalities Champion, and Zahid Qureshie, Environment and Development Services' Policy Co-ordinator, who gave a presentation on Equality and Diversity in the Directorate.

The presentation drew specific attention to:-

- Main equality and diversity objectives and targets.
- How the targets were being achieved.
- How the Directorate was embedding the additional strands of promoting age, religion and sexuality equality into equality work.
- Update on the EIA outcomes achieved.
- Outcomes of equality monitoring on service delivery.
- Plans for rolling out further equality and diversity training to employees.
- Working towards having a workforce that was representative of the local community at all levels.

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

- Training strategy, whether this was labour intensive and the use of online materials.
- Monitoring of the Environmental Impact Assessments, including around disabled accessibility to toilets.
- Approaches to hard to reach groups.
- Equalities and diversity training provision and the tendering opportunities.
- Disestablishment of the Joint Disability Equality Scheme post.
- Evaluation and impact of the training being delivered.

The Scrutiny Panel was made aware of difficulties associated with the use of disabled toilets by those acquiring keys under false pretences. It was suggested that this be looked into further and an appropriate response provided to Scrutiny Panels and the Chairman of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel.

Resolved:- (1) That Diane Douglas and Zahid Qureshie be thanked for their informative presentation.

(2) That the issue of disabled toilet access by people not disabled be investigated and a response be provided for all Scrutiny Panel Members and the Chairman of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel.

78. ROTHERHAM WOMEN'S STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report presented by Janet Spurling, Equalities and Diversity Officer, which gave a brief overview of the present position regarding work on the borough's first Women's Strategy, "Rotherham – Working Together for Women. The Strategy had been developed under the auspices of Rotherham Partnership and approved by the Board on 29th November, 2007.

Reference was made and further detail provided on:-

- "Women Working Together for Change" Event.
- Women's History Display.
- Making the Strategy Work – Performance Management.

The Scrutiny Panel welcomed this report and were informed, when asked, that the Action Plan would be monitored and progress reported to the Corporate Management Team, Cabinet, Local Strategic Partnership and this Scrutiny Panel.

Resolved:- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

(2) That the annual report on performance of the Strategy be received.

79. NEW EUROPEAN MIGRATION

Consideration was given to a report presented by Zafar Saleem, Community Engagement and Cohesion Manager, which provided information on the impact and opportunities for the council presented by new European migration. It also summarised progress so far in developing a co-ordinated approach, with partner agencies, to respond to current and future demographic changes caused by migration.

The report drew specific attention to:-

- Current migrant population data for EU A8 Accession countries.
- Self assessment and developing good practice.
- Initial findings from self assessment within the Council's Directorates.
- Areas for development.

Reference was also made to actions that had been implemented, which included:-

- The Community Engagement and Cohesion Manager leading and co-ordinating the Council's response to new European migration issues, reporting to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement, Cabinet, CMT the New Arrivals Working Party, Rotherham Community Cohesion Partnership, Rotherham Partnership Board and the Proud Theme Board.
- An officer project group being established to co-ordinate action,

comprising of officers from Policy Team, Chief Executive's Directorate. This was currently being expanded to include officers from relevant Directorates and partner agencies, such as Neighbourhoods (Housing), 2010 Rotherham Limited and LSP Proud Theme Manager.

- A Member Development Seminar held on 20th November, 2007 to provide information to Members on new European migration into Rotherham, possible future trends and the opportunities and challenges that migration provided to the Borough.
- A workshop for Rotherham Partnership Board held on 29th November, 2007 to share information and good practice on New European Migration in Rotherham and plan a way forward.
- A conference held on 17th January, 2008 for partner agencies, voluntary and community sector organisations. This shared information and good practice and to begin the development of a co-ordinated approach to respond to current and future demographic changes caused by migration. As a result officers were in the process of developing proposals for an action plan which would be implemented under the auspices of Rotherham Partnership. Actions likely to be included were:

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

- Co-ordination of the Action Plan and the best solutions to address the migration problem.
- Young people from new migrant families being educated in Rotherham and ages and numbers involved (discussed at Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel previously).
- Funding to and class sizes in the Welcome Centre.
- Issues in relation to schools and how this is being, including impact on resources, performance and academic achievement
- Accommodation needs.
- High turnover of population.
- Outlook for Rotherham in the future and its integration.
- Potential impact on resources and statistics-
- Information sharing with Rotherham's Members of Parliament.

Resolved:- (1) That the results of a self assessment carried out by the Council's Directorates and 2010 Rotherham Limited, to identify current good practice and areas for development be noted

(2) That the update on progress following the self assessment work be noted.

(3) That the self assessment and subsequent actions reported to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement, Cabinet, Rotherham

Partnership Board, the New Arrivals Working Party and the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee be noted.

(4) That a further report be submitted to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel on issues associated with education and children and young people in relation to new migration.

(5) That Rotherham's Members of Parliament be made aware of the issues and this be included as an agenda item on their next meeting with the Cabinet.

80. UPDATE ON ACTIONS RELATING TO LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) COMMUNITY NEEDS

Consideration was given to a report, presented by Carol Adamson, Equalities and Diversity Officer, which provided an update on actions relating to meeting the needs of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities in Rotherham and future plans.

The report drew attention to the progress made by in relation to:-

- Rotherham LGBT Inter-Agency Group.
- LGBT Rotherham Limited.
- LGBT Helpline.
- LGBT History Month Celebrations.
- Other responses by partner agencies, such as support for LGBT Rotherham community group, training for employees, RMBC Corporate Equality Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit and Community cohesion.

The Chief Executive Directorate's Equalities and Diversity Unit were now working with Rotherham LGBT Inter-Agency Group to develop a new action plan, which would contribute towards promoting equality for Rotherham's LGBT communities and addressing needs.

The Equalities and Diversity Unit were currently developing a Single Equality Scheme to encompass LGBT equality in line with changing legislation and the revised Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Council's equality monitoring policy and guidance was also being reviewed to comply with the new revised Equality Standard for Local Government requirements. The Council currently monitors the impact of services by ethnicity, gender, disability and age, but was proposed that this be expanded to include sexuality, gender identity and faith.

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

- Number of actions completed and how progress was demonstrated.
- Progress made and how this compared to other communities of

- interest-
- Funding opportunities.
 - Recruitment and training of volunteers to manage the LGBT helpline.
 - Measurement of calls received.
 - Integration of helpline into existing services and the progress.
 - Member nomination for the LGBT Steering Group.

Resolved:- (1) That the actions to date and future plans be noted and welcomed.

(2) That the Scrutiny Panel be asked for a nomination to the LGBT Inter-Agency Group.

81. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 21ST FEBRUARY, 2008

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 21st February, 2008 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

82. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND INVOLVEMENT HELD ON 13TH MARCH, 2008

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement held on 13th March, 2008 be noted.

83. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE HELD ON 15TH AND 29TH FEBRUARY, 2008

The Scrutiny Panel noted the minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 15th and 29th February, 2008.

84. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL HELD ON 21ST FEBRUARY, 2008

The Scrutiny Panel noted the minutes of the meeting of the Members' Training and Development Panel held on 21st February, 2008.

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND INVOLVEMENT
Monday, 19th May, 2008

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

An apology was received from Councillor J. Hamilton.

80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Burton declared a personal interest in Minute No. 84 on the grounds of being the Council's Representative on the Women's Strategy Group.

81. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18TH MARCH, 2008

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement held on 18th March, 2008 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

82. REPRESENTATIVES ON WORKING GROUPS, PANELS AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Consideration was given to the appointment of members to various Panels, Sub-Groups and Working Parties for the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

Resolved:- (1) That the following appointments be made:-

Members' Consultation Advisory Group:-

Deferred.

Members' Sustainable Development Action Group:-

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member

New Arrivals Working Party:-

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member

Groundworks Trust Panel:-

Councillor Burton, Adviser

Mosque Liaison Group:-

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member

Equality Champions Group:-

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member

N.R.F. Commissioning Framework:-

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member

Women's Strategy Group:-

Councillor Burton, Adviser

Housing Asylum Seekers Consortium Regional Reference Group:-

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member

South Yorkshire Community Foundation:-

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member and the Mayor.

(2) That the future and remit of the Members' Consultation Advisory Group be considered further.

(3) That Councillor Burton be recommended for inclusion on the Voluntary Action Board and for this to be considered by the Leader and Deputy Leader.

(4) That Andrew Crowley seek clarification as to the membership of the Housing Asylum Seekers Consortium Regional Reference Group.

83. ROTHERHAM NEW LIVES STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report presented by Andrew Crowley, Asylum Team Leader, regarding 'Rotherham New Lives', which was Rotherham's first integration strategy for asylum seekers and refugees and an innovative joint venture with the Refugee Council. The successful launch of the strategy was an action within the Landlord Excellence Plan.

This strategy differed from other local authority strategies, in that it considered the needs of asylum seekers, destitute asylum seekers and refugees in one strategy. It was general practice that integration strategies focused on the needs of refugees who have been allowed to remain in the United Kingdom. This strategy would suggest that integration began on arrival in Rotherham. Preparation for full integration could be undertaken whilst a person was still claiming asylum. Indeed many of the actions applied equally to asylum seekers as well as to refugees. These were highlighted throughout the strategy.

As well as the strategy being a basis for developing and co-ordinating services, it also provided key information about asylum seekers. The Borough's experience of refugees, a brief outline of services and a local

information briefing were contained in the strategy.

The draft strategy had been discussed on a number of occasions by the New Arrivals Working Party and had been presented to Cabinet Members for Communities and Involvement and Neighbourhoods, the Cabinet, 2010 Executive and the Rotherham Partnership Proud Board. Key officers, strategy co-ordinators and the Corporate Equality and Diversity Strategy Group have also been consulted. The draft strategy was approved as ready for formal consultation in September, 2006.

It became clear in May, 2007 when the strategy was being re-drafted that a number of key stakeholders had not been passed the strategy for the earlier consultation. These stakeholders were contacted individually to agree the relevant actions in the action plan, and most of the actions have now been agreed.

Discussion ensued on the time and effort put into the development of the strategy and the need for more resources to complete all the identified actions.

Resolved:- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

(2) That the strategy be endorsed and be forwarded to the Community Cohesion Group of the Proud Board.

84. ROTHERHAM'S WOMENS STRATEGY - PROGRESS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Janet Spurling, Equalities Officer, which outlined the progress made in implementing the first year actions within the Rotherham Women's Strategy.

This report presents a summary of progress against the objectives in Rotherham Women's Strategy Action Plan for the year ending March, 2008. The strategy was developed under the auspices of Rotherham Partnership and approved by the Board on 29 November 2007.

The aims and objectives within the strategy were developed following consultation with local women and using local and national research findings.

Specific reference was made to the progress on the action plan against the 48 objectives across all themes, the positive achievements and the three objectives shown as red.

It was imperative that the progress made in year one continued throughout 2008/2009. Arrangements were in place for monitoring progress and reporting back.

Although the majority of actions were ones with specific lead organisations, it was important that all partners in the Local Strategic

Partnership and Council Directorates implemented the five underpinning actions within Fairness. These were actions to facilitate a more “gender aware” approach to service planning and delivery overall.

Recording and analysing monitoring data broken down by gender was also a key way of showing that partners were meeting women’s needs and that the strategy was having a positive impact for Rotherham women. As a new set of national performance indicators (PIs) had been introduced it was an appropriate time to ensure that arrangements were in place to collect disaggregated data by gender for PIs relevant to the Women’s Strategy. A similar breakdown by ethnicity, age and disability (plus other categories as appropriate) would show any double disadvantage for particular groups and assist in measuring the impact of other strategies and plans.

Discussion ensued on the traffic light performance measures, how actions were determined in particular categories and the mix of concepts and actions.

Resolved: That the good progress made in implementing the strategy be noted.

85. GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME - PROGRESS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Zafar Saleem, Community Engagement and Cohesion Manager, which outlined the good progress made in implementing the first year actions within the Council’s Gender Equality Scheme.

This report presented a summary of progress against the actions in the Gender Equality Scheme during the first year of the three-year scheme and action plan. The aim of the first year of the plan was primarily to consolidate and build on gender related information and raise awareness of the scheme. During the second year of the plan the focus would be on utilising gender related information to further develop departmental Gender Action Plans. The third year of the plan would focus on implementation and the completion of an evaluation the scheme.

The actions within Rotherham Women’s Strategy – Rotherham Working Together for Women were also making a significant contribution towards promoting equality for women and complying with the general duty to promote gender equality.

Progress against the corporate actions within the strategy was good against the action plan with five objectives having green status and the other three amber. Of the three rated as amber, two were ones where further consolidation was needed to embed fully the gender perspective - in equality impact assessments and in gender analysis of data. The other action rated as amber was where further work was to be developed around the retention and recruitment of transsexual employees.

Recording and analysing monitoring data broken down by gender was a key way of showing that the Council was meeting both women's and men's needs and that the scheme was having a positive impact.

In addition to making good progress on the corporate actions all Directorates, 2010 Rotherham and RBT were able to illustrate positive examples of promoting gender equality.

Resolved:- That the good progress made in implementing the Gender Equality Scheme be noted.

86. EU MIGRATION - UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report presented by Zafar Saleem, Community Engagement and Cohesion Manager, which summarised progress in developing a partnership approach to respond to the impact of migration of people from EU accession countries to the Borough. It also recommended actions to accelerate progress.

Self assessment of responses to new migration was carried out by the Council's Directorates and 2010 Rotherham Ltd at the end of 2007 using a good practice toolkit developed by the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA). This was followed by a multi-agency conference in January, 2008, to verify and develop the self assessment. This revealed a number of programmes and activities already in place that respond to the needs of new migrant communities and manage their integration into the Borough. A number of challenges and recommendations were also identified and these have informed the proposals identified in the report.

Structures for delivering leadership for managing new migration have been agreed by Rotherham Partnership Board. Joint working was also taking place through the New Arrivals Working Party and through the Cohesive Communities Partnership.

Successful partnership working has taken place to identify the impacts and challenges of new European migration to the Borough and on service delivery. Overall leadership and monitoring arrangements have also been agreed with Rotherham Partnership.

Concern continued to be identified within the Borough relating to new migration and solutions needed to be found as matter of urgency. In particular, this related to meeting educational needs and issues arising from school attendance and attainment; meeting health and social care needs and pressures on health care services caused by language barriers; housing needs and standards and the need for further proactive responses in relation to anti-social behaviour and potential exploitation of new migrant communities.

Barriers were being experienced in progressing issues through the lack of

a clear structure of accountability to co-ordinate action. This had now been solved with the support of the Chief Executive's Officer Group of Rotherham Partnership. To accelerate progress on the identified priorities, it was essential that there was strategic level leadership, commitment and co-ordination of the proposals. This was needed to identify workable solutions and make recommendations on the allocation of resources from partner agencies. A detailed feasibility analysis would also be required on the proposal to establish a community based one-stop welcome and induction centre, with costings and recommendations to be made to Members, Rotherham Partnership, and other appropriate boards and committees.

Overall, migration offered many opportunities for Rotherham in terms of economic, social and cultural development. Co-ordinated strategies and actions developed by partners would enable the Borough to capitalise on the opportunities and manage the integration of new migrant communities successfully. Furthermore, it was vital that partner agencies provided responses and services that were appropriate and sensitive to the needs of both new and existing communities in order to maintain a strong cohesive community in Rotherham.

The proposals for further action were considered in detail, particularly around dispelling myths around employment, the understanding of issues relating to education, health, housing and family structures and the implementation of a programme of reassurance to build resilience and confidence at a neighbourhood level.

Resolved:- That the proposals to accelerate progress be noted.

87. PARISH REVIEW UPDATE

Zafar Saleem, Community Engagement and Cohesion Manager, gave an update on the Parish Review drawing specific attention to various issues that had arisen from the forty or so responses received.

A report would be submitted to the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet in due course.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress to date be noted.

(2) That a briefing be arranged for the Cabinet Member and Adviser to keep them fully informed and abreast of the situation.

88. LINKS UPDATE

Julie Slatter, Head of Policy and Performance, gave an update on progress with Links and confirmed that, following the tender exercise, a successful tenderer had been identified and work was now ongoing to formalise contract arrangements prior to a formal announcement.

7E CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND INVOLVEMENT - 19/05/08

Resolved:- That the information be noted.

89. FORWARD PLAN/WORK PROGRAMME FOR COMMUNITIES AND INVOLVEMENT

Consideration was given to the formation of the Forward Plan/Work Programme for Communities and Involvement.

Several items had been suggested and these would be incorporated into the Plan which would be submitted for inclusion for the next meeting.

Resolved:- That the revised plan be submitted to the next meeting of the Cabinet Member.

90. 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 I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information relates to financial or business affairs).

91. VOLUNTARY ACTION ROTHERHAM (VAR) SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Consideration was given to a report presented by Zafar Saleem, Community Engagement and Cohesion Manager, which provided a summary of key changes to the Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) Service Level Agreement (SLA) and set out proposals for performance management of the Service Level Agreement.

Further information was provided on the key outcomes and actions to deliver against, which included:-

- Improved and increased VCS engagement in local decision making and the planning, shaping and delivery of services.
- Increased access to and involvement of communities and groups especially those that are marginalised or disadvantaged.
- Improved support to the VCS as a provider of services and activities
- Secure additional funding to enhance and develop activity in all of the above areas.

In addition, a copy of the Service Specification was circulated and the content discussed. Further information would be provided to the Cabinet Member in due course.

Discussion ensued on the support provided to the Local Area Agreement target and the need for a more detailed discussion on the voluntary and community sector as a whole.

Resolved:- (1) That the proposed Service Level Agreement with Voluntary Action Rotherham for core infrastructure activity and management of the Financial Inclusion Strategy and the outcomes and actions for delivery be agreed and noted.

(2) That proposals for the performance management of the Service Level Agreement be agreed.

(3) That the first performance report be referred to the Cabinet Member's Delegated Powers meeting from July, 2008.

(4) That the two separate Service Level Agreements for (1) core infrastructure activity and (2) Financial Inclusion Strategy management be maintained and reported on separately for 2008/2009 but these be combined into a single Service Level Agreement and Service Specification in 2009/2010.

(5) That a meeting be arranged between respective parties to discuss the voluntary and community sector.

92. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement would be altered and now take place on Thursday, 12th June, 2008 at 1.00 p.m.

**PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
28th March, 2008**

Present:- Councillor Stonebridge (in the Chair); Councillors Akhtar, Austen, Boyes, Burton, Clarke, Doyle, Jack, McNeely, G. A. Russell, P. A. Russell and Whelbourn.

Also in attendance was Councillor Wardle (Chair of the Audit Committee)

166. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Akhtar declared a personal interest in item 179 below (BVPI 8 – Payment of Invoices within Thirty Days) being the Council's representative on the RBT Board.

167. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

168. PROCUREMENT LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Further to Minute No. 121 of the meeting of this Committee held on 19th December, 2007, Sarah McCall, Performance Officer, presented the submitted report setting out the details of the indicators developed to date, targets and the first, second and third quarters' reported performance.

Of the thirteen indicators (details of which were appended to the report):

- six were status amber with performance on target
- one was status amber with performance slightly below target
- two were status red with performance below target
- one was reported on an annual basis at the year end
- two were still under development
- one had work ongoing to baseline the current position

In addition, three sustainability local performance indicators had been developed for the Ringway contract (highways) with reporting yet to commence.

Resolved:- That the current performance against the indicators be noted.

169. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 122 of the meeting of this Committee held on 19th December, 2007, Sarah McCall, Performance Officer, presented, with the aid of powerpoint, the submitted report detailing how the Council's

Corporate Procurement Strategy was based around the 4 key visions of the National Procurement Strategy :

- Vision for leadership, management and capacity
- Vision for partnering, collaboration and supplier management
- Vision for systems that allow business to be done electronically
- Vision for stimulating markets and achieving community benefits

Implementation of the Strategy was via four action plans corresponding to the visions and the report provided an update on progress against those action plans.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- need to link the forward plan of procurement to the forward plan of key decisions
- website difficulties

Resolved:- That the actions to implement the Procurement Strategy be noted and the ongoing actions be supported.

170. REGIONAL NETWORK OF SCRUTINY CHAIRS

Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, reported receipt of a request from Mike Leitch, for expressions of interest in the possible development of a regional network of scrutiny chairs.

The Chairman indicated there were examples of such models elsewhere in the country and reference was also made to similar networks regarding health scrutiny.

The opportunity to share best practice was welcomed with as much virtual communication as possible rather than bureaucratic meetings.

Resolved:- That a positive response be sent to the principle of a regional network of scrutiny chairs and further information be awaited.

171. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, reported on provisional arrangements for a scrutiny session on 18th April, 2008 to discuss the above.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following

issues were covered:-

- revised date for the session
- invitees to the session
- need to seek issues from
 - voluntary/community sector organisation
 - area assembly chairs and area partnership managers
 - co-optees
- issues for discussion

Resolved:- (1) That the above session be held on Friday, 25th April, 2008 at 11.00 a.m. to which all Members of the Council be invited.

(2) That discussion include :

- (a) recommendations from scrutiny panels
- (b) issues from Cabinet /Corporate Management Team
- (c) issues raised by the public over the last twelve months
- (d) issues from the parish councils' network
- (e) issues rolled over from the previous year's programme that were not completed.

172. COPTION ONTO SCRUTINY PANELS

Further to Minute No. 162 of the meeting of this Committee held on 29th February, 2008, Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, presented the submitted report indicating that the previously agreed two year "term of office" for co-optees was to end in May, 2008.

The report highlighted issues to be considered in determining future co-option arrangements for scrutiny panels including :-

- legislative drivers
- recruitment
- scrutiny of organisations subject to formal scrutiny

Also submitted, as appendices to the report, were :

- a full list of current co-optee organisations
- basic role description for potential co-optees
- suggested formats for expressions of interest for completion by groups or individuals

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:

- current numbers of co-optees on scrutiny panels
- types of co-optees (e.g. statutory and non statutory)
- changing role and function of scrutiny
- need to monitor how effective co-optees were at reporting back to their groups/organisations
- potential need for parish council representatives to be co-opted onto all scrutiny panels
- need for clarity regarding co-optee representation (e.g. because of own experience or representing organisation)
- potential development of a 'bank' of citizen co-optees
- code of conduct issues relating to a 'bank' of co-optees
- potential 'bank' of citizen co-optees and link to applications to join citizen panels
- organisations to be approached to nominate co-optee representation
- optimum numbers of co-optees for scrutiny panels
- application process to support co-optee recruitment and format of application form
- co-option arrangements for groups/organisations subject to formal scrutiny
- code of conduct for co-ordinating groups of area assemblies

Resolved:- (1) That approval be given to the recruitment of co-optees to scrutiny panels for the two year term of office 2008 to 2010.

(2) That sectoral organisations, as now discussed, be approached to nominate representatives for co-option onto all scrutiny panels.

(3) That the Parish Council Network be approached with a view to nominating representatives for co-option onto all scrutiny panels.

(4) That an application process, to support co-optee recruitment, be introduced and accordingly the submitted draft application forms be

developed including issues relating to disability/access and how feedback to representative organisations would be implemented.

(5) That further consideration be given to co-option arrangements for groups that were subject to formal scrutiny.

(6) That a further report be submitted on the feasibility of establishing a 'bank' of community co-optees (citizen element) in line with the recommendation from the Public Engagement Scrutiny Review.

(7) That consideration be given to the introduction of a Code of Conduct for co-ordinating groups of area assemblies.

(8) That an overall progress report be submitted to this Committee on 25th April, 2008.

173. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

Further to Minute No. 124 of the meeting of this Committee held on 19th December, 2007, Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, presented examples of forward plans from other authorities namely Hackney, Newham, South Staffordshire, South Tyneside and Blackburn with Darwin.

The Committee considered the various formats of the plans submitted against the Council's current forward plan of key decisions.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:

- focus on the user friendly aspect of the plans
- impending work on the development of the Council's website following the appointment of a website manager
- elected Member involvement in the development of the website
- utilisation of the previous review by Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel to help inform the redesign of the website
- need for website to be user friendly and fit for purpose

Resolved:- (1) That the information be noted.

(2) That, in the first instance, Corporate Management Team be requested to consider the Hackney forward plan format as a basis/benchmark for the development of this Council's forward plan of key decisions.

(3) That the website redesign element of the previous scrutiny review be referred to the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Innovation to help

inform the redesign and respecification of the Council's website.

(4) That the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Innovation be requested to look at the Hackney forward plan format given the imminent appointment of a website manager.

(5) That further to the above, a progress report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

174. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th February, 2008 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

175. WORK IN PROGRESS

Members of the Committee reported as follows:-

(a) Councillor McNeely indicated that the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel was planning for the year ahead with voids and the lettings/allocation policy being likely topics.

(b) Councillor Akhtar reported that, with regard to the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel,

- a special meeting was scheduled for 2nd April, 2008 themed on renaissance/town centre issues
- the report on the use of school buildings would be considered at the scheduled meeting on 18th April, 2008
- next year's work programme was being considered
- a joint review was to take place with the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Panel on child safety issues

(c) Councillor G. A. Russell reported that the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Panel had considered:

- presentation on the Directory of Services and Activities for Children, Young People and their families
- forward plan of key decisions
- Imagination Library
- support for newly arrived children and young people in schools

(d) Councillor Jack reported that the Adult Services and Health Scrutiny Panel was about to consider:

- for Adult Services
 - examination of the Alive Local Area Agreement indicators
 - In house residential accommodation charges 2008/09
 - proposed changes to the service level agreement and impact assessment
- for Health :
 - annual health check
 - LINKs update

(e) Councillor Stonebridge reported the need to be considering relationships and partnership working in Rotherham.

176. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no formal call in requests.

(The Chairman authorised consideration of the following item to prevent any unnecessary delay in processing the matters referred to)

177. HEARING LOOP AND AV EQUIPMENT

Reference was made to the availability of portable hearing loops systems and the potential for such use in the Town Hall and anywhere else that the public regularly met.

It was suggested that the previous review on Community Leadership be revisited as reference to hearing loops was made.

It was also proposed that proper AV equipment be supplied as part of the revamp of the Town Hall.

Resolved:- That Cabinet/Corporate Management Team be requested to investigate the provision of portable hearing loop systems for use in the Town Hall and anywhere else that the public met on a regular basis.

178. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to individuals).

179. BVPI 8 - PAYMENT OF INVOICES WITHIN THIRTY DAYS

Further to Minute No. 120 of the meeting of this Committee held on 19th December, 2007, Sarah McCall, Performance Officer, presented the submitted report which detailed BVPI 8 and how it measured the payment of undisputed invoices within 30 days.

The Council had agreed the following average annual targets for performance of BVPI 8 with RBT:

2007/08	96.3%
2008/09	97.0%
2009/10	97.5%

Following a drop in performance against this indicator in May, 2006 a series of measures were put in place by the Council and the situation steadily improved, although the final outturn figure for the year was 91% against a target of 95.90%.

Performance against BVPI 8 was not as consistent as it should be and it was recognised that the Council should act to instil and embed good practice in this area and work was ongoing to this effect. Recent performance had achieved :

April	97%
May	95%
June	91%
July	91%
August	91%
September	91%
October	94%
November	96%
December	95%
January	90%
February	96%

Average performance against BVPI 8 for the year to date is 93.36%.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:

- prompting system for first named authorisers
- early payment discounts

- driving up performance
- impact on suppliers
- invoice system
- impact on budget
- need to continue as a local performance indicator
- early invoicing
- disputed invoices
- numbers of invoices
- average value of failed invoice to be paid within thirty days.

Resolved:- (1) That the improving position be welcomed.

(2) That the information be noted and mitigating actions be supported.

(3) That future reports should:

(a) continue to be submitted quarterly on an exception reporting basis

(b) show performance on the numbers of invoices

(c) identify any specific risks and impact e.g. relationships with suppliers and reputational risks to the Authority

(Councillor Akhtar declared a personal interest in the above item being this Council's representative on the RBT Board)

PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
11th April, 2008

Present:- Councillor Stonebridge (in the Chair); Councillors Akhtar, Austen, Boyes, Burton, Clarke, Doyle, Jack, McNeely, G. A. Russell and P. A. Russell.

Also in attendance was Councillor Wardle (Chair of the Audit Committee)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Whelbourn.

180. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

181. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

182. CONSULTATION PAPER RESPONSE - CPA THE HARDER TEST FRAMEWORK FOR 2008

Matt Gladstone, Assistant Chief Executive, presented the submitted report indicating that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) was the existing assessment framework which measured how well councils were delivering services for local people and communities. This would be replaced from 2009 with the Comprehensive Area Agreement (CAA).

The Audit Commission had published a consultation paper in January, 2008 titled "CPA – The harder test framework for 2008" which invited views on the proposed changes to the existing CPA framework for its final year. The deadline for responses was 11th April, 2008.

After considering how the proposals could impact on the Council's current "Excellent" rating, a response to the consultation was prepared. The proposed response was submitted.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:

- Key risks in service blocks
- Concerns in Adult Social Care
- Active People Survey and definitions of activities
- Green spaces and schools
- Activities in schools: children's participation in sports
- Anomalies in schools' data
- Active People Survey within area assemblies
- Need for a plan for 20-25 year olds regarding improving the health of the public
- Concerns regarding lack of advice for pregnant smokers and referrals to smoking cessation clinics

- Potential joint review (Regeneration/Children and Young Peoples Services) regarding the Culture block issues
- Potential impact of the use of community buildings review
- Active space concordat with partners as a potential future initiative
- Publicity to encourage patterns of activity
- Promoting breastfeeding

Resolved: (1) That the response to the consultation be noted

(2) That the potential for a joint review regarding the cultural/schools issues concerns now raised be discussed further at the next meeting of this Committee

(3) That the well-being issues including breastfeeding and pregnant smoking concerns be referred to Rotherham PCT and also to the Alive spoke of the Rotherham Partnership for consideration

(4) That the breastfeeding and pregnant smoking concerns be also referred to the Women's Strategy Group

(5) That consideration be given to the identification of a role model to encourage breastfeeding

(6) That an active space concordat with partners be considered as a future initiative

(7) That area assemblies be requested to carry out active space/active land surveys and highlight opportunities for people to improve their well-being

(8) That scrutiny panels be requested to monitor issues relevant to their area of work.

183. COMMUNITY STRATEGY/CORPORATE PLAN/LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

Matt Gladstone, Assistant Chief Executive, presented the submitted report which detailed the latest version of the refreshed Rotherham Community Strategy and RMBC Corporate Plan 2005-2011. The Plans had been updated to cover the period 2008-2011 in line with the Local Area agreement timeframe. Incorporated within the Strategy and the Plan were the sixteen mandatory education and early years targets for 2008-09 and the 'up-to-35' indicators and targets that would form the basis of the 2008-2011 Local Area Agreement subject to final negotiations with Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber and partners. As such, attached for consideration and agreement were:-

- A draft of the updated Community Strategy 2008-2011.
- A draft of the Corporate Plan 2008-2011.
- The indicators taken from the National Outcome and Indicator set

that were currently proposed for our second Local Area Agreement 2008-2011.

The cost of the refresh and production of the revised documents was to be met within existing budgets.

Major costs included consultation costs for partnership events £2,000, design and print costs, based on 500 copies of each document estimated to be £ 12,000, though these would be kept to a minimum by ensuring that both documents were downloadable from the Council's and Partnership's Website.

In addition, around £2.1 million of reward grant could be claimed by the Council in 2011 for delivery against the targets contained within the Agreement. At this time, details were still not available as to how the reward grant would be allocated against targets or calculated. Our next steps to publication included:-

- Corporate Plan and Community Strategy to full Council for approval on 4th June, 2008.
- Publication of the final documents to be deferred until June after Local Area Agreement negotiations were complete to enable any amendments to targets to be reflected in final Community Strategy and Corporate Plan.

Successful Partnership ownership of the Agreement was essential for the effective delivery of the Community Strategy and the Agreement. To mitigate against this risk, an extensive process of engagement had taken place ensuring that the Chief Executive Officers Group, Rotherham Partnership and individual target holders had been involved in all stages of the negotiation process.

A key risk was that the indicators chosen to form the basis of the Agreement were neither simple, measurable, attainable, realistic or achievable within the three year time-scale. To reduce this risk, the negotiation process included an initial check list agreed by Cabinet for short-listing potential indicators (from the basket of 198); the delivery of four structured challenge events that included representatives from Government Office, potential target holders and all key partners; a risk assessment against all 198 potential Indicators undertaken by the Council's Performance and Quality Team and regular reviews of progress by the Chief Executive Officer Group, the Council's Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and the Council's Scrutiny Panels.

There was also the potential risk that, due to the extended process of risk assessment, partnership involvement and extensive negotiation, the final agreement lost its connection to Rotherham as a place. Action taken to reduce this included:-

4T PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE - 11/04/08

- Refreshing the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan at the same time as negotiating the 2008-2011 Local Area Agreement.
- Ensuring that all 'risk assessments' make reference to the Strategic Priorities within the Community Strategy.
- Working with the Council's Scrutiny Boards to ensure that the Indicators were meaningful for local Elected Members.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:

- Textual presentation
- Statistical hub funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government
- Presentation of consultees
- Involvement of elected members and parish councils
- Definition of targets
- Observations from other scrutiny panels

Resolved:- (1) That the list of indicators and targets forming the basis of the 2008-2011 Local Area Agreement (subject to final negotiations and agreement with Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber and partners) be supported

(2) That comments/views now expressed on the documents be considered and any further comments on the draft(s) be submitted to the Assistant Chief Executive.

(3) That further consultation take place with Members on the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan through referral to Scrutiny Panels alongside the Local Area Agreement proposals.

(4) That a further report be submitted to this Committee highlighting the observations made by all the scrutiny panels.

(5) That it be noted that the final versions of the plans and the Local Area Agreement would be submitted to Council for approval on 4th June, 2008.

184. INTEGRATING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (IEM) - SUMMARY OF PHASE 2 DISCUSSIONS

Cath Saltis, Head of Scrutiny Services, presented the submitted report relating to the above.

The report covered:

- Pitt review
- Critical infrastructure
- Category 2 responders
- Gold Command
- Environment Agency (EA)
- Local Resilience Forums (LRF)
- Information sharing
- Local issues
- Issues requiring further attention

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:

- Information sharing
- Action plans progress internal and partner wise
- Insurance premiums/excess levels
- Need for insurance companies to pursue liability claims with responsible organisations where appropriate
- Need to assess changes as a result of work undertaken

Resolved: (1) That the information be noted.

(2) That this report be sent to partners/agencies seeking their response to the actions proposed.

(3) That the Emergency Planning Team report to the next meeting of this Committee, such report to include:

- progress regarding local action plans
- progress regarding action plans of other agencies
- priorities of action plans

(4) That, initially, a letter be sent to insurers citing examples of the problems caused to claimants with a view to the British Association of Insurers being invited to a future meeting of this Committee.

185. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28TH MARCH, 2008

Resolved: (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 28th March, 2008 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman

(2) That, with regard to Minute No. 172 (Co-option onto Scrutiny Panels) it be clarified that organisations being scrutinised be not represented on scrutiny panels as co-optees

(3) That, with regard to Minute No. 177 (Hearing Loop and AV Equipment), investigations continue, to include the viability of individual members utilising portable hearing loop equipment at meetings within and outside the Town Hall.

186. WORK IN PROGRESS

Members of the Committee reported as follows:

(a) Councillor Akhtar reported that, with regard to the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel:

- the 2nd April meeting, themed on the town centre renaissance and retail strategy, had gone well.
- Consideration had also been given to progress against the recommendations of the Christmas illuminations scrutiny review.

(b) Councillor Austen reported:

- that the 3rd April meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel, themed on equalities issues, had been well received
- the area assemblies scrutiny review phase two had been considered by Cabinet (The Chairman indicated this had been referred back to the Corporate Management Team for further work).

(c) Councillor G A Russell reported that the Children and Young People's Service Scrutiny Panel had considered:

- Local Area Agreement Targets
- Key Stage 1 and 2 attainment levels
- Imagination Library

(d) Councillor Doyle reported that the Adult Services and Health Scrutiny Panel would be:

- meeting with John Radford, Director of Public Health, with a view to possible health diversity scrutiny work
- considering consultation issues including mental health

(e) Councillor Stonebridge reported an approach to participate in the National Audit Office study "Why doesn't Government Learn". Examples of scrutiny issues were invited.

187. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no formal call in requests.

PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
25th April, 2008

Present:- Councillor Stonebridge (in the Chair); Councillors Akhtar, Austen, Burton, Clarke, Doyle, Jack, McNeely, G. A. Russell and Whelbourn.

Also in attendance for Item 195 below were Councillors Billington, Goult, Sharman, Stone and Whysall.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Boyes and P. A. Russell.

188. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

189. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

190. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th April, 2008 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

191. WORK IN PROGRESS

Members of the Committee reported as follows:-

(a) Councillor Doyle reported that the Adult Services and Health Scrutiny Panel was focusing on the work programme for the coming year.

(b) Councillor G. A. Russell reported that the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Panel was looking at the refresh of the Bullying review.

(c) Councillor Stonebridge reported:-

- the complaints review was now in draft form
- the review of the use of consultants was now being pulled together
- a first draft of the Advice Sector review was complete with comments received from contributors

192. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no formal call in requests.

193. COPTION ONTO SCRUTINY PANELS

Further to Minute No. 172 of the meeting of this Committee held on 28th March, 2008, Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, presented the submitted report updating the Committee on co-option arrangements.

The report covered:-

- thanks to co-optees for their contributions over the last two municipal years
- clarification of co-option arrangements for organisations subject to formal scrutiny
- Parish Council Network agreement to nominate co-optees onto all scrutiny panels
- approaches to organisations for co-optee nominations utilising the previously agreed application form
- dispatch of application forms to individuals who were currently co-optees but not representing specific organisations
- scope to extend invitations to members of the public to participate in reviews either as co-optees or witnesses
- invitations to co-opted groups, who had not attended on a consistent basis, to attend in an advisory capacity for relevant items
- response deadlines
- proposed voluntary code of conduct for non voting co-optees along the lines of the Area Assembly Co-ordinating Group's Code of Conduct (submitted as an appendix to the report)

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- confirmation of appointment of co-optees at the first meeting of respective scrutiny panels in the new municipal year
- textual amendments to the submitted voluntary code of conduct

Resolved:- (1) That the information and progress to date be noted.

(2) That scrutiny panels confirm the appointment of co-optees at their respective first meetings in the new municipal year.

(3) That the principle of a voluntary code of conduct for co-optees, along the lines now submitted and amended, be approved.

(4) That, further to (3) above, discussions take place with a small group of co-optees on the format of the code and a further report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

194. YORKSHIRE SOUTH TOURISM

Cath Saltis, Head of Scrutiny Services, presented the submitted report regarding the latest position in respect of regional scrutiny of Yorkshire South Tourism.

The report indicated that, at a meeting of officers from the four South Yorkshire authorities held on 8th April, 2008 to consider the next stage in the development of scrutiny for tourism across the region, the following issues were discussed:-

- number of meetings to be held per year
- political representation
- remit of the Panel
- Yorkshire South Tourism as a potential limited company
- next steps

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- terms of reference and the drawing up of such
- status of the group
- Doncaster MBC as lead authority for scrutiny arrangements
- potential scrutiny framework
- concerns regarding the delays in progressing arrangements
- discussion with neighbouring South Yorkshire authorities
- governance of Yorkshire South Tourism

Resolved:- (1) That the information be noted.

(2) That the governance implications be referred to the Audit Committee with a view to discussions taking place with the Audit Committee of Doncaster MBC.

(3) That this matter of Yorkshire South Tourism be brought to the attention of Cabinet and the South Yorkshire Leaders to consider the following

issues:-

- (a) need for elected Member representation
 - (b) need to tighten up governance arrangements
 - (c) need for clarification of the intended status of the organisation
 - (d) support for the request that overview and scrutiny arrangements are progressed rapidly either by Doncaster MBC or another authority.
- (4) That Richard Jones and South Yorkshire local authority overview and scrutiny members be invited to a future meeting of this Committee to discuss scrutiny arrangements, including proposed terms of reference.

195. SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and, along with Matt Gladstone, Assistant Chief Executive (who focused on 'Year Ahead' implications), gave a presentation relating to the above which covered:-

- Purpose of the day
- Scrutiny work programme : principles
 - balance of scrutiny roles and types of activity
 - alignment with priorities of the Council – supporting the improvement agenda
 - informed by a range of people and information
 - realistic – with spare capacity to be responsive
- Potential areas of work
 - (a) customer services agenda
 - customer access strategy – delay in publication
 - customer service centres – timescale for delivery slipped
 - customer service standards
 - national customer excellence standard
 - follow up complaints review
 - (b) Council reputation

- website development
- single partnership community newsletter
- communications and marketing activity Council wide
- research methods and mechanisms to obtain better understanding of the borough

(c) Comprehensive Area Assessment

- embedding the new national indicator set across the authority and partners
- greater understanding of local areas (i.e. development of ward based records)
- Local Area Agreement

(d) Children's Trust arrangements

- implementation of locality working
- commissioning strategy
- safeguarding unit
- not in education, employment, training (NEETs)

(e) Adult Services

- value for money
 - modernisation agenda
- Contest : the changing national policy landscape
- Councillor Call for Action
 - overview and scrutiny committees may be empowered to require information from partner organisations
 - scrutiny of external organisations
- Headlines
- refresh and revise internal and external communication
 - develop overview and scrutiny involvement in aspects of Council improvement work

- develop ways of further involving the community
- programme of training and development
- Outcomes sought
 - overview and scrutiny adding value to those areas of greater relevance and having a more strategic focus
 - overview and scrutiny looking at the right things at the right time – more timely recommendations
 - value and impact of overview and scrutiny being recognised by the whole Council, its partners and the public
 - local people being actively involved in shaping and informing decision making and policy development
 - members and officers being confident and effectively supported to undertake their roles
- Ways of Working
 - themed meetings
 - scrutiny adding value as a consultee
 - holding decision makers to account
 - performance and progress monitoring
 - responding to petitions
 - joint work between panels and with other authorities and other governors

Areas for consideration –

for example

- adult access to dentistry
- breastfeeding friendly Rotherham
- supporting people on incapacity benefit back into work
- safeguarding children

- support for newly arrived children
- Yes Project
- child road safety
- allocations housing policy/key choice
- adaptations service
- risks and benefits of partnership working
- flooding/integrated emergency planning
- strategic commissioning
- road repairs strategy

Discussions and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- single partnership community newspaper and editorial arrangements
- NEETs and influencing factors/organisations
- NEETs targets in Local Area Agreement
- effective use of research material
- health agenda/scrutiny arrangements
- buy in of partner organisations at the highest level
- need for clear channels for communicating information
- information sharing

The meeting then divided into two groups to highlight priority issues for overview and scrutiny work.

Resolved:- (1) That the information be noted.

(2) That all Members of the Council be invited to identify any priority issues.

(3) That the scrutiny team write up the comments from the group discussions and report further to a future meeting of this Committee.

(The Chairman authorised consideration of the following item to prevent any unnecessary delay in processing the matter referred to)

196. CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY ANNUAL CONFERENCE - LONDON - 10TH JUNE, 2008

Resolved:- (1) That four places be reserved for the above conference.

(2) That Members be provided with the conference details and expressions of interest in attending be invited.

**MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
THURSDAY, 17TH APRIL, 2008**

Present:- Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors Austen, Barron, Cutts, Dodson, Littleboy, McNeely, Pickering, Turner and Whysall.

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Falvey, Foden, Gosling, Hodgkiss, Lakin, Rushforth, Sharman and Sharp.

28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 21ST FEBRUARY, 2008

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21st February, 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

With regard to Minute No. 24 (LGIU – Supporting Councillors) the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel were to consider the content at its meeting in June, 2008.

Further to Minute No. 25 (Member Development Budget) the fluorescent vests were not yet ordered as the Cabinet requested for the vests to remain “un-named”. However, this Panel was of the view that the vests should display the Ward Councillor’s name or at least have the word “Councillor” clearly displayed.

With regard to Minute Nos. 25(2) and 25(4) (Member Development Budget) a list of problems raised at the last meeting had been pulled together for rectification. The Town Hall and Eric Manns Building were to be refurbished and retained and not form part of the new civic accommodation. With this in mind it was suggested that a small working party made up of Members from this Panel consider refurbishment requirements, including the possibility of a mobile microphone facility for use in the John Smith Room and on request by Members.

29. INDUCTION 2008

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Scrutiny Adviser which outlined the proposed programme of induction for 2008.

The Panel noted the induction sessions and the practical information and skills sessions. It was important that new Members were advised on how the Council worked and the structures involved.

Agreed:- That the proposed programme be endorsed.

30. GREAT EXPECTATIONS: GREAT SUPPORT: GREAT RESOURCES - CONFERENCE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Scrutiny Adviser

which detailed the outcome of the South Yorkshire Improvement Conference, which took place on Monday, 10th March, 2008.

The report set out attendees, guest speakers and who provided support.

The conference was well received and the evaluation sheets were all very positive (apart from the lack of microphones) with plenty of suggestions for further events. The possibility of a conference in November was currently being explored on partnership working, to be hosted by the South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat.

Agreed:- That the report and the proposal for a further conference in November, 2008 be noted.

31. AWARDS

The Scrutiny Adviser reported that Rotherham had again been shortlisted for the Municipal Journal Awards in the category for Member Development, with a decision being announced in June, 2008.

An entry had also been submitted for the Mayoralty Team as a result of the work with Dolly Parton.

Rotherham's Scrutiny Unit had also been entered for three scrutiny awards – one of which was for the work involving the Youth Cabinet and another for "Scrutiny Team of the Year" for the work with the scrutiny of health.

Member Development had also been nominated for an APSE award.

Agreed:- That further information on progress be provided in due course.

32. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS

The Scrutiny Adviser informed the meeting of the first two workshops which had taken place with the IDeA on Local Area Agreements – looking at what the Local Area Agreement was, how it would work and Member involvement. These had proved successful and more workshops would be taking place after the elections.

Members would be informed of dates in due course.

33. UPDATE ON MEMBERS' I.T. SUPPORT - BROADBAND

The Scrutiny Adviser gave an update on the I.T. support for Members and the comments received from the first tranche of the roll out. Some Members had experienced some difficulties and others had found the speed refreshing.

Further information was requested on the computer refresh for all

Members, whether this included printers and whether the broadband line could be used for business telephone calls.

Discussion ensued on equipment, affordability and provision for Member use in the Majority Party Room. It was suggested that the latter issue be considered as part of the refurbishments of the Town Hall by the working group.

34. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Scrutiny Adviser was in receipt of a letter from Mike Leitch of the Local Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, regarding a successful bid for capacity building funds. This had resulted in free places on the Certificate of Local Government Modernisation course at the University of Huddersfield. Further information on workload etc. had been requested so any Member interested in undertaking this course should contact the Scrutiny Adviser.

35. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Panel be changed to now take place on Thursday, 26th June, 2008 at 2.00 p.m. with the agreement of the Chairman.