

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL

Venue:- Town Hall, Moorgate,
Street, Rotherham. S60
2TH

Date:- Thursday, 16 September
2010

Room:- Council Chamber

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. Rotherham's Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) – Trustee Board

Minute No. 12(2) of the Cabinet Member for Community Development and Engagement held on 12th July, 2010 recommended:-

That a representative for the Rotherham's Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) – Trustee Board be sought from the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel.

For Monitoring:-

7. Presentation of the Priorities of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods, Councillor Jahangir Akhtar. (Pages 1 - 10)
8. Combined Parliamentary and Local Elections May 2010 (report herewith) (Pages 11 - 28)
9. Rotherham Election Turnout Analysis (report herewith) (Pages 29 - 34)
10. Community Leadership Fund 2009/2010 (report herewith) (Pages 35 - 43)

Minutes - For Information:-

11. Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 15th July, 2010 (herewith). (Pages 44 - 52)
12. Minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 23rd July, 2010 (see Orange Book "Reports for Information - Section D - pages 26 - 31)

Extra Item:-

13. Policing in the 21st Century (report herewith) (Pages 53 - 61)

**Date of Next Meeting:-
Thursday, 28 October 2010**

Membership:-

Chairman – Councillor Austen

Vice-Chairman – Councillor J. Hamilton

Councillors:- Currie, Cutts, Dodson, Hughes, Johnston, Littleboy, Mannion, Parker,
Pickering, Sims and Tweed

Co-opted Members

Ms. J. Jones (GROW)

Councillor A. Bryden (Parish Council Representative)

Achieving

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Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel

16th September 2010

Councillor Akhtar

Safe Theme Board

Safe and Attractive

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rotherham
partnership
working together
succeeding together



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Learning

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Safe

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Priorities - Across All Portfolios

- **Neighbourhoods are safe and free from crime**
- **Communities to help shape local services**
- **Citizens have choice and equality of access**
- **Our Neighbourhoods are places to be proud of**



Building on overwhelming success

- 13% reduction in level of crime, 3000 fewer victims
- Headlines;
 - Domestic Burglary down by 8.7% - 16
 - Criminal Damage down by 15.1% - 134
 - Violent Crime down by 22.2% - 137
 - Serious Acquisitive Crime down by 17.6% - 122
 - Robbery (Person) down by 28.6% - 4



The Challenges

- Constraints on Public Sector Budgets
 - LAARG halved
 - £26k in year reduction of Area Based Grant
- Deepening our partnership working
- Maintaining our customer care & response
- Greater local engagement
- The Big One – managing the fast moving new Government Agenda and realising expectations



We know our local priorities - JSIA

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Serious Acquisitive Crime
- Reducing re-offending & managing offenders
- Serious Violent Crime
- Improving lives by reducing the harm caused by substance misuse
- Reducing & managing perceptions of crime and ASB and improving community confidence and public satisfaction
- Improving the quality of life in our most vulnerable communities



Government Direction

- strong, local community action
- trust the professionals
- dealing with some of the root causes
- replace bureaucratic accountability with democratic accountability
- Support of partnership working
- Visibility & availability
- The “Golden Thread”



Government Priorities

- Enable the police and local communities to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Enable police forces and local communities to deal better with the anti-social behaviour and crime that blights people's lives
- Increase the accountability of the police to citizens
 - Make police forces more accountable to the communities they serve through oversight by a directly elected individual and transparency about what the police are doing locally to tackle crime



Government “Structural Reforms”

- Review of ASB powers
- Overhaul alcohol licensing
- Reducing bureaucracy and interference
- Enable the police and local communities to tackle crime
- comprehensive approach to drug misuse
- Make the police more accountable through oversight by directly elected individuals
- Make the actions of the police in tackling crime more transparent



Key consultation – Policing in the 21st Century

- Increasing democratic accountability; Elected Police and Crime Commissioners
- Removing bureaucracy
- New national Framework of Policing
- Reconnecting people – active community involvement
- **New Crime Strategy to come**

Achieving

Learning

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Safe

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Our Priorities - In a Nutshell

Meeting our local expectations and continuing focused impact

Fast, flexible and creative to the fast moving agenda shift

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel
2.	Date:	16 September 2010
3.	Title:	Combined Parliamentary and Local Elections May 2010
4.	Directorate:	Chief Executive

5. Summary

This report is intended to provide an accurate account and assessment of how the combined parliamentary and local elections in May, 2010 were conducted in Rotherham. It will include key aspects of the process from the planning stage through to the counting of votes and will draw on direct experience of the electoral services team and feedback from other stakeholders including voters, candidates, agents and polling staff.

6. Recommendations

That the report, which was requested by the Panel, be noted.

7. Details - Conduct of the Election

7.1 Planning for the Election

We continue to deliver elections within an increasingly complex and challenging environment. Rapid and continuing legislative change, the high percentage (25%) of voters choosing to vote by post and the trend for the combination of polls increase the complexity of the election for everyone involved, not least the voters who should always be at the heart of the electoral process. There were around 25 separate pieces of primary and secondary legislation (some of which have been amended on several occasions) governing the administration of these elections.

“The complexity of election law is exacerbated when elections are held on the same day, and where polls are combined, particularly where the rules and timetables for the elections are not compatible”¹

The uncertainty around the date of the parliamentary election affected the planning processes for the local elections. Whilst it was known that the parliamentary election must be held by 3 June, it could have been called any time before that and at very short notice. The parliamentary election time-table is only 17 working days from the date of dissolution of parliament and with today’s complex elections; preparations cannot wait for the announcement of the date. It was therefore necessary to consider all the options and produce detailed provisional plans (but without entering into any actual spending commitments) for the following four different scenarios each with its own challenges:

- A snap autumn 2009 parliamentary election (during the electoral registration canvass)
- A snap spring 2010 parliamentary election (possible conflict with local election preparations)
- A combined parliamentary/local election in May 2010
- A stand-alone parliamentary election on 3 June 2010

In each scenario, the complexity was further increased by the requirement for “cross boundary” working with Barnsley MBC for the new Wentworth and Dearne Constituency which now includes the two Barnsley electoral wards of Dearne North and Dearne South. A particular concern was the requirement for the personal identifiers of any postal voters to be verified by software used in Rotherham when they had been originally captured by the different system in use in Barnsley. This was a national issue and software developers were working on compatibility fixes throughout the autumn of 2009 and spring of 2010. The Electoral Services team in Rotherham devoted significant time and resource to thorough pre-testing so as to minimise the risk of failure at the election. The Electoral Services teams in both authorities worked co-operatively throughout the planning and operational stages of the election to minimise the difficulties.

¹ Beyond 2010: the future of electoral administration in the UK – Association of Electoral Administrators

Planning for elections continues throughout the year starting with the review of the most recent election and ensuring any lessons learned are implemented. The performance of contractors is analysed and any necessary improvements agreed, the design and content of all election documents must be agreed and print and despatch schedules negotiated. Venues for training, postal vote opening, polling and counting must be confirmed very much in advance of the election and staffing requirements must be reviewed and recruitment processes put in place.

The electoral register is fundamental and the Electoral Services team is concerned to ensure its accuracy and completeness. Efforts to encourage eligible citizens to register are not confined to the annual canvass but continue throughout the year. Ensuring that the register is properly maintained all year round is key to the successful delivery of elections. Because of a by-election for Anston Parish Council on 3 December 2009, we were required in law to publish the fully revised register on 18 November instead of the usual date of 1 December. Additional consideration therefore was given to what actions would be necessary to ensure that the completeness of the register was not compromised by the early publication date.

7.2 The Nomination Process

The nomination period for local candidates opened on 30 March and closed on 8 April. The PM announced on 6 April that the Parliamentary election would be called for 6 May and combined with the local election. The nomination period for parliamentary candidates therefore opened on 14 April and closed on 20 April.

This was a very busy time and the Electoral Services team dealt with 92 nominations from candidates for the local election and 16 nominations for the parliamentary elections. Minority party and independent candidate involvement increased at both election types.

Between 30 March and 20 April, the Electoral Services team of 6 officers dealt with 108 nomination appointments including checking the papers and advising on queries. In the same period the team dealt with more than 2300 telephone enquiries.

A survey of all candidates resulted in 27 responses – feedback on the nomination process was positive in every case.

7.3 Communications with Candidates - Briefings and Guidance

A briefing was held for local candidates and agents on 14 April at 18:30 and for parliamentary candidates and agents on 21 April at 18:00. Candidates were briefed on the plans for the conduct of the election including the effect of the combination of polls. Arrangements for the verification and counting of votes were covered in some detail and the requirement for increased security was explained. Candidates were informed that access and movement at the count would have to be strictly controlled.

The briefings were conducted by Martin Kimber (Chief Executive and Returning Officer) and Mags Evers (Electoral Services Manager). Tim Mumford (Assistant Chief Executive, Legal & Democratic Services) was in attendance and South

Yorkshire Police were represented by officers from the Operational Planning Unit and the Economic Crime Unit (which handles electoral offences).

Written communications including specific guidance was issued to all candidates and their agents at the relevant times (eg: with nomination packs and following the deadline for withdrawals). These communications were intended to cover all aspects of the election and included everything covered in the candidate briefing sessions so that those unable to attend the briefing still received the information.

The responses from the candidate feedback was overwhelmingly positive although one local candidate thought the briefing a "little long-winded".

7.4 Voter Registration

Early publication of the revised register following the autumn 2009 canvass as described at 7.1 was a matter of some concern to the Electoral Services team. To allow households every opportunity to respond, door to door canvassing continued after the publication date to allow for inclusion of late responders in the monthly update in January 2010.

The table below illustrates the figures at 18 November and the effect of the continued efforts by 1 January Notice of Alteration.

Total Number of properties canvassed = 111,832		
Response Rates:	By 18 Nov Publication	By 1 Jan Notice
Number of responses	94066	100459
% Response	84	90
Total Electorate	191,332	193,517

Of course, attempts to encourage citizens to register are not confined to the annual canvass period and in Rotherham, we are active throughout the year to make the most of the opportunities offered by "rolling registration" to maintain an accurate and up to date register. The table below sets out statistics of the resulting changes each month to the electoral register.

"Rolling Electoral Registration" Statistics for Monthly Notices of Alteration 2010					
<u>DATE</u>	<u>ADDED</u>	<u>REMOVED</u>	<u>CHANGE TO DETAILS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>TOTAL ELECTORATE</u>
01.01.10	3634	1375	1316	6325	193,517
01.02.10	313	162	18	493	193,750
01.03.10	368	408	25	801	193,709
01.04.10	1042	638	32	1712	194,110
28.04.10	1367	952	70	2389	194,534
01.06.10	324	318	13	655	194,554
01.07.10	352	393	22	767	194,513
01.08.10	403	492	15	910	194,425
01.09.10	400	1154	12	1566	193,671

	8203	5892	1523	
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Since 2007 there has been a facility to allow voters to register up to 11 working days before polling day. This is also the deadline for receipt of applications to vote by post or to cancel or change any existing postal or proxy vote. For the elections in May 2010 the date was Tuesday 20 April (otherwise known as “Super Tuesday”). The conflicts between the local election and parliamentary election timetable meant that this was also the deadline for close of Parliamentary nominations and withdrawals. This was a real “pinch point” in the timetable and required a tremendous effort to ensure that

- all parliamentary candidate details were accurately captured, carefully checked and extracted in data files for the print contractor who needed them to prepare parliamentary ballot papers
- postal vote applications from parliamentary voters living in the Dearne North and Dearne South Wards of Barnsley MBC were processed and data files transferred to Rotherham for checking and including with our data files to print contractors
- all processing of registration and postal vote applications was completed accurately to allow a data file of postal voters at each election to be produced and carefully checked and transferred to the print contractor so that postal packs could be produced
- the data files would be used to provide proofs of ballot papers and postal vote packs for immediate approval to allow the printer to begin work overnight

At the deadline on 20 April there were:

208,996 voters eligible to vote at the parliamentary elections – including 52,608 who had chosen to vote by post²

193, 307 voters eligible to vote at the local elections – including 49,861 who had chosen to vote by post.

To avoid any delays, the electoral services team continued working until the printers had been able to process all the data files so that they could be verified and all proofs signed off on the same day. Final sign off was at 9:45pm on 20 April.

7.5 Printing and Postal Ballot Preparation and Despatch

All printing work was undertaken by Adare. This included poll cards, postal ballot packs, ballot papers and corresponding number lists. As described at 7.1, time spent on pre-planning and negotiation was significant but invaluable.

Poll cards and postal votes were all despatched on the pre-agreed dates. Electoral Services Officers were on site on the date of despatch of postal votes to carry out QA checks, confirm numbers and personally supervise the handover to Royal Mail

A post election ‘lessons learned’ meeting has taken place with Adare and planning for 2011 election is already beginning.

² These figures include parliamentary electors in Dearne North & Dearne South wards of Barnsley MBC

7.6 Postal Ballot Opening and Personal Identifier Verification Process

Available venues for postal vote opening sessions are limited resulting in cramped conditions and some inconvenience to staff and to candidates and agents who attend the sessions. If all candidates and agents entitled to attend actually did so we would have difficulty in accommodating them.

There were 6 postal vote opening sessions including a final one at the close of poll to deal with postal votes handed in to polling stations on polling day and with the Royal Mail "sweep" which includes any posted on polling day and reaching Sheffield Mail Centre by 9:00pm.

All staff who were to work at postal vote opening sessions attended a two-hour training session before the first session and were briefed at the beginning of each session. Supervisory staff also attended a full day training course delivered by the Association of Electoral Administrators. Only those who have attended training by the Forensic Science Service are authorised to adjudicate on signatures.

The postal vote opening process is complex and time-consuming and involves detailed checking of numbers on postal vote statements and ballot paper envelopes. Postal vote statements accompanying postal ballot papers must contain the voter's signature and date of birth and these must be checked against those given by the voters when they applied to vote by post. As described at 7.1, this election saw the additional complication of using one software system to check the identifiers collected by another. The significant time and resource devoted to working with our software supplier in testing their solution proved to have been worthwhile and this was a success.

In all more than 45,000 postal votes were opened and the signatures, dates of birth and co-relation of numbers of them all were checked and verified. The process was further complicated by the combination of the polls and the postal vote packs.

At the final session, held after the close of poll to deal with postal votes handed in at polling stations or received from the Royal Mail sweep of Sheffield Mail Centre, 1688 postal votes were opened and the numbers and personal identifiers on each were checked and verified. As predicted and mentioned in candidate briefing sessions and guidance notes, this process was still continuing after the contents of polling station ballot boxes had been verified at the count and delayed the progression from verification stage to the vote-counting stage.

Feedback from candidates/agents indicates that some have reservations about postal voting being available on demand and believe that this offers more opportunity for fraud. One candidate appears to doubt the integrity of the postal vote opening staff but did not attend any postal vote opening sessions so it is difficult to see any justification for such suspicion. Candidates who did attend the sessions, regardless of their political standpoint, were very satisfied with the way the sessions were conducted and the complex processes were managed. Some did comment on the cramped conditions in which the postal vote opening teams have to work.

7.7 Polling Day

The combination of polls required that additional consideration be given to polling stations in terms of additional equipment, staffing requirements and voter allocations.

Whilst combined polls are not unknown in Rotherham it had been more than 30 years since a parliamentary election had been combined with a local election in this area. The polling staff are used to combined polls where the franchise at each is much the same and voters are entitled to vote at both elections.

Franchise at a parliamentary election is limited to British and Commonwealth citizens but the local election includes European Union citizens too. This could lead to delays or confusion in polling stations. Polling staff would have to understand the franchise and be prepared to answer questions from voters.

These issues had already been considered in the project plan drawn up for this particular scenario as at 7.1. Once the parliamentary election date was confirmed, the plans were put into place.

- Voter allocations were reviewed at the pre-planning stage to ensure that they were well within Electoral Commission guidelines
- Staffing resources were reviewed and additional polling clerks were appointed where necessary to avoid delays caused by issuing two ballot papers, dealing with voter queries and marking the register properly to indicate which ballot paper(s) had been issued.
- Extra ballot boxes were hired and separate boxes for each election were issued to every polling station and labelled with colour-coded labels to clearly indicate which ballot papers should be inserted.
- Other polling equipment was reviewed to identify where extra equipment or supplies may be necessary. As usual in Rotherham, all polling stations were issued with 100% allocation of ballot papers.
- Additional Polling Station Inspectors were appointed to offer support to Presiding Officers on the day.
- All Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors were required to attend training sessions. To accommodate the numbers, 6 training sessions were delivered by the two senior members of the Electoral Services team from 5pm to 7pm on 6 consecutive days. The officers also travelled to Barnsley to deliver training to polling staff who would be working in polling stations in Dearne North & Dearne South. Any Presiding Officer who did not attend a training session had their appointment cancelled and was replaced. A “reserve” list was maintained and individuals on the list were invited to attend training so that they could be appointed at short notice in case of illness etc.
- The briefing sessions for poll clerks were extended to allow for training on the franchise and how to issue ballot papers and mark the registers.
- The comprehensive polling staff guidance manuals were fully revised to take account of the very different requirements at these elections.
- A “quick guide” for polling staff was drawn up consisting of a table which made it much simpler to see at a glance which ballot paper(s) any elector was entitled to and how to mark the register. This was laminated and several copies issued to

every polling station as well as being included in the guidance manual issued to every Presiding Officer and Poll Clerk.

Whilst polling day was very busy at the stations and in the office, there were no significant problems and we did not suffer any of the issues experienced in some other areas.

The Electoral Commission appointed two official observers to the elections in Rotherham and they had the right to observe any and all proceedings in polling stations, at postal vote sessions and at the count.

The Electoral Services Office was staffed from 06:30 until 21:00 which was sufficient to meet the statutory needs. After that the service was backed up with a combination of contacts by mobile telephones with polling station inspectors and with electoral services staff who by this time were all at Magna.

Candidate feedback is generally very positive in this aspect of the election though some commented that voters found the combination of the polls confusing.

7.8 Counting of Votes

There has been some adverse comment about the level of security at the count and so this point will be addressed separately at 7.9.

Several new count supervisors had to be recruited and trained for these elections because of the loss of some experience due to retirement and also because of the need for a greater number of supervisors because of the scale of the task. Several members of the Strategic Leadership team undertook the task and all made a valuable contribution despite little opportunity for in-depth training. The existing team of count supervisors acted as mentors and provided excellent levels of support whilst still meeting their own responsibilities.

The combination of polls added to the complexities and timescales for counting votes. Additional demands due to the volumes and complexities of postal votes for two major elections and “cross-boundary” working in the Wentworth & Dearne Constituency all increased the risk of a prolonged count and very late results.

The law required that the verification of ballot boxes for both elections and the verification of all postal votes at the final session **must** be completed before the counting of votes for candidates at either election could commence. This requirement was confirmed in guidance from the Electoral Commission and there were 2 EC observers in attendance at the count.

The government introduced new legislation at very short notice to ensure that the parliamentary counts commenced on Thursday night but as there was no safe way to predict what time they would finish, the counts for the local elections were deferred until the morning of Friday 7 May.

The verification stage commenced at 10pm with the counting teams dealing first with the boxes of postal ballots from the first five postal vote opening sessions.

The arrangements for getting presiding officers in and out of Magna had been reviewed in pre-planning meetings and provision to avoid delay built in. Feedback from Presiding Officers was good including the following comment:

“Just wanted to say that the bit at Magna, giving in the ballot boxes, was the best I’ve experienced. The car queuing was not as long as usual, the actual checking in of the boxes was done before I’d noticed. Well done for all the organisation which went into making it so effortless” Presiding Officer – May 2010

Overall the procedures at the verification went well despite the additional burdens presented by the legal requirement that the Rotherham Returning Officer verify the contents of the local and parliamentary ballot boxes for 2 extra electoral wards (Dearne North and Dearne South).

As predicted, there was a delay following the verification of polling station ballot boxes whilst the complex procedures were completed to deal with the 1688 postal votes in the final session.

There were no requests for re-counts and the results for each constituency were announced at the following times:

Rother Valley	03:17
Wentworth & Dearne	03:22
Rotherham	03:32

All results were posted on the council website within minutes of being declared.

The table at **Appendix 1** shows declaration times for all metropolitan authorities in West and South Yorkshire. Rotherham’s declarations were amongst the earliest.

Electoral Services staff and the Returning Officer remained at Magna until around 4 a.m. having ensured that all sensitive materials and local ballot boxes were secured ready for the local count on the following morning.

The Returning Officer and the Electoral Services team were back at Magna by 08:30 the following morning to ensure preparations were completed for the local election counts and to meet with Royal Mail to complete and hand over the parliamentary writs for return to the Clerk of the Crown.

The counting of local election votes commenced promptly at 11:00am and since all ballot boxes had been verified previously, the process of sorting and counting votes for candidates proceeded quickly and smoothly. There were no requests for recounts and all results had been declared by around 1:00pm. All results were posted on the council website within minutes of being declared.

Turnout statistics for parliamentary and local elections are attached at **Appendix 2**.

Commencing the counting of votes on the Thursday night is still a contentious issue. The delay experienced because of the final postal vote session was simply the need to process the final postal ballots that had been received up to the close of the poll. There were no other technical difficulties. Had there been technical difficulties the delay could have been significantly longer resulting in the count having to be reconvened during Friday.

The Gould report into the 2007 Scottish elections commissioned by the Electoral Commission concluded:

“After carefully weighing the pros and cons of the alternatives, we recommend that if the polls continue to close at 10.00pm, there should be no overnight count of the ballot papers.”³

Feedback from candidates indicates general satisfaction with the conduct of the count but 8 of the 27 candidates who responded had concerns about security.

7.9 Security at the Election and at the Count

South Yorkshire Police had an active involvement during the election. Our contact with both the operational planning unit and the Economic Crime Unit are now well established and the police provide resources to help secure the integrity of all elections.

Postal votes were delivered by Royal Mail at an agreed time each day and handed directly to Electoral Services Officers who placed them in sealed ballot boxes which were kept secure until each postal vote opening session. Following the opening sessions, postal ballot papers to go to the count were secured in sealed ballot boxes. At all times, all the ballot boxes were securely stored with only Electoral Services Officers having access to the locked room in which they were contained.

Police patrolled and visited polling stations, were present at Magna throughout the count and provided the escort for local ballot boxes into and out of secure storage after the completion of the verification and before counting votes on Friday.

Planning meetings were held with South Yorkshire Police before and during the election period and detailed integrity plans were agreed. Following the announcement of the parliamentary election date a document “Election Security “Notes for Guidance” was received from ACPOS (Association of Chief Police Officers) and had to be taken into account.

Some candidates have questioned the need for the level of security at the count and there were admittedly some unforeseen consequences arising from the decision to use a professional security company used for other events held at Magna.

Because Magna’s own staff would be needed elsewhere to deal with the additional pressures at this election count, they could not be available for security. The

³ *The Independent Review into the 2007 Scottish Elections conducted by Ron Gould and commissioned by the Electoral Commission*

unforeseen consequence of this decision was that the security agents would take instruction only from a member of the Magna team who had briefed them initially and this did cause some unfortunate delays in issuing changes to instructions when it became apparent that security could be somewhat relaxed.

The necessity for some form of security control at election counts is threefold:

- To ensure the safety of those inside the premises in case of an emergency or security incident
- To ensure rivalry between supporters does not become heated and lead to aggression
- To ensure that those persons appointed to observe proceedings at any particular count are able to do so clearly and without obstruction caused by over-crowding at tables

The advice from ACPOS indicated that the current terrorist threat assessment was higher than for some time and the size and uniqueness of the Magna building made it impossible for police search teams to search and secure every part of the premises before commencement of the count. It was therefore seen as important that access to the premises be strictly controlled to secure the safety of those entitled to be inside.

Because of the combination of polls, a total of 628 candidates and agents were entitled to attend the verification stage on Thursday night.

It is very important that those appointed to a particular count are able to observe the processes for their own count without being obstructed or intimidated by the presence of large numbers of people who have no entitlement.

Election rules in the Representation of the People Act 1983 and related statutory orders clearly state that no person other than those listed below may attend any specific count–

- a) the returning officer and his staff
- b) the candidates and one other person chosen by each of them
- c) the election agents
- d) the counting agents
- e) electoral commission observers

The rules do allow the returning officer very limited discretion but he must not exercise this unless he is satisfied that the efficient separation or counting of ballot papers will not be impeded and has either consulted the election agents or thought it impracticable to do so.

With verification of 23 electoral wards and 3 parliamentary constituencies followed by 3 parliamentary election counts it was originally considered important to maintain the separation to ensure transparency for those entitled to be in each count area.

If a situation arose where an individual appointed to attend and observe a particular count was to object to the presence at that count of any person who did not have the

same entitlement, the Returning Officer would have no choice but to ask them to leave the area. This could give rise to some unpleasantness which would be better avoided.

At previous election counts, police have had to intervene between rival supporters, some of whom had circumvented the access arrangements and gained admittance without any entitlement.

In light of the ACPOS document it was also important to know where to expect to find people in the event of an incident requiring evacuation. This document was clear in its advice that only previously authorised persons should be allowed entry and lists of who was present should be available at all times.

As it happened, not all those who were entitled to attend did so and as a result local candidates and agents who were only entitled to attend the verification stage were allowed to remain in the Big Hall (Counting Hall) for the parliamentary count contrary to the original plan that they would be moved to the Red Hall at this stage of the proceedings.

For the local election count on Friday, the Magna team were instructed to brief the security staff to relax restrictions and to take instruction from Electoral Services Officers. This allowed everyone to move freely throughout the Big Hall at the local count but access to the premises still had to be controlled.

The view from some candidates that security was “over the top” is understandable; it certainly must have seemed so since no serious incident occurred. However, security is still an important element for a successful and well managed count. The police will expect us to provide some security and not rely solely on their limited resources.

Security at future elections will be controlled directly by the Electoral Services team whether delivered by Magna or by a separate security service provider. This will ensure more flexibility to respond sensibly and quickly to the situation at any particular election count.

7.10 Assessment of Performance

Against challenging odds the election was delivered successfully with none of the problems experienced elsewhere and given wide coverage in the media.

The feedback from staff, voters and candidates has been mostly very positive. There were very few complaints from voters and these are detailed at appendix 3. There was some anecdotal evidence that voters found the combination of the polls confusing.

The Electoral Commission’s official observers were complimentary and commented that the election had been managed professionally and efficiently at polling stations, postal vote opening sessions and at the count.

The core electoral team of 6 electoral officers worked very hard and under extreme pressure to ensure the successful delivery of these complex elections. The entire team worked throughout bank holidays and weekends and put in very long hours every day. During the period from 30 March to 5 May this small team of 6 with assistance from 2 temporary helpers dealt with 3,837 telephone calls.

On polling day every member of the team worked from 06:30am until 04:00am the following morning with only 2 short breaks of around an hour each. They were back at Magna within 4.5 hours by 08:30am on Friday to set up for the local count and remained until the conclusion of the local count and after all equipment and documents had been returned to secure storage in the afternoon. They had been unable to take leave during the early part of the year and were by now exhausted but justifiably proud of their achievement.

Any election cannot be delivered without additional support and this election required even more support from colleagues across the organisation and its partners. This was provided in full measure across RMBC, RBT and 2010 Ltd. and messages of thanks have been sent to them all.

The Returning Officer at this election was Martin Kimber who was newly in post as Chief Executive and Returning Officer. He provided strong support to the Electoral Services team and made himself available whenever necessary despite the many competing demands for his attention. He attended pre-planning meetings and briefing sessions and encouraged colleagues across the council to offer support.

The Electoral Commission sets and monitors national performance standards at elections and at this election the team at Rotherham exceeded the standard in every performance area.

8. Finance

The cost of the election is being met from the current budget with additional funding from central government for the parliamentary elections. Some savings will be achieved through sharing costs for elements such as staffing and postage on postal vote packs.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There were many risks to the successful delivery of these elections some of which have been described earlier and all of which, on this occasion, have been successfully avoided. The challenges, however, continue to grow.

“ I have serious reservations about being able to conduct future elections if there is no change to the timetable and if local authorities cut back on staff due to deficit problems”

Returning Officer Northern England⁴

⁴ Report on the administration of the 2010 UK general election

A separate report is being prepared for the October meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel which will focus on the challenges to come as indicated in the Coalition's programme for government and also by the forthcoming office accommodation changes in Rotherham MBC and potential budgetary constraints.

10. Background Papers and Consultation

- *Beyond 2010: the future of electoral administration in the UK – Association of Electoral Administrators*
- *The Independent Review into the 2007 Scottish Elections conducted by Ron Gould and commissioned by the Electoral Commission.*
- *Report on the administration of the 2010 UK general election - The Electoral Commission*
- *The Coalition – our programme for government*

Contact Name : *Mags Evers, Chief Elections and Electoral Registration Officer, telephone extension: 3521, e-mail address: mags.evers@rotherham.gov.uk*

Barnsley MBC

Barnsley Central	02:11
Barnsley East & Mexborough	02:50

Doncaster MBC

Don Valley	02:58
Doncaster Central	03:20
Doncaster North	03:10

Rotherham MBC

Rotherham	03:32
Rother Valley	03:17
Wentworth & Dearne	03:22

Sheffield CC

Sheffield Central	07:03
Sheffield South East	05:18
Brightside & Hillsborough	05:29
Penistone & Stocksbridge	06:26
Sheffield Hallam	06:37
Sheffield Heeley	05:43

Bradford CC

Bradford East	07:14
Bradford South	06:13
Bradford West	06:42
Keighley	06:07
Shipley	05:37

Calderdale MBC

Calder Valley	07:10
Halifax	06:55

Kirklees MBC

Batley & Spen	05:03
Colne Valley	05:23
Dewsbury	04:49
Huddersfield	04:52

Leeds CC

Elmet & Rothwell	05:21
Leeds Central	05:14
Leeds East	04:38
Leeds North East	05:06
Leeds North West	05:28
Leeds West	04:30
Morley & Outwood	04:53
Pudsey	04:46

Wakefield MBC

Hemsworth	?
Normanton, Pontefract & Castleford	06:40
Wakefield	05:18

**Parliamentary Elections
06-May-10
Turnout Figures**

APPENDIX 2

Constituency	Electorate	No. of Votes Cast	Overall turnout inc postal votes		Postal Votes Only	
			Turnout		PV issued	PV Turnout
Rotherham	63563	37601	59.16		16502	81.8
Rother Valley	72847	46852	64.32		19346	83.78
Wentworth & Dearne	72586	42187	58.12		16760	80.62

Appendix 3

Complaints received from voters following elections in May 2010

Written complaints

By Letter (1)

1. A letter was received from a voter who was unable to vote because she was not included in the register of electors. Her name had been removed during the annual canvass because the annual canvass registration form returned from the property indicated that the property was boarded up and empty. The voter had moved into long-term temporary accommodation because of a problem with the residence but had not re-registered at the new address, nor advised the registration officer of the situation. The voter has now applied to be added to the register and the application has been processed.

By email (3)

1. A voter complained that because the polling station for his area is in a council owned building, he is unable to vote because of an injunction against him entering council premises. He has been advised repeatedly that he can enter the polling station to vote but must leave afterwards and is aware of the facility for postal voting.
2. An overseas voter currently registered to vote by post, complained that he was refused a proxy vote and that this would mean that he would not be able to vote since his postal vote would not arrive in time. The statutory deadline to cancel an existing postal vote at this election was 20 April and the deadline to apply for a proxy vote was 27 April. Unfortunately the deadline for cancelling the postal vote was not pointed out to him at the time this office sent his proxy vote application form. His application was received after the deadline to cancel his postal vote and so could not be granted since his postal vote could not now be cancelled. His postal vote was despatched by airmail on 26 April and was received and returned to the Returning Officer before the close of poll. His application for proxy voting has been granted for future elections.
3. A similar situation to the one above except that the overseas voter's enquiry about applying to vote by proxy was not received in this office until 21 April and so after the deadline for the voter to cancel the postal vote which he had previously chosen. The voter wanted his postal vote to be issued by email which is not possible. The voter complains that electronic voting is not available in this country. The voter's postal vote was despatched on 26 April by airmail but he states that, unlike the previous case, it was not received. The postal vote has not been returned to the Returning Officer

By Telephone

In a similar vein to those above - a postal voter who was unhappy that he could not cancel his postal vote and be granted a proxy vote after the 20 April. His postal vote would not have presented any problems except that his holiday had been postponed due to volcanic ash and so he would now be away when his postal vote arrived. The voter said that he would complain in writing but this has not been received up to today's date.

One voter who is a wheelchair user complained that he could not access his polling station via his usual route because a gate was padlocked. He was able to get into the station and vote but by a longer and more inconvenient but accessible route. On investigation it transpired that the caretaker had originally forgotten to unlock the gate. The Presiding Officer had him unlock it as soon as this voter made her aware. We will be visiting the polling station before the next election to review its accessibility arrangements.

A voter telephoned to complain that he was not on the register of electors – this was because in accordance with the RPA 1983, his name had been deleted after non-response in two consecutive years to the electoral registration canvass. A letter had been sent to the property in January warning that names had been deleted and enclosing an application form to allow any residents to apply to register. The voter said that he would complain in writing but this has not been received. An application form to register has been sent.

We did receive several telephone calls from postal voters who said that they had not received their parliamentary ballot papers and had only got local ones. On further questioning it transpired that many of these were because the voters did not recognise the parliamentary ballot paper since it did not contain the names of Gordon Brown, Nick Clegg or David Cameron.

I am also aware of a telephone call from a voter who said he hadn't received his voting papers but claimed to have registered last year. He gave no details but said he would complain in writing – this has not been received up to today's date.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL
2. Date:	16th September, 2010
3. Title:	Rotherham Election Turnout Analysis
4. Directorate:	Chief Executive's

5. Summary

Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel requested statistical analysis of the May Election turnout figures, to identify turnout change or information that could help members work more effectively in their wards.

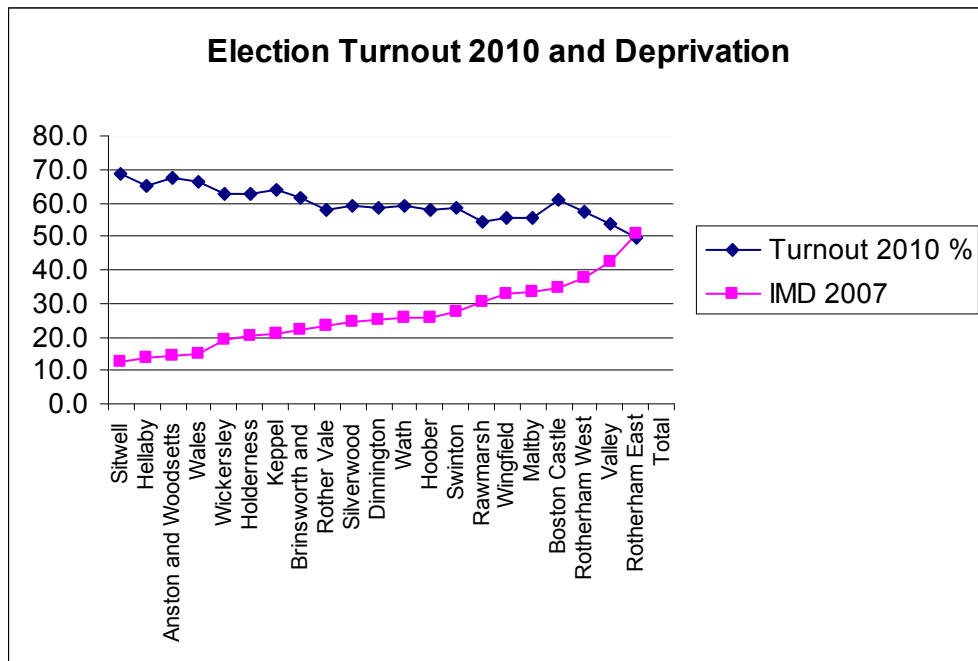
6. Recommendations

That the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel note the contents of this report.

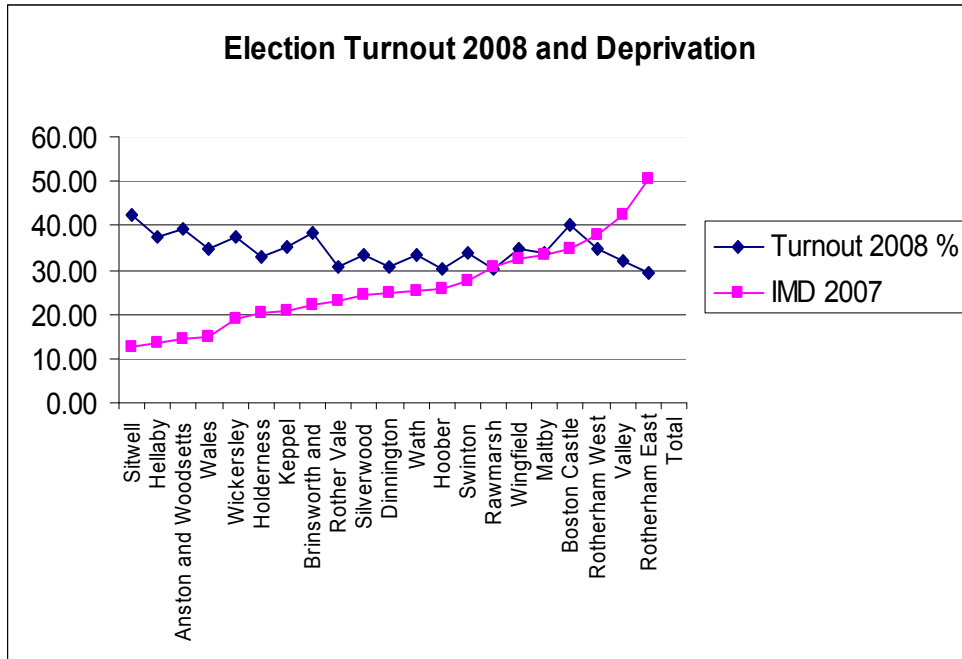
7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Deprivation

There is a clear correlation between turnout and deprivation. The least deprived wards (Sitwell, Hellaby, Anston) have the highest turnout in both 2008 and 2010. The pattern for the most deprived wards is rather more complex but generally they have the lowest turnout. Boston Castle is an exception, possibly because BME voters are more likely to turnout, allowing for deprivation levels.

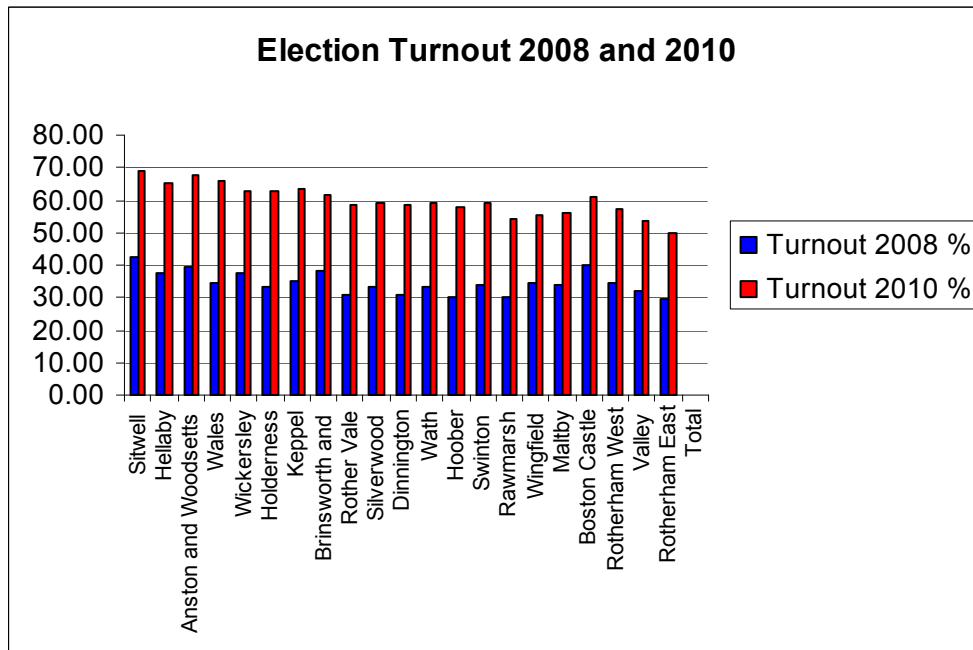


IMD = Index of Multiple Deprivation



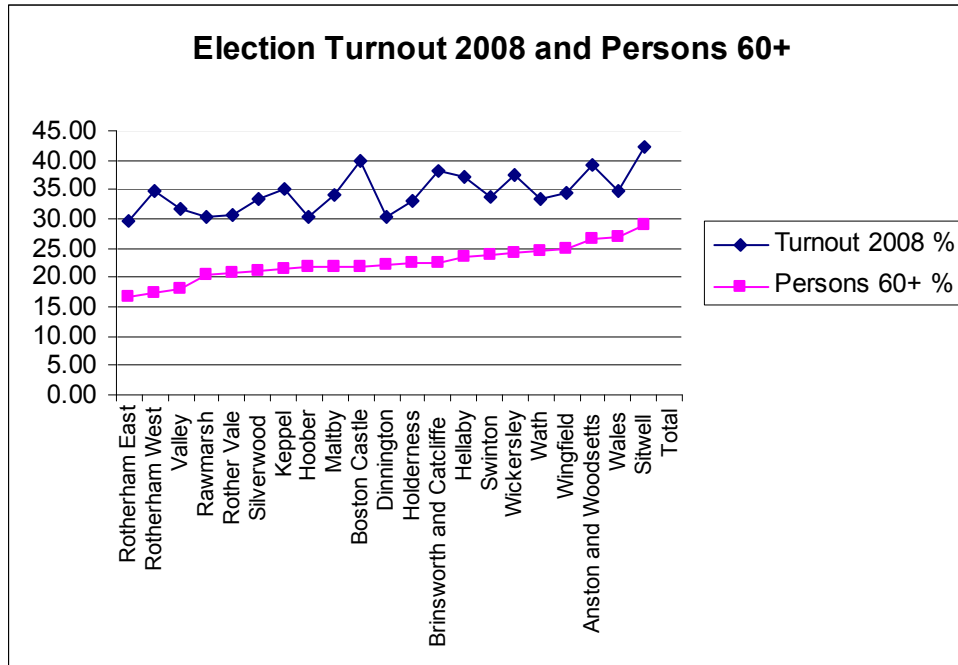
A study by Manchester University found that turnout is the same for Pakistani voters as White British. However, there is much evidence to show that Pakistanis are generally more deprived so their tendency to turnout will be higher relative to deprivation.

The 2010 election was unusual in that turnout was boosted by the General Election. This was an untypical election so the 2008 turnouts will be used to compare with other factors below to give an indication of local election turnout.



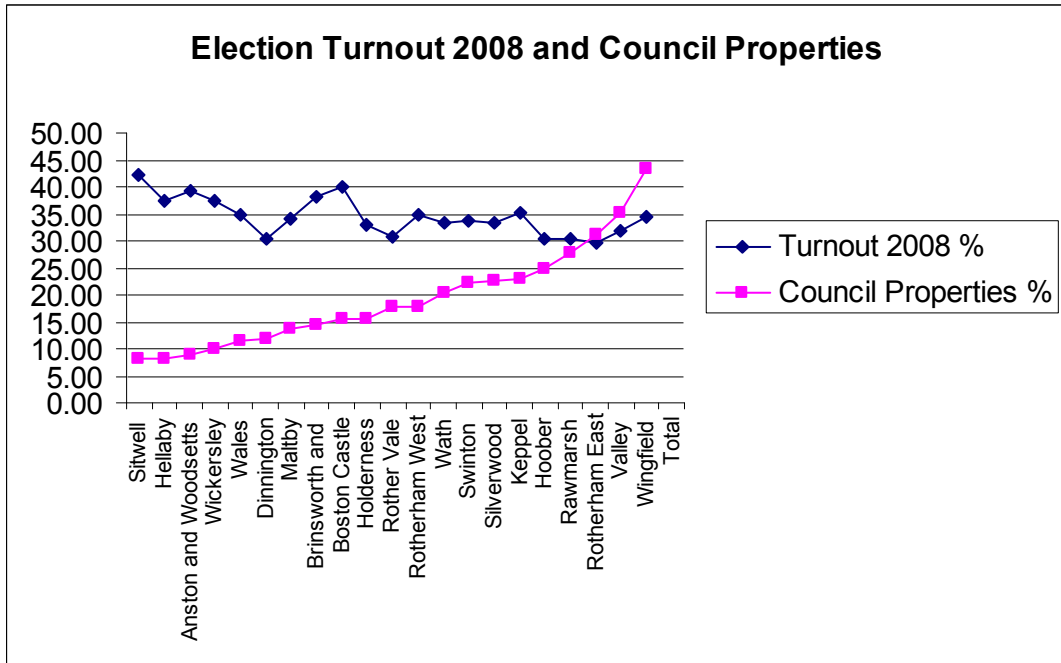
7.2 Age

Turnout is generally higher amongst older voters and this has an effect on Rotherham wards. Wards with older residents tend to turnout better although these also tend to be the less deprived and the two factors may combine to increase turnout.



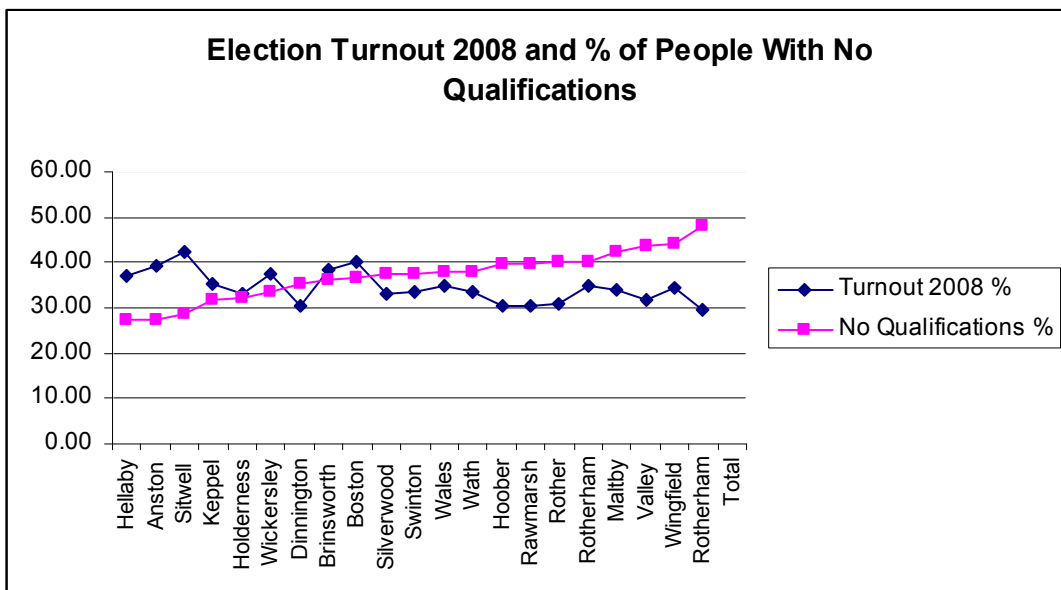
7.3 Tenure

Council housing is clearly linked to deprivation but there is a less clear cut relationship between the amount of council housing in a ward and turnout. Generally wards with few council homes have high turnouts but there is also a link with age. Council housing residents tend to be deprived (less likely to vote) but also older (more likely to vote). Thus, Wingfield has many older residents living in council housing and has a fairly average turnout despite high deprivation.



7.4 Qualifications

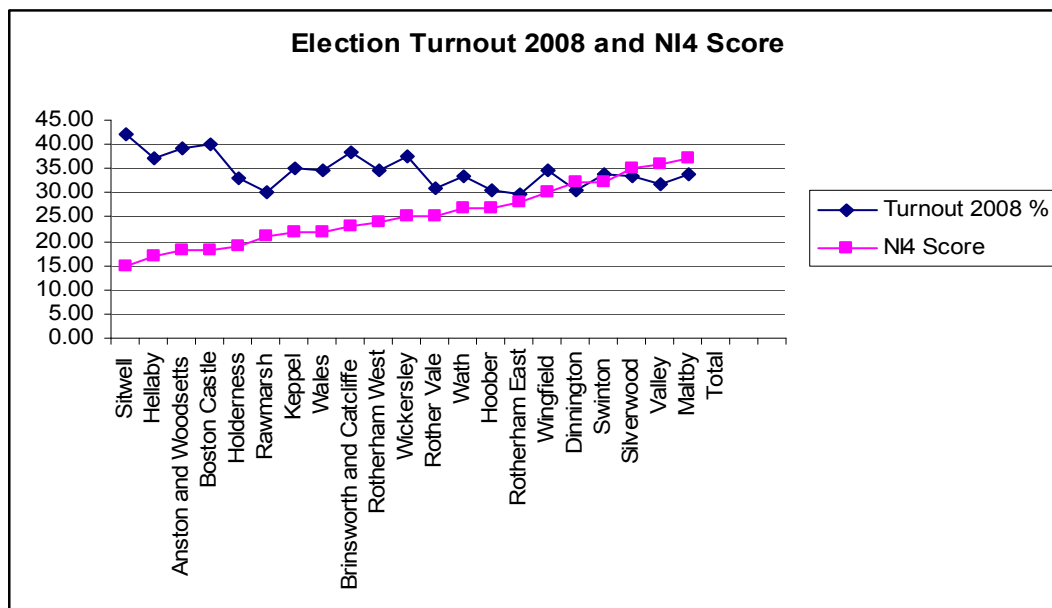
Qualification level is linked to deprivation and thus there is a pattern where wards with the fewest qualified votes have the lowest turnouts.



7.5 National Indicator 4 – People feel they can influence local decisions.

In Rotherham, 25% feel that they can influence local decisions (2008 Place Survey), which varies from 15% in Sitwell to 37% in Maltby. There is a general link to deprivation with feelings of influence rising with deprivation. Wards with a low feeling of influence generally have the highest election turnouts. Wards with an above average NI 4 score (25-37%) had turnouts

averaging 32% but those below average (15-25%) had turnouts averaging 37%.



8. Finance

There are no financial implications directly arising out of this report.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

If voter turnout falls significantly the election result may not be an accurate reflection of the will of the people and will constitute a challenge to governance arrangements.

10. Background Paper and Consultation

Non-applicable.

Contact: Miles Crompton, Principal Officer Policy and Performance, direct line: (01709) 822763 e-mail: miles.crompton@rotherham.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO SCRUTINY

1. Meeting:	Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel
2. Date:	16TH September, 2010
3. Title:	Community Leadership Fund 2009-10
4. Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This report outlines the expenditure of the Members Community Leadership Fund for the financial year 2009-10 and it's continuing role in enhancing the leadership role of elected members within Rotherham's neighbourhoods.

6. Recommendations

- 1 That the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel notes the expenditure for the financial year 2009-10**
- 2 That no changes are made to the fund at the present time.**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Background

Over the past few years there has been an emphasis in local government on the importance of elected ward councillors as political and community leaders at the heart of local neighbourhoods.

The Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, the Councillors Commission and the Empowerment White Paper have all encouraged local authorities to adopt a range of powers and responsibilities to empower ward councillors including new opportunities to act on local issues and be more effective advocates of local democracy.

In Rotherham the Community Leadership Fund was established in 2003 to enable Members to address local priorities, empower grassroots groups and quickly instigate changes in response to local opinion.

The new coalition government has acknowledged the key leadership role played by local councillors and its support for localism, democratic engagement and decentralisation all of which reflect the principles of the Community Leadership Fund. They have also indicated that legislation will be brought forward in Autumn 2010 to encourage greater use of Ward budgets for councillors.

7.2 Community Leadership Fund - Expenditure 2009/10

- Members spent £67095 during the financial year 2009/10.
- This has resulted in a cumulative carry forward figure of £30000 from 2009/10 into 2010/11 giving a budget for the 2010/11 financial year of £93000.

7.3 Projects Supported during 2009/10

Over 200 projects were supported during 2009/10. This includes match funding projects with Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Area Assemblies, Area Housing Panels, Tenants and Residents Associations and internal RMBC services including Sports Development Teams and Youth Services.

A direct correlation can be made between the types of projects and activities supported by the Community Leadership Fund and the key strategic themes of the Community Strategy. For the year 2009/10 39% of projects focused on 'Alive' related activities, 26% on Proud, 18% on Safe and 17% on Learning. A small selection of projects listed below illustrates links to the key themes:-

Alive (children and young people,	Proud (active citizenship, diversity,
--	--

<p>environment, sports activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling Autism • Junior Football Teams • Dance events for young and old • Keep Fit for OAPs • Community Fun days 	<p>supporting vulnerable people)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and role model workshops • Equipment for the new carers centre • Tackling isolation for OAPs • Cohesion events • Community Awards Ceremonies
<p>Safe (preventing crime, community safety)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fawkes night diversionary events • Workbooks to prevent children running away • Setting up youth clubs • Magnetic door alarms for vulnerable households • Hi-viz road safety jackets for youngsters • Support for neighbourhood watch 	<p>Learning (training, skills and education)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School holiday clubs • Community arts festival • Activity groups for toddlers and mums • Tools to grow vegetables for school projects • Horticultural schemes

7.4 Feedback

Feedback is obtained for each project and placed on file with the original application. A small selection of quotes is provided below to underline the significant difference that sometimes minor amounts of funding can make to local groups and projects:-

Maltby Project 400 for people with learning difficulties – purchase of decorating materials (Maltby Ward)

“This has been a fantastic community project for the project 400 learners. It has helped them gain skills in painting and decorating and breakdown social barriers and the learners have been made to feel a valued member of their local community. One our learners has now moved onto a full time job in streetpride. Many thanks for supporting the project.”

D Harper, Addison Day Centre

Swinton Fitzwilliam primary school – purchase of plants to improve Swinton precinct (Swinton Ward)

“A grant from Cllr Neil License’s Community Leadership Fund allowed the children to purchase the colourful plants and Cllr Ken Wyatt came to the school assembly to talk about the history of the precinct and how important it is to look after the shopping area. All the local agencies became involved including the Area Assembly, Rotherham Wardens, SY Police and Rotherham 2010 Ltd”

Jane Flaherty School Business Manager.

St Andrews Centre – support for the school holiday club (Brinsworth and Catcliffe Ward)

“The grant enabled the St Andrews Centre to provide a holiday club for the benefit of children in Brinsworth free of charge.

We provided a safe and stimulating environment with games and activities which helps provide a healthy diversion for children during the summer holidays.

This has encouraged us to look at future provision and making it available for other age groups aswell”

J Lindley

7.5 Carrying Over Funding

One of the founding principles of the Fund was that it was flexible and easy for Members to use. As a consequence since the financial year 2006-7 Members have been able to carry over up to £1000 of their allocation into the next financial year to enable them to support emerging projects, those that may require additional funding or to retain money to deal with urgent issues that may arise within the Ward.

This has proved to be a popular option and the vast majority of Members have chosen to carry some funding forward.

During the last review of the scheme in Autumn 2008 a questionnaire was sent to all Members regarding the Fund. Members were asked if they found the carry over facility useful and all those who responded indicated that they found this helpful when planning where to allocate money within their Ward.

Up to date details of expenditure are available to Members on the internal intranet and a statement is sent out half way during the financial year to all Members. During 2009/10 further reminders went to Members carrying a balance of £1000 or over in the final quarter.

However, as in previous years, during 2009/10 some Members did not meet the criteria for carry over and some funding was ‘lost’ and redirected into general Council budgets. In the last financial year £1180.48 was redirected in this way.

7.6 Options for changes to the carry over

In the current financial climate it is vital that maximum value is achieved from the Fund for the benefit of local communities. A number of options could be considered to ensure that the Fund is fully utilised by Members:-

- Consider ending the ‘carry over’ to provide an incentive for Members to spend their allocation within the financial year. Any unused funds are then directed back into wider budgets to be used elsewhere. However, some Members purposely ‘save’ their allocation to spend on larger projects, for example Councillor Gamble’s commitment of £2,000 for a CCTV project for a local church.
- Alternatively consider a cut off point for expenditure in January with any unspent monies going into a general pot for Members to use via an application process to be facilitated by a Members panel. However this may encourage members to spend on less significant priorities.

- Although Members latest spending position is available on the intranet the frequency of paper based statements could be increased from every six months to every quarter to remind Members of their spending position. However, this would seem to be unnecessarily bureaucratic.

7.7 Approaches taken by other Local Authorities:-

Many local authorities recognise the benefits of operating a devolved budget scheme for their local councillors.

A benchmarking exercise was undertaken during August 2010 looking at schemes operating by local authorities across the country. This research has indicated that three broad approaches have been taken:-

- Large devolved budgets (50k plus) controlled by an 'Area Forum' or similar body.
- Medium budgets (10k) controlled by councillors as a Ward collective.
- Smaller budgets (1-5K) controlled by individual councillors.

It is clear that the Fund as it currently operates in Rotherham is simple and flexible for Members to use and much less bureaucratic than other comparable schemes.

However in terms of monitoring and value for money other local authorities are doing more to publicise the outcomes of projects at a Ward level and consequently promote the key local role the elected member.

Please see **Appendix 1** for three case studies outlining further details.

8. Finance

Members currently have an allowance of £1,000 per year equal to a total budget pot of £63000. The estimated annual cost of administrating the scheme is currently approximately £4000 which includes net salary administration costs and postage.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The Community Leadership Fund supports grass roots local organisations and the leadership role of the Ward Member and the Fund is an effective tool available to ward members to directly address local issues and concerns. Any reduction in funding or value for money will have a negative impact on the community leadership role of individual ward councillors and their advocacy of the value of local democracy and active citizenship particularly at a time when national and regional funding to many projects is being reduced or withdrawn.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Community Leadership Fund contributes to NI 4 % people who feel can influence decisions in locality.

The breadth and diversity of projects supported contribute to many of the Stronger Communities Indicators (1,2,3,4 5,6,10 and 11) and indicators in Safer Communities and Children and Young people.

The Community Leadership Fund contributes towards the key Corporate strategic theme of:-

Rotherham Proud

This key theme is reflected within Strategic Objective 4 of the NAS Service Plan 2009-12:-

Strengthen by 2011 neighbourhood leadership through increased opportunities that shape local service delivery in a way that people are involved and increasingly feel that their views make a difference.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- 1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- 2 Ward Councillors and Community Leadership: A Future Perspective JRF December 2007
- 3 The Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" October 2006
- 4 Councillors Commission
- 5 Community Empowerment White Paper
- 6 CLF Members questionnaire
- 7 The Community Strategy
- 8 The Coalition: Our Programme for Government May 2010

Contact Names: Paul Griffiths, Community Liaison Officer – Neighbourhoods and Adult Services, Ext 23159 paul.griffiths@rotherham.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Devolved Budgets to Ward Councillors

Case Study 1

Westminster City Council

Amount Allocated

Budget of £50,000 per Ward (20 Wards in total) for 2010/11

Criteria

- Locally derived projects
- To meet an identified need
- Improve local social, economic and environmental well being
- Does not undermine Council policy or service delivery
- Lawful

Decision Making

Ideas are put forward by local residents at Area Forums and then recommended by Councillors to Cabinet who make the final decision

Monitoring

Feedback made at Area Forum meetings plus Annual Reports for each ward explaining how the money has been spent and what has been delivered as a result.

Case Study 2

Eastbourne Borough Council

Amount Allocated

£10,000 allocated to each Ward for 2010/11

Criteria

One off spend on material work identified as having a positive impact in the Ward

Or

projects that enhance community facilities and the local environment.

Decision Making

Money allocated by the agreement of at least two of the three ward members who submit a decision notice outlining how the projects meets the basic criteria to the central budget holder (a director within the Council).

Monitoring

Decision notices outlining spending proposals placed on the Councils website

Councillors encouraged to communicate outcomes to their Ward via newsletters, blogs etc

Case Study 3

Lincoln City Council

Amount Allocated

£1,000 per Ward Member for 2010/11

Criteria

- Show a clear benefit to the targeted area, i.e. an advantage to local residents or improvements to a public area.
- Be for activities in which the Council is legally permitted to become involved.
- Not have any ongoing revenue costs for the Council. All funds are provided on a one-off basis, with no commitment to anything beyond the initial funding.
- Not be of a party political nature.
- Not involve any illegal activity

Decision Making

Members of the public can complete an application form on line and send to the individual councillor of their choice. This is approved by the Councillor and sent on to the relevant officer for processing against the scheme criteria.

Monitoring

Spending decisions, project outcomes and Councillors current balances are posted on line and link to Councillors personal profiles on the Councils website.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL
Thursday, 15th July, 2010

Present:- Councillor Austen (in the Chair); Councillors Currie, J. Hamilton, Hughes, Littleboy, Parker, Pickering and Tweed.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cutts, Dodson, Johnston, Mannion and Sims.

12. COMMUNICATIONS.

Co-optees

The Chair welcomed Joanna Jones back to the Panel and Councillor Dryden to his first meeting.

She reported that Ray Noble, who had also been appointed as a Co-optee had advised that he would be unable to take up the position due to personal circumstances.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

14. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

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

15. REPRESENTATIVES ON WORKING GROUPS AND PANELS 2010

Consideration was given to the memberships of the various Council sub-groups for the Municipal Year 2010/ 11.

Resolved:- That the following memberships be confirmed:-

Health, Welfare and Safety Panel:- Councillor Dodson and Councillor Currie as substitute.

Members' Sustainable Development Group:- Councillor Austen.

RBT Governance Group:- Councillor Austen and Councillor Hamilton

16. IMAGE OF ROTHERHAM SCRUTINY REVIEW - UPDATE

The Chair gave an update to the Panel in respect of the Image of Rotherham Scrutiny Review which had been undertaken jointly with members of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel.

The Review had commenced in February 2010 and had been chaired by Councillor Boyes, with support from Councillors Austen, Swift, Havenhand and Hamilton and a number of co-optees. Councillor Austen had now taken over the role of Chair following the retirement of Councillor Boyes.

She reported that the review set out to look at five key areas:

- The Town Centre
- Industrial History of Rotherham
- Community Cohesion
- Perception of Crime
- Perception of the Council

As part of the consultation the following took place:

- Key members of the Council were interviewed
- Looked at good practice in other authorities
- Strategic Plans and Policies were considered
- People who live and work in the Borough were consulted

She detailed the following as issues which had been highlighted as being the way forward:

- To create an image which includes the towns and the rural parts of Rotherham
- Maximise the use of the words “green generating and growth
- Minimise stereotyping
- Industrial History – celebrate what is good about the town
- Reducing the barriers and changing perception to anti-social behaviour
- Community Cohesion

She confirmed that the first draft of the review would be presented to the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel in September/ October, which members of this panel would be invited to attend. It would then be presented to PSOC in October and Cabinet in November. Responses from Cabinet would then be reported back in early January 2011.

The Cabinet Member for Community Development and Engagement then gave a presentation in respect of “One Town One Community”.

He drew specific attention to:

- Why the One Town One Community started

- The need for the image of Rotherham to be one image
- How to spread the message
- Internal and external message
- Work undertaken with the Chamber of Commerce
- Other groups to work with to help promotion
 - Voluntary Community Sector
 - Women's Groups
 - Police – Community Safety
 - Fire and Rescue Service
 - Health Service
 - Arts and Culture
 - Sports Clubs
 - Rotherham United
 - Rotherham Rugby Club
 - Rotherham Cricket Club
 - Formula One – Dinnington
 - Schools
 - Street Scene
 - Boston Castle
 - Clifton Park – Rotherham Show
- Changing people's discussions and debates
- Celebrating Diversity

A discussion ensued and the following issues were discussed:

- Reference was made to the work being done in the town centre with young people by Oracle Training and it was suggested that more providers should get involved such as RCAT. This may be a way to engage young people and get their perception on the town which could then be fed into the review.
- A comment was made that there was no engagement by the Council with the rural communities. It was felt that this was a contributing factor to why they did not associate themselves with Rotherham. It was suggested that the Area Assemblies be given the responsibility for collating community events to ensure that there were representatives from the council in attendance. It was agreed that this be included on the agenda for the next Area Assembly Chairs meeting.

Resolved:- (1) That the content of the review be noted.

(2) That an item be included on the next Area Assembly Chairs meeting regarding future responsibility for Area Assemblies in respect of Community events.

17. SAFER ROTHERHAM PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Steve Parry, Safer Rotherham Partnership Manager gave a powerpoint presentation in respect of the Safer Rotherham Partnership.

The presentation drew specific attention to:-

- Performance: April – May 2009 -v- April – May 2010
- The Challenges
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Priorities for 2010/ 11
- Funding for 2010/ 11

He also circulated the Safer Rotherham Partnership Performance Summary for May 2010.

Reference was made to the PACT meetings which were held around the Borough and the general consensus was that they were having a big impact on making people feel safe.

A discussion ensued around the violent crime statistics and in particular in respect of domestic violence. A request was made that future statistics include a break down in respect of gender. Also reference was made to the proposed refresh of the Domestic Violence Strategy which had been discussed at a previous meeting. Members had been advised that this would be undertaken through the Performance Clinic and a query was raised as to whether this had happened yet. It was confirmed that the Domestic Violence Strategy Refresh had been completed and was in the process of going out to 90 day consultation.

Members thanks Steve for his informative presentation.

18. CONTRIBUTING TO REDUCING AND MANAGING OFFENDER BEHAVIOUR

Maryke Turvey, Head of Probation in Rotherham reported on the work of South Yorkshire Probation Trust in Rotherham in reducing re-offending and contributing to make communities safer by punishing and rehabilitating offenders through delivering the sentences of the Court.

The Trust was hoping to move from its existing premises to a business park close to the Town Centre but may be affected by current reviews of all Government expenditure. As part of the move, it was the intention to co-locate at least 6 Police personnel (the local Offender Management Unit currently based in Maltby) as well as

Local Accommodation and Drugs Services using a regime called Integrated Offender Management.

The Rotherham Probation Unit:-

- Consisted of Head of Unit, 4 (FTE) Team Managers, 22 Probation Officers, 15 Probation Service Officers and 15 Administrative Support staff
- 1,300 offenders were worked with in a typical year
- Over 1,000 reports prepared for local Magistrates and Crown Courts, 257 Community Orders supervised and 215 people on Licence post-Custody
- Approximately 50,000 hours of Community Payback supervised
- In 2009 37 Drug Rehabilitation requirements (in partnership with Clearways) completed, 58 Alcohol requirements (in partnership with Lifelines), 11 Sex Offender Programmes, 19 Domestic Abuse Programmes and 77 other Offending Behaviour Programmes
- Reduced re-offending by those on the caseloads by an average of 11% against their expected levels
- Only area to have achieved a statistically significant reduction for all 6 quarters

Along with most of the public sector, South Yorkshire Probation Trust faced an uncertain financial future. The budget had reduced by approximately 5% in each of the past 2 years, including a cut of approximately 3% last month (£600,000 across SYPT) and clearly there would also be effects from the recently announced 25% cut over the next 4-5 years.

SYPT had a target to ensure 35% of offenders were in employment by the end of their Order. In light of the local economy, this was an area where difficulties were anticipated.

A discussion ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Reference was made to the sharing of information in respect of perpetrators of crime and whether all partners were involved. It was confirmed that on the whole most agencies were effective, but there were problems engaging certain agencies.
- A comment was made about offender mentoring and a query was raised as to whether Rotherham had such a system in place. It was confirmed that a group called Remedy had recently made some mentors available to the Probation Service and also Voluntary Action Rotherham undertook some

work in this area.

It was noted that a meeting had been arranged between the Probation Service, Steve Parry and Simon Perry to discuss what support could be given to offenders, during the community service and beyond. It was anticipated that the Council would be invited to assist with this support in the future.

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

(2) That the Council be invited to become involved in the development of Integrated Offender Management services being developed in Rotherham.

19. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DEBT RECOVERY FINAL REPORT

Further to Minute No. 146 of 2nd December, 2009 Cabinet meeting, the Director of Internal Audit and Governance submitted four reports on debt recovery.

Report No 1 – Creation of a Single Debt Recovery Service

Of the 112,000 Council Tax payers in Rotherham and 20,000 housing tenants, less than 500 residents had significant debt on both their rent and Council Tax accounts. In 2009/ 10 there were approximately 30 formal complaints received by the various Services relating to debt collection of which only 7 were upheld. In proportion to the number of payers, the number with significant multiple debts was small and the number of complaints even smaller.

The report set out how the current arrangements between the respective Services for co-ordinating their work relating to residents with significant multiple debts could be developed to achieve the objectives of the Scrutiny recommendation without requiring full consolidation of existing Services which could have significant financial and operational implications.

Attempts had been made to identify any authority that had combined the collection of Council Tax, sundry debts and rents. Scrutiny Services had also been unable to find any authority using a single collection point. The Programme Director for Finance at the LGA had stated that it was not uncommon to have Council tax, sundry debts and business rate collection under 1 roof, however, he could not name any authorities that had included rents in the arrangement.

Of particular significance was the fact that Rotherham's performance

in collecting debt was exemplary under the existing arrangements and any reduction in current performance would create a detrimental impact on the Council's overall budget.

Resolved:- (1) That the findings and conclusions of the Review be noted.

(2) That Debt Collection Services improve the communication and co-ordination of debt recovery action relating to significant multiple debts, as opposed to the consolidation of existing services, be supported.

Report 2 – Bailiff Services

The comparison of existing charges to both the Council and customers with estimated costs of an in-house service, suggested that the Council would have to subsidise any internal service by approximately £88,404 per year or charge customers more than was currently the case for the recovery of debt. The creation of an in-house service would also involve set up costs of approximately £76,765.

In considering any alternatives it was noted that the Council's current arrangements, which involve the use of external bailiffs, worked very effectively. The Council's Council Tax and NNDR collection rates were amongst the best in the country. The creation of an in-house service could adversely affect the Council's income collection rates, at least in the short term. If this happened, there would be a reduction in Council Tax collected to pay for Council services.

The Scrutiny review recommendation has had a positive impact. Whilst the number of formal complaints received by the Council about bailiffs was low, as a result of the review quarterly forums had been established between the Council, bailiffs and advice services to enable any concerns to be addressed in an open and constructive way. This should improve the customer relations element of existing arrangements.

It was therefore recommended that the Council should continue to work with bailiffs to make the services provided to customers' as sympathetic as possible in the circumstances. It was also recommended that the Council continue to work as proactively as possible with debtors, to prevent cases from being referred to bailiffs.

Resolved:- (1) That the findings and conclusions from the review of the business case for creating an in-house bailiff service be noted.

(2) That the recommendation to continue to work closely with bailiffs and advice services, rather than to establish an in-house bailiff service be supported.

Report 3 – Additional effort to contact debtors prior to referral of cases to bailiffs

A pilot had been carried out on 97 council tax cases about to be passed to bailiffs. This resulted in a small amount of additional council tax being collected and agreement of payment arrangements with half of the sample group. However it was noted that two thirds of the residents making payment arrangements later defaulted on the agreement within one month of making it. In these cases, referral to bailiffs was delayed, and with it, the chances of the prompt recovery of debt.

The pilot demonstrated benefits including identification of vulnerable residents or residents potentially entitled to benefits or discounts and identification of vacant properties.

In order to attempt to contact approximately 900 relevant cases per year prior to referring these to the bailiffs, RBT would have to engage one extra collection officer at a cost of £29,000. There was currently no budget available to meet these costs and this requirement would have to compete with other Council priorities.

Resolved:- (1) That the findings and conclusions from this pilot involving taking additional steps to contact residents owing Council Tax prior to the Council referring debts to bailiffs for recovery be noted.

(2) That the recommendation to not invest in additional proactive activity at this time be supported.

Report 4 – Scrutiny Review of Debt Recovery

A large number of positive outcomes had been achieved from the review, including:

- The production of a customer focused corporate debt policy
- Better information on where to get help with debt and procedures for helping vulnerable residents
- Better co-ordination of debt collection
- Closer working with and monitoring bailiffs

These outcomes would both improve the services managed by the

Council and result in a fairer and more sympathetic approach to the collection of debt.

Resolved:- That the positive outcomes achieved from the scrutiny review of debt recovery arrangements be noted.

20. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 3RD JUNE, 2010

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 3rd June, 2010 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

21. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2010

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of the Members' Training and Development Panel held on 24th June, 2010.

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods.
2.	Date:	20th September 2010
3.	Title:	Policing in the 21st Century
4.	Directorate:	Chief Executive's/NAS

5. Summary

Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people consultation was published on 26th July as part of the coalition reform

This report provides a summary of the government's proposals to transform the approach to local policing with a focus on those that have a significant impact on the Council. The report is accompanied with a prepared draft consultation response to the questions most relevant.

6. Recommendations:

That Cabinet Member:

- a) **Receive the information contained in the report**
 - b) **Consider and approve the consultation response to key questions set out in Appendix A.**
 - c) **Authorise the Chief Executive to submit the final consultation response to meet the 20th September deadline.**
 - c) **Request a future detailed report on publication of the 'Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill'.**
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7. Proposals and Details

The consultation for 'Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people' published 26th July sets out the governments plans for police reform some of which will become part of the 'Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill' expected in this Autumn.

The proposals put forward are based on three key principles:

- 1) Transferring power back to the people through the introduction of directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners
- 2) Transferring power away from national government through reducing bureaucracy
- 3) Shifting the focus of government through the creation of a New crime Agency.

The document covers five distinct areas; The challenge; Increasing democratic accountability; Removing bureaucratic accountability; A national framework for efficient local policing and finally Tackling crime together. This report considers in detail the new approach outlined to increase democratic accountability (Chapter 2) and tackling crime together (Chapter 5) as these are most relevant and have the greatest impact on the work of the Council.

Increasing Democratic Accountability

The government has stated its intention to introduce legislation which will allow the appointment of publicly elected Police and Crime Commissioners by May 2012 at force level replacing Police Authorities. It is expected that the public voting arrangements will be based on the existing framework for Local Government and Parliamentary elections.

The role of Police and Crime Commissioners will be to:

- Ensure representation and engagement of all those who live and work in the communities in the force area and identify their policing needs
- Agree a local strategic plan
- Holding the Chief Constable to account
- Set the force budget and setting the precept
- Appointment and removal where necessary of the force Chief Constable.

Commissioners will hold specific responsibility for:

- Local policing including neighbourhood policing
- Serious crime and protective services
- Working in partnership to address wider community safety and criminal justice – the government are considering creating enabling powers to bring together Community Safety Partnerships at force level and giving Commissioners a role in commissioning community safety activities.
- Accountability for efficient and effective use of resources
- Ensuring diversity in the police force.

The government intend to establish a new 'Police and Crime Panel' who will act as a advisory body to the Commissioner in developing policing plans and setting budgets and consider annual performance through the 'state of the force report'. The panel will consist of local elected councillors from constituent wards along with independent and lay members. Panel powers include the power to trigger a referendum on the policing precept recommended by the commissioner, the ability to summon the Commissioner to public hearings. The panel has no direct powers over the tenure of the Police and Crime Commissioner but are required to take concerns to the IPCC for investigation.

Tackling Crime Together

The government's aspiration is that these reforms underlying the proposed new approach will enable and encourage greater public cooperation with the police and increased involvement tackling neighbourhood crime. A key theme in Policing in the 21st century is the drive to 'strip away unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy in the partnership landscape'.

This is reflected in their intention to see an increase in the number of people volunteering with the police and the possibility of establishing a new police 'reservists' force. English forces will be encouraged to 'sign up to' local compacts with the voluntary sector.

The Government expects to revoke a number of the current regulations for Community Safety Partnerships while maintaining the central statutory duty on key partners to work together.

Attached: Appendix A: The Council's draft consultation response to the questions set out in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5.

8. Finance

It is not possible at present to determine the potential impact that the proposals bear on council's current resources and the nature of additional costs that may be incurred through implementation.

The government have committed themselves to make available the projected costs generated by the proposed Commissioner elections and associated activities in due course.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The detail of proposals will be set out in due course, following the consultation, including legislation. A more detailed analysis will be able to be made at that stage

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The proposals outlined in the Policing in the 21st Century document set out the direction of travel the government intend to take in reforming the police service and its governance supporting the principles of a 'Big Society' model.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Rotherham consultation response to “From the neighbourhood to the national: policing our communities together” – the Policing Green Paper. (October 2008).

‘Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people’. (July 2010).

Contact Name : Dave Richmond
Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services

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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council consultation response to 'Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people'

Please note: Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has prepared a response to the chapters considered to directly impact on the Local Authority.

Chap 1: The Challenge

Consultations questions:

1. Will the proposed checks and balances set out in this Chapter provide effective but un-bureaucratic safeguards for the work of Commissioners, and are there further safeguards that should be considered?

Members of Rotherham MBC are directly elected with the overarching duties and powers for economic, social and environmental well-being for the area, and as such are fully empowered to both participate in delivering community safety, holding partners to account and being held to account by the communities they serve. The South Yorkshire Police Authority consists of 9 elected members (nominated by local councils to reflect political balance in the county), and 8 Independent members of which 1 has to be a magistrate.

It is difficult to understand how the proposals provide greater checks and balances to these existing arrangements. The safeguards that need to be taken into account are:

- Risk of Commissioners elected on 'extremist' or 'single issues' resulting in policing being dominated by fringe/radical views. Need also to ensure that political patronage is not allowed to cloud the process
- Dangers that the appointment of Commissioners could be counterproductive, producing a split democratic mandate, and even lead to conflicting priorities between them and the elected members of the local authority.
- Managing inevitable tensions between the Commissioner/ the Chief Constable/ Local Councils especially when the commissioner sets the police precept that councils have to levy.
- Need to establish clear terms of reference and responsibilities between the Commissioner and the Policing Panel are crucial otherwise there is the potential for tension and conflict.
- Increased bureaucracy locally generated by the cost of running the actual election processes, holding referendums and appointment of Commissioners support team.
- Reducing the answerability of the Chief Constable and Force to only the post of the Commissioner when current at present they are held to account to a more wider and diverse Police Authority.

2. What could be done to ensure that candidates for Commissioner come from a wide range of backgrounds, including from party political and independent standpoints?

A planned recruitment strategy with local communities and interest groups along with local partnerships over time will contribute to encouraging diverse candidates; there is a real risk that the timescales proposed will not accommodate the work necessary for this.
Responding to some of the concerns set out in question 1 and the possible use of deposits, such as in elections might be considered to prevent frivolous candidatures.
All those submitting applications should be required to declare political and financial interests.

3. How should Commissioners best work with the wider criminal justice and community safety partners who deliver the broad range of services that keep communities safe?

The Commissioner will need to demonstrate how:

- They contribute to achieving the goals of the local Community Safety Partnership
- They have robust structure in place to ensure the views of elected representatives and community activists at a local level are taken into account
- They ensure local priorities are reflected

The Commissioner will be required to become a representative on each local CSPs (replace existing Police Authority representation), as well as participate in the county wide Criminal Justice Board

4. How might Commissioners best engage with their communities – individuals, businesses and voluntary organisations - at the neighbourhood level?

In Rotherham structures already exist within the local authority that ensure widespread community engagement on crime and disorder issues, overseen by an effective partnership structure and democratic scrutiny.

The Commissioner can best engage:

- Through existing channels including Neighbourhood Action Groups, Resident Associations, PACT meetings, Area Assembly meetings etc.
- By working with CSP partners to ensure widespread consultation on local issues.

There are concerns that Commissioners will only be able to engage with communities through the appointment of a number of Commissioner Representatives which will result in an added layer of bureaucracy at a local level.

5. How can the Commissioner and the greater transparency of local information drive improvements in the most deprived and least safe neighbourhoods in their areas?

The success of the Safer Rotherham Partnership in reducing local crime issue has been driven by effective use of local information and assessment of need enabling targeted activities. The Commissioner will need to build on this to:

- Ensure that the right resources are in the right place avoiding situations where the ‘person who shouts loudest’ gets the most attention.
- Work with all partners to tackle issues
- Ensure a good flow of accurate information on which to base decisions

6. What information would help the public make judgements about their force and Commissioner, including the level of detail and comparability with other areas?

The public will value information that:

- They can understand and uses clear language
- Focuses on the issues that are important to the local community
- Provides clear definitions (i.e. through both simpler definitions and fewer categories of crime)
- Provides clear targets and goals which help the public to measure success

Chap 5: Tackling Crime Together.**Consultations questions:**

19. What more can the Government do to support the public to take a more active role in keeping neighbourhoods safe?

The following support from the government would be welcome:

- Making ASB and low level crime more of a priority for Police with a requirement for them to improve their responses to minor ASB thereby building a better rapport with the public
- Reallocating resources to provide additional funding and support for Neighbourhood Watch
- Working with insurance companies to offer premium incentives for members of Neighbourhood Watch (NW)
- Making membership of schemes such as Pub Watch and Responsible Retailer schemes mandatory for license holders
- Addressing nationally the issues around large retail outlets/supermarkets selling alcohol at significantly reduced prices

20. How can the Government encourage more people to volunteer (including as special constables) and provide necessary incentives to encourage them to stay?

The government can:

- Make volunteering more accessible through working with employers to release staff to volunteer
- Consider 6 month voluntary work with the Police or similar agencies compulsory for school/college leavers, or as part of pre-employment training
- Ensure volunteers are offered coaching and training offering pathways for personal and professional development
- Have a volunteer representative on the Police and Crime Panel.

21. What more can central Government do to make the criminal justice system more efficient?

The government are encouraged to:

- Shift to a victim focus. At present the balance still lies too much with the perpetrator of crime and not with the victim. This discourages victims from coming forward to seek redress
- Increase use of restorative justice programmes, thereby keeping some low level crime out of the mainstream justice process altogether
- Speed justice up. Too many cases take too long to bring to a Conclusion, again discouraging victims from coming forward or from Assisting the police in criminal investigations. This is also linked with restoring the balance between the victim and the criminal
- Consider use of FPNs for ASB which PCSOs could issue.

22. What prescriptions from Government get in the way of effective local partnership working?

Rotherham is concerned the extent of government guidance & requirements that may be required in implementation of proposals set out in Policing in the 21st Century, possible risk could 'set back' existing effective local partnership working arrangements.

The government are requested to consider national campaigns which can appear arbitrary and do not recognise local issues and solutions.

A helpful prescription from government would be consideration of a national information sharing protocol for Community Safety Partnerships

Draft consultation prepared by:

Steve Parry

**Safer Rotherham Partnership Manager/Neighbourhood Crime & Justice
Manager Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Directorate RMBC**