DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL

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

Date:- **Thursday, 28 October 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 Monitoring:-

6. Six Month Review of the Council's Website (report herewith) (Pages 1 - 8)

7. Delivering Electoral Services - Current and Future Issues (report herewith) (Pages 9 - 16)

8. Domestic Violence Input from the Women's Refuge (Officers to report)

9. Equality and Cohesion Update (report herewith) (Pages 17 - 28)

Minutes - For Information:-

10. Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 16th September, 2010 (herewith). (Pages 29 - 34)

11. Minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 10th and 24th September and 8th October , 2010 (see Orange Book - Reports for Information - Pages 32D to 47D)

12. Minutes of a meeting of the Members' Training and Development Panel held on 30th September, 2010 (herewith) (Pages 35 - 37)

Date of Next Meeting:-
Thursday, 9 December 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)

Agenda Item 6

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS		

1.	Meeting:	**Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel**
2.	Date:	**28th October, 2010**
3.	Title:	**6 Month Review of the Council's Website**
4.	Directorate:	**Financial Services**

5. Summary

The Council's refreshed website went live on 6th January 2010 following a successful implementation project, led by the Transformation and Strategic Partnerships Team. This included the purchase and roll out of a new Content Management System providing a flexible, cost effective and engaging way for customers to access Council services online.

This report provides an update on the implementation of the refreshed website in its first six months between January and June 2010.

6. Recommendations

The Democratic Renewal Scrutiny are asked to note progress on the implementation of the refreshed website.

7. Website Refresh

The Council website is a significant customer access channel for the Council. In the first six months since the website was refreshed, an average of 59,000 unique visitors have visited the website and have viewed an average of almost 2.4 million website pages every month. It is therefore crucial to have a website that is capable of accommodating this level of activity and also providing an online experience that meets customer requirements.

In order to deliver on these requirements and address some issues with the previous website, the Council website was successfully refreshed in January 2010. Over 3,500 pieces of content have been reviewed for accuracy and relevance and rewritten where appropriate. Content has been migrated to an improved Content Management System; this is the software that powers the website and allows any authorised user to update and amend content. Additionally, the Council has launched a number of interactive features which allow citizens to engage with the Council in new and innovative ways.

7.1 Benefits of the new Content Management System

The new Content Management System which underpins the refreshed website is a cost effective solution, which has provided a number of benefits for both customers and the Council over the past six months. These include:

- The provision of an improved 'Google' powered search function allowing citizens to find information more quickly and more accurately.

- The ability to develop online forms and online customer questionnaires quickly and cost effectively. Fifty additional forms have been developed since January enabling customers to transact with the Council at a time which suits them. Citizens are able to track the progress of their service request online. These forms were developed in-house at no charge. Using the previous website, these would have incurred significant expense in the region of £1,000 per form.

- The Content Management System is quick and easy to maintain. The system can be updated by PC or mobile phone, providing employees with the ability to work agilely and providing increased business continuity for the website during times which previously would have prevented officers updating the website, such as the floods in 2007.

- Employees responsible for website maintenance are extremely positive about the new content management system. It has saved officers significant time and effort by having a modern Content Management System.

- Improved stability and resilience has been achieved through external hosting of the website servers. This means that the servers are physically located away from Rotherham. The company hosting the website stores copies of the website in several different locations, providing additional

guarantees of uptime. There has been no unplanned system downtime since the Council website was refreshed whereas previously this was a regular occurrence.

7.2 Website Usage

A further benefit of the new website is the ability to collect detailed, accurate information about website usage. The old website had a very limited ability to collect usage information.

Table 1 shows the number of unique visitors to the website in the first six months of 2010. There is no comparative information for the same period last year prior to the refresh as the old website did not enable this particular data to be collected.

Table 1: Council Website Unique Visitors January – June 2010

Month	Unique Visitors
January	66,618
February	60,557
March	59,748
April	51,196
May	59,942
June	56,618

Table 2 shows the number of page views per month for the first six months of 2010 alongside the figures for the same period in 2009. This shows a significant increase in the number of monthly page views every month. The particularly high increase in May was due to the high number of visitors viewing election information.

Table 2: Council Website Page Views January – June 2009 and 2010

Month	2009	2010	Difference	% Increase
January	929,207	1,789,979	860,772	92.64
February	965,464	3,024,816	2,059,352	213.30
March	755,469	2,810,001	2,054,532	271.95
April	547,281	2,166,582	1,619,301	295.88
May	508,851	2,518,789	2,009,938	395.00
June	533,365	2,006,266	1,472,901	276.15

Customers using the refreshed website have been able to provide information, apply for services, report problems and provide feedback using a range of online forms. In addition to increases in the number of page views, there has also been an increase in the number of transactions completed online since the launch of the refreshed website. Table 3 shows figures for the most

popular online forms submitted between January and June 2010 and figures for the same period in 2009.

Table 3: Online Forms Submitted January – June 2009 and 2010

Form Type	Online Forms Submitted (January – June 2009)	Online Forms Submitted (January – June 2010)	% Increase
Key Choices form – allowing customers to bid for council housing.	9,982	12,079	+21%
Street Pride form – allowing customers to report issues and request Street Pride services.	331	840	+153%
Council Tax Direct Debit form – allowing customers to set up a direct debit to pay their council tax bill.	596	763	+28%
Customer Comment form – allowing customers to give feedback to any Council department.	326	440	+35%

In total, between January and June 2010, there were 16,579 online forms submitted through the Council website, an overall increase of 11% on the same period in 2009.

Customers can also pay for goods and services using the Council website. There has been an overall increase of 20% in the number of payments being made online in 2010 against the same period in 2009 as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Number of Online Payments January – June 2009 and 2010

Month	2009	2010	% Increase
January	1,784	2,110	+18.3%
February	1,248	1,579	+26.5%
March	1,379	1,598	+15.9%
April	1,926	2,321	+20.5%
May	1,972	2,360	+19.6%
June	1,928	2,359	+22.4%

These website usage figures demonstrate that good progress is being made against the Council's Customer Access Strategy objective of increasing web transactions by 20% during 2010 -11. It is important to note that these significant improvements have been achieved without any major promotion of the new website, which was given a soft launch initially. There will be an increase in the proactive marketing of the new website over the remainder of 2010/11 which should drive up website usage even further. This will play an important role in reducing demands on more expensive customer access channels.

7.3 Independent External Reviews

The Council website has been externally assessed by two independent bodies during 2010. Significant improvements in website performance have been identified in both assessments.

7.3.1 SOCITM Better Connected

The Council website is assessed on an annual basis by the Society of Information Technology Managers (SOCITM), an independent body who review and report on all local authority websites across the UK. The SOCITM report, titled Better Connected 2010, provides feedback on Local Authority website functionality and ease of use.

Historical performance by the Council website in this assessment has been disappointing, with the site being categorised as 'Satisfactory' in 2008/09 against the following categories:

- Poor
- Satisfactory
- Transactional
- Excellent

In 2009/10, the Better Connected assessment categories have been amended to the following:

- 1 star (equivalent to Poor category)
- 2 stars (equivalent to Satisfactory category)
- 3 stars (equivalent to Transactional category)
- 4 stars (equivalent to Excellent category)

The Council website has achieved an improved 3 star rating in the 2010 Better Connected assessment. in The SOCITM rating puts the Council website in the top quartile for all metropolitan boroughs websites according to the overall assessment of the site's usability. In addition, the Council's online library section on the refreshed website has been highlighted as an example of good practice.

7.3.2 Sitemorse

Another independent company, Sitemorse, who benchmark local authority and private sector websites, also reviewed the Council website. Sitemorse specifically focus on the accessibility of local authority websites and produces a 'league table' based on their scoring.

In February 2010, Sitemorse assessed the Council website as the most improved local authority website and the site increased 301 places (to the top quartile) in the Sitemorse local authority league table immediately following the refresh. Work continues to ensure that this improvement continues.

7.4 Customer Registration

By registering their customer details, the Content Management System allows the customer to be kept informed about their specific areas of interest.

At the end of June 2010, 981 users had registered with the website, and regular marketing emails are being sent to those customers. As registration numbers increase, this facility will allow the Council to target information to customers more quickly and cost effectively.

In order that significant benefits can be achieved from the registration facility, an intensive marketing campaign will begin during September 2010, starting with the Rotherham Show where there will be a stall where people will be encouraged to register on the site .

7.5 Customer Satisfaction Results

Customers are able to provide comments on each website page and this facility is regularly used. Where customers have provided contact details, the Council's website editors make contact with customers to thank customers for their feedback and provide an update on the action they have taken.

Some of the customer comments which have been received are detailed below:

"I just wanted to say….your website is probably one of the clearest council websites I've ever used – really easy to find what I needed and a cracking design – well done".

"I'm not sure you could improve, I haven't had any problems with it. Your old website would be a different story though!! The search engine is very good, it just works. Think you could use more pictures and photos".

"It's clean and clutter free, I like that".

"Really like the search, I found what I wanted straight away".

"I find map search to be very useful to find information".

Initial customer feedback shows that the majority of customers are very positive about the website with 75% of customers happy with their overall website experience. The customer satisfaction survey will continue throughout 2010 to ensure we are capturing as much customer feedback as possible. Additionally, a customer usability group has been established to provide ongoing feedback and help improve the customer experience.

7.6 Website Forward Plan

A Website Forward Plan has been developed to ensure that the website continues to be improved and developed in terms of look and feel, functionality and transaction types available via the site. This is developed in conjunction with Directorates and the Head of Communications and Marketing to ensure that key communication messages and marketing campaigns are reflected on the website. The implementation of the Website Forward Plan is overseen by the Corporate Website Strategy Group chaired by the Cabinet Member for Resources and Commissioning.

8. Finance

The Jadu Content Management System has been funded by the ICT Capital programme. Initial set up costs were as follows:

Item	One Off Cost
Jadu CMS	£59,800
Hosting set up	£1,200
Google Search Engine	£2,495
Total	**£63,495**

Revenue charges relating to the previous version of the Council Website in 2008/09 were £83,395. This sum was made up of a combination of RBT support and maintenance charges and subscriptions to third party services, all of which were rendered unnecessary by the adoption of the new Jadu Content Management System.

These charges have been significantly reduced following the Transformation and Strategic Partnership Team's refresh of the website. Ongoing revenue charges are now as follows:

Item	Annual cost
Jadu CMS licence	£7,200
Hosting service	£9,000
Total	**£16,200**

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Delivery of an effective website as part of the Council's Customer Access Strategy is a critical element in ensuring the Council transforms its services for the benefit of citizens, businesses, members and staff in order to improve the customer experience, generate efficiencies and deliver customer service excellence. This will also form a key supporting access channel for consolidation of customer services.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Council's Customer Access Strategy aims to provide services to customers across a number of channels and seeks to increase the take up of the online channel. The performance of the Council website is therefore central to delivering this strategy.

The Customer Access Strategy will deliver key efficiency and value for money improvements and an effective website will be a significant contributor to this.

11. Background Papers

- Customer Access Strategy 2008-2011

12. Contact(s)

Rachel O'Neil, Customer Access Client Manager, 54530
rachel.oneil@rotherham.gov.uk

Mark Gannon, Transformation and Strategic Partnerships Manager, 54526
mark.gannon@rotherham.gov.uk

Agenda Item 7

	ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS	

1.	Meeting:	Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel
2.	Date:	28 October 2010
3.	Title:	Delivering Electoral Services – Current and Future Issues
4.	Directorate:	Chief Executive

5.   Summary

This report is intended to provide a picture of the issues on the horizon for the delivery of electoral services in the UK. The report is written against a background of damaging incidents in some areas at the combined parliamentary and local elections in May 2010 and a challenging future following the publication of "The Coalition our programme for government." It will draw on research into the various Bills currently before parliament and on discussions amongst peer groups such as the West & South Yorkshire Electoral Officer's Forum and the Association of Electoral Administrators (Yorkshire and North East Branch). The report is further informed by attendance at a recent AEA seminar which drew on the expertise of influential and knowledgeable speakers to examine the present and future system of electoral administration. Also in attendance was the Cabinet Office Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, Mark Harper, MP who spoke about the plans for reforms and gave more detail following his announcement the previous day about the implementation of individual electoral registration.

6.   Recommendations

That the report, which was requested by the Panel and the implications for successful delivery of electoral services, be noted.

7.   Proposal and Details

7.1   The Context and Background

Until the Representation of the People Act 2000 there had been little change for many years in the administration of elections and electoral registration. The laws governing the conduct of elections and registration of electors were out of pace with modern lifestyles. The 2000 Act was the first major piece of legislation to attempt to address the situation and was followed by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and the Electoral Administration Act 2006. Together with

some other minor legislative changes, these three Acts fundamentally changed the system of Electoral Administration in the UK.

Whilst many of the changes were positive, they did add significant challenges to the successful delivery of elections and the management of electoral registration.

Against this background of increased demand, there has been no change to the statutory election timetables except to add more tasks to be completed within the already tight timescales.

Across the UK resources are stretched to the limit and there have been more incidences of problems at elections resulting in election petitions based on allegations of mis-management or electoral fraud.

The main changes so far:

- Electoral registration is now a continuous process with monthly deadlines for registering and an extra "late" registration deadline 11 days before polling day when an election is pending.
- Full review of polling places must be conducted every four years.
- Postal voting on demand has led to a huge increase in postal votes (50,000 in Rotherham)
- The consequent increase in allegations of electoral fraud led to a requirement that postal voters supply signatures and dates of birth (personal identifiers) on application. The identifiers have to be stored by the Electoral Registration Officer.
- Postal voters must supply their personal identifiers on a postal voting statement when they return their postal vote. These must be checked (verified) against the original identifiers before the postal vote may go forward for counting.
- Postal voters may hand in their postal vote at the polling station until close of poll on polling day.
- The counting of votes takes longer because of the requirement after close of poll, to check the personal identifiers on postal votes handed in at polling stations before the verification of ballot box contents can be concluded. At the election in 2010 there were 1688 postal votes to be dealt with at this late session.
- There has been a move towards combining polls at elections including those with different franchises or voting systems.

The system is currently under severe strain and still more change is promised by the Coalition Government.

7.2   The Future and its Challenges

The document "The Coalition our programme for government" includes a section on political reform and a section on crime and policing; each of which have implications for electoral administration in the UK. These include:

- Holding a referendum on the introduction of the Alternative Vote at UK parliamentary elections

- A review of parliamentary constituency boundaries to reduce the number of constituencies across the UK.
- Speeding up the implementation of individual voter registration
- A power of recall to allow voters to force a by-election where an MP is found to have engaged in serious wrongdoing and following a petition signed by 10% of his/her constituents
- Giving residents the power to instigate referendums on any local issue
- Giving residents the power to veto excessive Council Tax increases (by referendum)
- Establishing 5 year fixed-term parliaments but with provision for dissolution on a majority vote
- Introducing directly elected police commissioners

Whist there is still much more detail to come on many of these reforms a series of announcements have already been made and bills introduced to parliament on some of them.

The Near Future: 2010 - 2011

The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill

This bill is currently before parliament and expected to receive royal assent early in 2011. Its provisions include:

o The AV Referendum

A referendum on the voting system at parliamentary elections and an amendment introduced in October means that the referendum will be combined with other polls scheduled for 5 May 2011.

In Rotherham the referendum will be combined with borough council and parish council elections. The franchise for the referendum will be parliamentary and so will differ from the franchise at the elections. This echoes the scenario in May 2010 which caused confusion for some voters and added to the challenges facing polling staff. The Association of Electoral Administrators commented on this issue in its report on the 2010 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]

It echoes the 2010 scenario in another important area – the counting of votes is likely to take longer because of the statutory requirement to verify the contents of ballot boxes for all three contests; including checking personal identifiers on postal votes at the session following the close of poll; before the votes can be counted and any result declared.

---

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

An unusual aspect to the management of the referendum is that it is the responsibility of the Electoral Commission and the Chair of the commission will be the Chief Counting Officer. The Local Counting Officer will conduct the referendum in his/her own area and a Regional Counting Officer will be appointed to oversee conduct within each region in a similar manner to European parliamentary elections.

The Local Counting Officer for Rotherham will be the RMBC Returning Officer, Martin Kimber, but the Regional Counting Officer for Yorkshire and the Humber is not yet known. The Electoral Commission is likely to use the regional management structure to disseminate information and instruction about the referendum and good lines of communication will be essential.

The Chief Counting Officer will have a "power of direction" in conduct of the referendum and may prescribe some of the decisions normally left to the local counting officer who can take account of local circumstances. This has the potential for conflicting instructions at the elections and the referendum.

The Commission has already stated its intention to prescribe most if not all documentation used at the referendum but no details have yet been confirmed. This is a potential matter for concern since printing for elections is very specialised and demanding in terms of timescales and complexity. Any major changes to documentation particularly if they relate to postal voting documents need to be identified very early to allow printers to effectively plan capacity.

o   Changes to Parliamentary Constituencies

The bill provides for a reduction in the number of parliamentary constituencies from 659 to 600. Constituency boundaries will be primarily based on mathematical equality of electorate according to the "quota" set out in the bill.

The electorate of any constituency shall be no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the UK electoral quota. The quota is U/598 *(where U is the electorate of the UK minus the electorate of 2 preserved constituencies).*

This will inevitably lead to the creation of many more constituencies which cross local government boundaries.

Whilst one vote, one value is an important democratic principle there are some drawbacks to strict mathematical equality:

o   Tension between mathematical exactness and community coherence
o   Frequent boundary reviews will be essential
o   Tight parameters will require the use of polling districts as well as wards for defining boundaries causing additional complexities in conducting elections at polling stations and confusion for voters
o   Will certainly lead to more cross boundary working at parliamentary elections

Cross boundary working caused by the inclusion of the Dearne North and Dearne South Wards of Barnsley MBC in the Wentworth and Dearne Constituency was a key factor adding to the complexity of the UK parliamentary general election in 2010.

The Fixed Term Parliament Bill

The bill has received consent at its second reading in the House of Commons but still has to go through the House of Lords. The bill sets the date of the next parliamentary general election as 7 May 2015 but early/short notice general elections would still be possible if two-thirds of MPs approved a no confidence vote.

There is no indication of any intention to change the existing parliamentary election time-table which at 17 days is very short and conflicts with other election timetables. The combination of polls for parliamentary and local elections seems set to become more likely in future and conflicting time-tables and differing franchises will only increase complexity.

Looking Further Ahead:

Absent voters - Personal Identifier Refresh - 2012

Arising from the Electoral Administration Act 2006 and commencing in January 2012, the Electoral Registration Officer must write in January each year to every postal voter whose signature has been stored for 5 years. The postal voter is required to provide a fresh signature in order to continue to be allowed to vote by post.

The electoral registration officer must issue reminders to postal voters who do not respond within 3 weeks and cancel the postal vote and issue a cancellation notice to any who do not respond within 6 weeks.

The electoral registration officer is required to include a pre-paid return envelope with the initial letter and with the reminder and so will bear the additional expenditure of return postage for every voter who responds as well as the printing and postage costs of the outgoing correspondence and cancellation notices.

Personal identifiers were introduced in January 2007 and some 42,000 postal voters supplied their signatures then. Whilst many of these may have since cancelled their postal voting arrangement or moved house and re-applied and supplied a new signature; it is likely that the numbers involved in the exercise in January 2012 will be considerable with obvious implications in terms of workload and expenditure.

Directly Elected Police Commissioners – 2012?

Whilst little detail is so far forthcoming, the government has announced an intention that the first elections for police commissioners will be held in May 2012 and combined with any scheduled local elections.

Borough council elections are scheduled in Rotherham in May 2012 and so another combined poll looms. It is not possible to speculate further about the possible implications since so little is yet known.

Looking Still Further Ahead:

Individual Electoral Registration - 2014

The previous government had already passed legislation to allow for individual electoral registration but had included a voluntary phase before this became compulsory.

The new government has stated its intention to abandon the voluntary phase and to commence individual electoral registration from 2014. A draft bill will be presented for scrutiny at the current parliamentary session.

From July 2014, all new electors and anyone wishing to retain an absent vote must be individually registered and must supply three identifiers, their signature, date of birth and NI Number. During the 2014 annual canvass, existing registered electors will be asked for their identifiers but if they fail to supply them, will be carried forward in the register until after a general election in 2015. They will, however, be removed from the register on conclusion of the 2015 canvass if they still have not provided the identifiers and registered individually.

Electoral registration officers will be required to cross check the information before adding the person to the register but there will be no new databases. Registration Officers will check the information with the Department for Work and Pensions.

Robust arrangements will be required to ensure that the personal data is securely held and processed. Personal identifiers will not be published in the electoral register.

And still to come…?   There is little detail yet on the following government intentions

- A power of recall to allow voters to force a by-election where an MP is found to have engaged in serious wrongdoing and following a petition signed by 10% of his/her constituents
- Giving residents the power to instigate referendums on any local issue
- Giving residents the power to veto excessive Council Tax increases (by referendum)

But each of them has the potential to increase the challenges faced by electoral officers trying to deliver quality electoral services to all participants in the democratic process.

There is no indication of when, or if, the existing timetables (set in 1782) and legislation will be revised to take account of 21st century elections.

If the answer to the referendum in 2011 does result in a change to the voting system used at parliamentary elections, future parliamentary election counts would be much more complex and prolonged. Where parliamentary elections are combined with other elections as seems likely to become the norm, the timing of the election counts would require serious consideration.

7.3   Conclusion

Whatever the future holds, it is clear that there will certainly be

- More electoral events
- More combined polls
- More complicated election procedures
- More complicated electoral registration processes – including checking identifiers on all applications

With the ever-increasing complexities and the pace of legislative change, it is important that electoral officers have up to date knowledge and skills. Membership of the Association of Electoral Administrators helps the Rotherham team to maintain awareness of the current issues and new ideas to meet the challenges.

The Association runs a professional qualification scheme and has recently introduced continuing professional development regulations to ensure that qualified officers maintain their knowledge and skills. The manager and one other member of the Rotherham team hold the certificate level qualification and a third member is now in the second year of the two year certificate programme. The manager is in the first year of the diploma level qualification which requires knowledge and understanding of electoral law, systems and finance at management level.

8.   Finance

At the AEA seminar, the minister stated that it was policy that extra **new** burdens will be funded and individual registration would fall into that category. There is no detail yet as to the level of funding which will be allocated and ring fencing is unlikely since registration is part of the day to day running costs. There will be a "strong focus from MPs and Ministers in reminding councils of the importance of ensuring adequate resources are made available"

The Returning or Counting Officer at a national election or referendum is entitled to reclaim expenditure from government and must submit detailed accounts of all expenditure. The council should not have to bear the cost of these events. Where elections are combined, some savings should be achievable.

The requirement to refresh personal identifiers of postal voters will have to be funded from January 2012.

9.   Risks and Uncertainties

There are already many risks to successful delivery of elections and the challenges continue to grow. The issues outlined in this report all present further areas of risk and uncertainty.

The current financial climate and budgetary restraints facing local government may mean it is more difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of quality staff to work on elections.

> *"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 England[2]*

Any perceived or actual mismanagement at an election could lead to a legal challenge and a high profile court case, with some risk of personal liability for the Returning Officer. This would attract negative attention in the media and could badly damage the reputation of Rotherham MBC and its partners. In those areas where there have been legal challenges to election results, the media has tended to focus its attention on subsequent elections, searching for any indication of a possible repetition.

Legal challenges to election results have become more common in recent years with the rapid pace of legislative change and increasing complexities placing heavy demands upon those attempting to deliver successful outcomes against ever increasing odds.

10. Background Papers and Consultation

- *Beyond 2010: the future of electoral administration in the UK – Association of Electoral Administrators*
- *Report on the administration of the 2010 UK general election - The Electoral Commission*
- *The Coalition – our programme for government*
- *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill*
- *Fixed-term Parliaments Bill*

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

---

[2] Report on the administration of the 2010 UK general election – The Electoral Commission

Agenda Item 9

	ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - REPORT TO MEMBERS	

1.	**Meeting:**	Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel
2.	**Date:**	28th October 2010
3.	**Title:**	Equality and Cohesion Update
4.	**Directorate:**	Chief Executives

5.   Summary

Following a request by Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel this report provides an update on Equality and Diversity issues including community cohesion in schools, Connecting Communities, the Equality Framework review, and complaints monitoring.

6.   Recommendations

That Members note the update on Equality and Diversity issues including community cohesion in schools, Connecting Communities, the Equality Framework review, and equality data monitoring of complaints.

1

7.   Proposals and details

7.1   Rotherham School Linking Project

A Schools Linking Project, in partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hallam and the Council was formally launched on 14 July 2010. This is the first project to be funded and supported by the national Schools Linking Network in South Yorkshire. The project links schools with different pupil populations, in respect of ethnicity, faith and socio-economic background of pupils. By working together on joint activities and visiting each other's schools, the project aims to help children and young people explore their identity, understand diversity and develop dialogue with others. Activities can be structured around individual curriculum or cross-curricula themes.

The national School Linking Network provides support to the project, which includes learning resources and lesson plans for teachers and training for the project coordinators. Linking activities take place over three terms; each term's activities commence with a CPD training session for teachers. In the first term, the pupils explore their own identity and community, exchange information with their link school and meet at a neutral venue.   Rotherham United Community Sports Trust, Rotherham Titans and Crowden Outdoor Centre are providing the venues and facilitating activities for the first meetings. School Linking Network provide £37,800 funding to cover the cost of employing a part-time coordinator (based at the Diocese of Hallam); supply cover for teachers attending CPD training; and a contribution to the costs of activities. The Diocese of Hallam, Chief Executives Directorate and Children & Young Peoples Services are providing additional resource (employee time) to manage and monitor the project.

The schools currently involved, in their link pairs/clusters are:

Secondary
- Clifton   St. Bernard's   Dinnington
- Rawmarsh   Winterhill
- St. Pius   Link school still being sought

Primary
- Sitwell   St. Mary's RC, Herringthorpe
- Kimberworth   St. Bede's RC
- Meadowview   Blackburn
- St. Gerard's RC   Canklow
- St. Anne's   Herringthorpe
- St. Mary's RC, Maltby   St Catherine's RC (Sheffield)

Funding from School Linking Network is provided for one-year only as pump priming, on the expectation that the link will become self-sustaining for the schools involved.

7.2   Cohesion duties for schools and how local schools are performing

Schools have a duty to promote community cohesion and all schools are accountable to Ofsted under their 2009 framework. Schools will be assessed on the extent to

which the school has developed an understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio economic characteristics of its community in a local, national and global context.

As with the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda, community cohesion needs to be an integral part of any school's planning and delivery. The best approach is through teamwork, integrated system leadership and developing a whole-school understanding of the importance and contribution this area has to improving opportunities for children, young people and families. Teamwork involves staff within the school and also governors, parents, pupils, the local authority and multi-agency teams within the area (including voluntary organisations and the children's trust).

The evaluation tool Ofsted uses is described below in the table together with the scoring rating.

Outstanding (1)	The school acts vigorously and successfully, using information from an incisive analysis of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context at local and national levels to focus its exceptional contribution to community cohesion. It evaluates its work rigorously in order to build on its many strengths. The school's actions have a markedly beneficial impact on community cohesion within its local community and beyond. The school community is highly cohesive and the pupils have a strong understanding of what is required to maintain this state.
Good (2)	The school demonstrates that it makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion based on a clear analysis of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. It evaluates its contribution to community cohesion and can identify clear impact but this may be uneven across the three strands. There are effective plans that promote engagement with a range of community groups beyond the school and the immediate community. The impact of its work is felt strongly within the school and pupils from different backgrounds get on noticeably well with each other.
Satisfactory (3)	The school has taken a set of actions based on an informed understanding of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. It is actively promoting community cohesion within the school community and is reaching out to other communities. Its work has a generally positive impact within the school, which is a largely cohesive community, but there may be only limited evidence of its success in promoting community cohesion beyond the school. Evaluation of its work is patchy but provides some relevant information.
Inadequate (4)	The school has an inadequate understanding of the religious, ethnic or socio-economic factors which define its context. Or It does not plan or evaluate its contribution to community cohesion either within or beyond the school. Or The school's work makes little effective contribution to community cohesion so that the school itself is not a cohesive community.

3

Applying the above evaluation tool to Rotherham schools Ofsted has assessed:

- Thirty one primary schools were inspected on the effectiveness with which the schools promote community cohesion, one scored outstanding, twelve scored 2, sixteen scored 3 and three scored 4.

- Three secondary schools were inspected, two scored2 and one scored 3.

- Four special schools examined, two scored 2 and one scored 3.

7.3   Progress on the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) Improvement   Plan

Since the award of Excellence through the Diversity Peer Challenge in November 2009 and submission of an improvement plan to the Improvement & Development Agency significant changes have occurred in the political, legal and economic environment. The provisions of the Equality Act 2010 are not yet fully defined, particularly in relation to the new specific duties for public bodies which come into force in April 2011, although the provisions relating to goods and services; facilities; and employment became law on 1st October this year. These environmental changes have occasioned a review of the original plan and the feedback from the Diversity Peer Challenge in order to consider overall feasibility of the original actions and to consolidate work on the EFLG, Equality Act and Single Equality Scheme in an integrated approach.

An overview of progress under each of the five EFLG headings follows:

a)   Knowing your Community and Equality Mapping

- An initial survey has been carried out to inform the development of a profile of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) communities and will be followed up with focus groups to explore the issues raised in more depth.
- A detailed "New Communities and Migration" Briefing has been produced as a central source of information on new Black and Minority Ethnic communities and migration trends.
- The profile of disabled people has been updated.
- Audit of current equality monitoring (what is collected and how data is used) by directorates will be finished by March 2011, with changes implemented from April 2011 in line with the requirements of the Equality Act to publish information.
- In August 2010 Cabinet approved a proposal for a Customer Service Consolidation Programme to maximise the use of RBT and Council investments in customer service infrastructure, including people, processes, buildings and technologies.

b)   Place Shaping, Leadership, Partnership and Organisational Commitment

- The Single Equality Scheme (SES) has been updated and final changes will be to update the section on the specific equality duties once these are confirmed. Revisions have been made to the SES implementation plan to

incorporate the EFLG work and this will be delivered through the work programme for the Corporate Equality and Diversity Officers Group (CEDOG). The corporate Equality Policy has also been refreshed to reflect the new Corporate Plan priorities.

- Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) continue to be carried out by Directorates and a new schedule will be developed for implementation from April 2011. Refresher workshops are held as required – for example Early Years in July 2010.

  - NAS have carried out or commenced 22 EIAs so far during 2010 with some still at a draft stage as consultation is ongoing. Examples include: Rothercare Direct - impact of extended rotas and training of staff in new protocols; Parish Charters - good practice needs sharing with Parish Councils where tackling barriers has begun;

  - Finance regularly review their EIAs and actions are considered and incorporated within the service planning round.

  - CYPS scheduled 29 EIAs originally for this year and subsequently added another ten. To date nine have been completed, including the Aiming High for Disabled Children – Short Break Strategy and the C&YP Plan 2010-2013, with a further 16 at draft stage.

  - HR has carried out EIAs on a range of updated policies. The EIA on the Recruitment Management System (on-line job applications) led to a change to allow people to apply off-line for reasons related to disability.

  - In EDS 18 EIAs have been completed in the last year. Positive examples include: Emergency Planning - needs of older people, BME and disabled people are now incorporated into protocols set up to deal with emergency situations. For the BME community a group of volunteers has been set up to help in an emergency. Similar arrangements have been set up for disabled people. Both these interventions were identified whilst carrying out the EIA.
  Engineers on Street Corner - equality monitoring question recently added to standard questionnaire to ensure equality in service delivery. Seven schemes were assessed in the first year – no disparity in satisfaction levels between people on the grounds of disability, ethnicity, age and gender. A new report is currently being compiled, which will assess 16 different projects/schemes.

- Future scrutiny work will be considering how best to deliver the wide agenda on self regulation, transparency and accountability, which will encompass equality and cohesion.

- Further embedding of the current process for reviewing equality and diversity requirements in contracts by contract managers will be rolled out with the Community Engagement and Cohesion Manager due to attend a procurement managers group by December 2010.

- Updated committee report template includes a compulsory section on equality and cohesion.

- The updated CEDOG work programme includes the following actions:
  - to strengthen DMT level quality assurance of the consideration of equality and cohesion implications in policy and decision making.
  - to develop and maintain a structured approach to addressing the equality agenda in all directorates (either through a standing item on DMT agendas or through a directorate equality group).

- Equality objectives will be aligned and included in the refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

c)   Community Engagement and Satisfaction

- The Council recognised that information about our local LGBT community was limited, hence the survey and work to develop the profile mentioned above.

- NAS incorporate sexuality monitoring in surveys, for example housing allocations/carer – about 80% responded to the questions and approx 3% identified as lesbian or gay and 1% as bisexual.

d)   Responsive Services and Customer Care

- Concerns about under-reporting of hate incidents prompted the following actions:
  - New structures for work on hate incidents and tension monitoring
  - Advertising on Rotherham Interchange plasma screens
  - Community Cohesion Officer is developing and rolling out Hate Crime Awareness training for front-line staff across partners, initially targeting Safer Neighbourhood Teams
  - New RMBC web and intranet hate incident reporting e-form

- Due to the changing demographic profile of Rotherham the corporate strapline to promote access to published information has been simplified and revised. It is still translated into five community languages with Slovak and Kurdish having replaced Chinese and French, in addition to Arabic, Farsi and Urdu.

- Work is continuing to improve accessibility to the Council website.

- RiDO – Market Stall administration; RiDO – Business development; Development Control - planning applications; and Streetpride – Community Delivery; are all monitored on an on going basis. Analysed data currently shows equality in service delivery.

- NAS carry out monitoring and analysis in relation to a range of services including Applicants Participating/Not Participating in Key Choices; Furnished Homes customers and Adaptations customers. Monitoring of Adult Services use by different groups demonstrated further research and needs assessment

work is called for to understand why there is continued consistent low take up from BME communities for Adult Social Care services, particularly around residential and nursing care.

e)   Modern and Diverse Workforce

For simplicity to keep all learning and development activity together in one block Member development has also been included under this heading.

- Two seminars on community cohesion were delivered by the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo) on 3/3/10 and 16/3/10. Prevent workshop was delivered to Members by IDeA Prevent Peer Advisors on 30/6/10. Induction for new Elected Members included equality and diversity in the session on the Code of Conduct. A workshop on EIAs is also planned for later this year.

- Further publicity will be rolled out to encourage more employees to update their personal information in YourSelf, which now includes a wider range of equality information – on disability, caring responsibilities, sexuality and religion/belief.

- The latest Employee Opinion Survey (EOS) carried out this year within CYPS included these wider categories for the first time and these will also be included in 2011 for the full RMBC EOS survey.

- Under the new mentoring initiative there are 14 mentoring relationships taking place, comprising of 28 mentees and mentors in total.

- 28 people have achieved Skills Gain qualifications with another 70 who are still completing.

- Information to support the roll out of Worksmart is being disseminated through briefings and Q&A pages on the intranet. Across CXD, EDS, NAS and CYPS nearly 700 people have been through the Worksmart process, with a further 76 in EDS to be signed off imminently and work having recently commenced with another team of 150 employees in NAS.

7.4   Complaints monitoring

Scrutiny Panel members had previously raised their concerns that equalities data was not being collected for complaints. Following enquiry it can now be confirmed that the information is being collected and can be reported on over any time period.

There is however an issue about the low number of people who fill in the equalities information, resulting in difficulties in using the data to drive service improvements, and thus officers from Chief Executives and Financial Services Directorates are exploring whether there are opportunities to collate this info in a different way, to give more meaningful service data.

This information will be being reported via the normal reporting routes (SLT, Cabinet Member and PSOC) by Financial Services.

7.5   National Indicator 4 TSF (Target Support Fund) Project (2009-2011) and Connecting Communities (2009-2010)

7.5.1 Target Support Fund

The Target Support Fund (2009-2011) was approved by the Department for Communities and Local Government and this also complemented the Connecting Communities Project (see 7.5.2 below).

In Year 1 (2009-2010) the following activities were initiated.

Rotherham People Power (Community Engagement Bulletin)

- 2 Rotherham People Power Bulletins published and distributed (Feb 2010 & August 2010), the February edition was highly commended by the previous Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.
- 4 Training sessions for volunteers have taken place to enable them to quality assure Rotherham People Power bulletins.

Disabled People

- 33 people with learning disabilities taken part in the active citizenship course organised and run by Speak Up a local voluntary sector organisation. This has been promoted as good practice at the RACLA (Regional Active Citizenship Alliance) People Power Conference on 1st October 2010 in York with Speak Up alongside its learners running a workshop on the work they have done and showcasing the materials produced by the disabled learners.

Young People

- 3 members of the Children and Young People Voluntary and Community Sector Consortium, RUCST (Rotherham United Community Sports Trust), UMCC (United Multi Cultural Centre), GROW (Rotherham's Women's Network) have all been working with disengaged young people in Rotherham North and South.
  - o GROW- young women developed 'How your borough works materials'.
  - o Worked with a group of young people in Masbrough through RUCST, who have secured a piece of land for sport – and undertook a visit to the parliament as a result and are setting up a Masborough Youth Forum (cited as good practice in the YHEP's (Yorkshire and Humber Empowerment Partnership) Contributions to a Bigger Civil Society document, which has been sent to the new Government.
  - o UMCC- effective use of flip video to improve communication. As a result the young people have recorded a number of issues that they would like addressed in their area, ranging from the removal of graffiti to the repairing of bus shelters, with assistance from elected members and local services.

In year 2 (2010-2011) the following activities have initiative.

Disabled People

- Speak Up has commenced the active citizenship course with 13 people who have physical disabilities which started on 13th September.

Young People

- The Children and Young People Voluntary and Community Sector Consortium is working on Year 2 objectives to invite expressions of interest from consortium members. Using the model of communication and influence developed and refined in year one, the project will be rolled out in the remaining five Area Assembly areas, using the local voluntary community sector. An evaluation event will take place in March 2011 to explore some of the good practice and how we can share and embed the learning in some of the practices when engaging young people.

Rotherham People Power

- Even though the Rotherham News has been discontinued, the remaining 3 community engagement bulletins 'Rotherham People Power' will still be produced and disseminated working alongside the volunteers who have been trained to quality assure the bulletins before they are published and distributed. Consultation has been undertaken with volunteers to look at how the bulletin is produced and disseminated as widely as possible. The indications are that the volunteers would like 3 separate bulletins targeting young people, older people and the disabled people.

7.5.2 Connecting Communities (2009-10)

Maltby Model Village Community Association

- An Impact Survey was carried out in October 2009 which has led to identification of priorities which has informed a Maltby Model Village Neighbourhood Agreement which will address issues such as crime, environment, ASB and housing etc. The Connecting Communities programme provided a Local Improvement Advisor to facilitate the development of the Neighbourhood Agreement working with the with members of the Maltby Model Village Community Association, WV Area Assembly and local service providers to ensure they meet the local needs identified. This agreement has been agreed by the Proud Board and was launched on 12th October and the Agreement was published in a calendar version. Also as part of the Connecting Communities resources, 12 people from the Maltby Model Village Community Association were trained as community champions to work on the Neighbourhood Agreement and 10 partners in the area have worked with the community champions to develop the Neighbourhood Agreement for the Maltby Model Village. This is being promoted as good practice in the YHEP Voices Publication.

Work with Birk Holts TARA through Rother Fed

This work includes:
- Joint SNT/youth service visit with families Support for Young People to get involved in supporting the TARA, the community house and activities on the estate
- Support for all community to get involved in supporting the TARA, the community house and activities on the estate
- Capacity building training with community members

Community Funding Training for Community groups (TSF)

- There are current gaps, community groups do not know where they can help fill and contribute to area requirements. Therefore the Wentworth Valley Area Assembly with Maltby Town Council will get together the Maltby Community groups- working with service providers and funders to get things done! The idea is to move forward form a 'meet the funder' type event and produce something more interactive. There will be a series of Meet the funder workshops which will explain how to apply for funding and applying for funding with service providers support and information.

Connecting Communities in Dinnington

- In Dinnington there were intergenerational issues as there was a negative perception of young people in the area and therefore the following projects were developed as a result of Connecting Communities and NI4 TSF

Tactile/Sensory intergenerational work with Davies Court Residential Home (Connecting Communities)

- Supported Dinnington Comp Students in Year 12 (as part of A Level work), to turn memories captured by dementia residents at the Home, to produce tactile sensory art pieces for display around the home and supporting Dinnington Comprehensive Students in Year 10 (undertaking a BTEC Construction Course) to build a sensory garden. This is been promoted as good practice in the YHEP Voices Publication.

A Dispersal DVD has been produced with young people and shown the impact the dispersal order has had on ASB/Crime (NI4 TSF)

- Detached Youth Workers, Area Assembly and the JADE Project (Just Another Dance Event) which is a local project to provide an informal drop in provision and focused music technology and DJ training for young people engaged with young people during the dispersal order period to identify aspirations and choices and to work with them as part of exit strategy to identify possible projects. The DVD focussed initially on why it was required, the triggers/reasons for such radical action etc, and then go trough a series of film, captions and music to take people through a journey with support from the JADE Project. The DVD show's footage of the area, will include interviews with detached youth workers, police, and young people who experienced it

first hand, with a clear message that it's about community cohesion and working together. Wanted viewers of the DVD to go away thinking about the difficulties young people today face compared to when they were younger; and that young people should not be discriminated against or isolated when communities are making decisions about services or changes in their neighbourhoods.

Local Democracy Week in Dinnington (11ᵗʰ to 15ᵗʰ October 2010) (TSF)

Initiatives undertaken include:

- **Political Speed Dating**: Students will be able to meet, challenge and question notable people working in their community about issues they feel strongly about.

- **RVS Manifesto Presentations**: Opportunity for students to experience writing and planning a future for their community.

- **Question Time**: Junior and Infant School students will be able to pose questions on any subject to and get honest and open responses. Creating a two-way, honest, transparent relationship in a relaxing, fun environment

A DVD will be produced capturing all these events.

Connecting Communities Research

The Campaign Company was commissioned to do some further research across Rotherham to look into perceptions of community cohesion. Interviews took place with senior public sector managers, front line customer facing staff, and members of the public across Rotherham. A report has been produced analysing the findings and have been disseminated in a council and partners workshops. Some of the key headlines from the research were:

- The One Town One Community (OTOC) initiative is being recognised by partners and different sections of the community and there is a need to maintain the momentum by rolling OTOC to the outer parts of the Borough.
- Recognise the continued impact of industrial decline and how this could potentially erode cultural and social foundations.
- Current economic climate poses further cohesion challenges and this needs to be managed and lead carefully
- There is a need to communicate positive messages back to the public making more use of community and residents as potential champions to 'spread the positive messages'.
- There is a clear correlation between areas where 'the Council' is active, visible and working well and community satisfaction.
- Opportunities for Elected Members and Parish Councils to be more actively involved in the OTOC need to be explored.
- Many local people do feel positive about their area and we need to build on this.

8. Finance

None specific arising from this report.

9   Risks and Uncertainties

None compliance with the new public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 could lead to enforcement action by the Equalities & Human Rights Commission. A number of the provisions are yet to become law so the implications for the council are uncertain.

10   Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The new Equality Act 2010 is now law. The main parts of the Act have come into force on the 1st of October 2010. The Equality Act 2010 replaces the existing anti-discrimination laws with a much easier and consistent Single Act. The Act aims to simplify and strengthen the equality law that is already in place, such as the Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act. It also contains a range of new rights, powers and obligations to help the drive towards equality.

The Act creates a new integrated Equality Duty which will mean that public bodies (and private bodies that deliver a public function) will need to consider the needs of diverse groups when designing and delivering services so people can get fairer opportunities and equal services considering the characteristics mentioned above (of age, race, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity)

11   Background Papers and Consultation

- Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? Government Equalities Office – GEO   - http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/equality_act_2010_what_do__in.aspx
- Equality Act, Equality and Human Rights Commission - EHRC http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/
- New Equality Act guidance, Download the guidance - EHRC
- http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/new-equality-act-guidance/
- How fair is Britain? Equality, Human Rights and Good Relations in 2010 - The first Triennial Review released by EHRC – October 2010 http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/triennial_review/how_fair_is_britain_-_complete_report.pdf
- An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK - Report of the National Equality Panel, Jan 2010

12   Contact

Zafar Saleem, Community Engagement & Cohesion Manager
Chief Executive's Directorate, Tel: 01709 822757
Email: zafar.saleem@rotherham.gov.uk

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL
16th September, 2010

Present:- Councillor J. Hamilton (in the Chair); Councillors Dodson, Hughes, Johnston, Littleboy, Pickering, Sims and Tweed.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Austen, Currie, Cutts, Mannion and Parker.

Also in attendance:- Joanna Jones and Councillor Dryden (Community Representatives) and Councillors Whelbourn and S. Wright and Sally Parkin for Minute No. 26.

22.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

23.   QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

24.   ROTHERHAM'S CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB) – TRUSTEE BOARD

Further to Minute No. 12(2) of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Community Development and Engagement held on 12th July, 2010, it was recommended that a representative for the Rotherham's Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Trustee Board be sought from the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel.

Information was provided on the frequency of this Trustee Board and details of the Annual General Meeting.

Resolved:- That Councillor Sims be nominated to Rotherham Citizens Advice Bureau Trustee Board.

25.   PRIORITIES OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS, COUNCILLOR JAHANGIR AKHTAR

The Scrutiny Panel offered a warm welcome to Councillor Jahangir Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, who gave a presentation on his priorities under the Safe Theme Board for the current municipal year during his term of office.

The presentation drew specific attention to:-

- Priorities Across All Portfolios.
- Building on Overwhelming Success – 13% reduction in crime.

- Headline Statistics for Domestic Burglary, Criminal Damage, Violent Crime, Serious Acquisitive Crime and Robbery.
- The Challenges.
- Knowing the Local Priorities.
- Government Direction.
- Government Priorities.
- Government "Structural Reforms".
- Key Consultation – Policing in the 21st Century.
- Our Priorities.

A discussion and question and answer session ensued and clarification was provided on:-

- Reports of performance improvement, but some indicators were off target, like NI28 serious knife crime, NI34 domestic abuse and NI 32 reporting incidents of domestic abuse.
- No serious increase in crime related activity as a result of the economic downturn.
- National coverage and a more focused approach to policing had had a desired effect on reducing crime.
- Statistical information and the effect of confidence building in residents to report crime.
- Constraints on the area based grant and what this figure accounted to.
- Tackling domestic violence had been a priority in Rotherham and nationally.
- Replacing bureaucratic accountability with democratic accountability – Government Direction.
- Statistical breakdown of all crime related activity.

Resolved:- (1) That Councillor Jahangir Akhtar be thanked for his very informative presentation.

(2) That a report on progress be provided to the December, 2010 meeting of this Scrutiny Panel.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM IN ORDER TO ASSIST WITH PREPARATION OF A DRAFT CONSULTATION RESPONSE AND ITS DEADLINE)

26.   **POLICING IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Consideration was given to a report presented by Steve Parry, Partnership Manager (Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Management), which detailed how "Policing in the 21st Century - Reconnecting Police and the People Consultation" was published on 26th July, 2010 as part of the coalition reform.

The report, therefore, provided 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 and was accompanied with a prepared draft consultation response to the questions most relevant.

It was noted that the proposals set out in the report show the direction of travel the Government intended to take in reforming the police service and its governance.

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, was to consider the report at his delegated powers meeting on Monday, 20th September, 2010 and would take account of any comments made by this Scrutiny Panel.

Discussion ensued on the document and reference was made to the proposals for the police service to lose some of its independence by its closer working with local authorities, but this was what was happening in Rotherham currently. Rotherham was in a strong position to meet the requirements of this document and to manage the priorities through neighbourhood policing.

Reference was also made to Question 20 of the consultation and the suggested response which included the word "compulsory" for school/college leavers. It was proposed that the word "compulsory" be removed.

The Scrutiny Panel also considered in detail the response to Question 1 and concern was expressed about the election of Commissioners, who may put themselves forward for election and how much an election may cost the ratepayers.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received.

(2) That the consultation response be noted and Question 20 be amended and incorporated into that document to be approved by the Cabinet Member on Monday, 20th September, 2010.

27.   COMBINED PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS MAY 2010

Consideration was given to a report presented by Tim Mumford, Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Democratic Services, which provided an accurate account and assessment of how the combined parliamentary and local elections in May, 2010 were conducted in Rotherham. The report included key aspects of the process from the planning stage through to the counting of votes and drew on

direct experience of the Electoral Services Team and feedback from other stakeholders including voters, candidates, agents and polling staff.

Further information and a detailed account was given of:-

* Planning for the Election.
* The Nomination Process.
* Communications with Candidates - Briefings and Guidance.
* Voter Registration.
* Printing and Postal Ballot Preparation and Despatch.
* Postal Ballot Opening and Personal Identifier Verification Process.
* Polling Day.
* Counting of Votes.
* Security at the Election and at the Count.
* Assessment of Performance.

Discussion ensued on the whole election process. Concerns were expressed about some unsuccessful candidates not joining successful candidates on the declaration stage, and about security and the segregation of candidates, agents and observers into the constituency areas which should be addressed by the Electoral Services Team in the future. However overall, credit was due to Rotherham's Electoral Services Team for the successful conduct of the combined election.

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

(2)   That this Scrutiny Panel's recognition of the first class performance of the Electoral Services Team be noted.

28.   ROTHERHAM ELECTION TURNOUT ANALYSIS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Tim Mumford, Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Democratic Services, which provided statistical analysis of the May Election turnout figures, which could be used to identify turnout change or information that could help Members work more effectively in their wards.

Further information was provided on the correlation between turnout and deprivation, age, tenure and qualifications.

Discussion ensued on the proposals to increase voter turnout, whether there could be a link between the census and the annual canvass and the encouragement of younger people to register and vote.

Resolved;- (1) That the contents of this report.

(2) That a further report on voter registration feature as an agenda item at the next meeting of this Scrutiny Panel.

29.   **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FUND 2009/2010**

Consideration was given to a report presented by Paul Griffiths, Community Liaison Officer, which outlined the expenditure of the Members' Community Leadership Fund for the financial year 2009-10 and its continuing role in enhancing the leadership role of Elected Members within Rotherham's neighbourhoods.

To assist with the information contained within the report Paul Griffiths gave a short presentation which focused on:-

- The National Context.
- Expenditure 2009/10.
- Projects within the Wards of Brinsworth, Rotherham West, Cross Ward Projects and Maltby.
- Carry Over Funding.
- Options for Change.
- Other Devolved Budget Schemes.
- Key Differences.

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

- Flexibility of the fund and carry over facility for larger projects.
- Spend by Members and opportunity to pool budgets.
- Publicity options for the fund and visibility on the website.
- Fund information circulated to the relevant Area Assembly on an annual basis.
- Support for proposals of a central pot for bids should some Members not spend all their allocation.
- Notifications and reminders to Members as the deadline period approached.
- Continued support for the fund and its arrangements to remain the same.

Resolved:- (1) That the expenditure for the financial year 2009-10 be noted.

(2) That no changes be made to the fund at the present time.

30.   **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL**

SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 15TH JULY, 2010

Resolved:-   That the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 15th July, 2010 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

31.   **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE HELD ON 23RD JULY, 2010**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 23rd July, 2010.

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

MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
30TH SEPTEMBER, 2010

Present:- Councillor Gosling (in the Chair); Councillors Austen, Dodson, Lakin, Littleboy, Pickering, Steele, Turner, Whelbourn and Wootton.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors St. John, Sharman and Smith.

7.   **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2010**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th June, 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

With regard to the role of champions, a report would be submitted to a future meeting.

With regard to Minute No. 2 (Personalisation Agenda), it was agreed to receive a presentation from Tom Sweetman at a future meeting.

With regard to Minute No. 3 (Member Development Budget), a report would be submitted to the November meeting.

With regard to Minute No. 4 (Member Development Programme), it was noted that 'Total Place had been replaced by 'Place Based Budgeting' and how to support members would be considered after the comprehensive spending review in October, 2010.

8.   **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Head of Scrutiny updating on progress towards satisfying the requirements for reassessment necessary to achieve the Charter. The self, pre and final assessment process was outlined.

The process of assessment was about determining whether or not the Council was continuing to adopt good practice in terms of building elected member capacity.

The Council would be expected to provide a portfolio of evidence, having carried out a self assessment against the Good Practice Guidelines. Pre-assessment was scheduled for 2nd November, 2010 should approval be given to proceed.

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

(2) That achievement of the Charter be sought and a further report be submitted accordingly.

9.   SUB-REGIONAL MEMBER NETWORK

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Head of Scrutiny on proposals to re-establish the sub-regional member network with a view to shared learning and development and joint bids for funding to support member development. Local Government Yorkshire and Humberside (LGYH) had allocated funding for South Yorkshire to support member development.
The South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat wished to be part of any South Yorkshire member development activity where appropriate.

Agreed:- That contact be made with the local authorities in South Yorkshire with a view to re-establishing the sub-regional member development network.

10.   CORPORATE PARENTING TRAINING

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Head of Scrutiny summarising proposals to provide training to all elected members on how to be an effective corporate parent, the rationale for doing so, an outline course plan and proposed dates.

Agreed:- That training, as now submitted, be provided on the following dates:-

19th October, 2010   5 – 7 pm

2nd November, 2010   10 – 12 am

16th November, 2010   2 – 4 pm

11.   ECO-VISION

Consideration was given to a report presented by Joanne Wherle indicating that the Dearne Valley Eco-Vision project team, in conjunction with Transform South Yorkshire's Delivering Design Quality (DDQ) team, was organising a best practice study visit to Freiburg in Germany in November, 2010.

It was hoped to take a varied group of people including business representatives, local community representatives and public sector representatives to look at a range of elements involved in sustainable urban development including planning, building design, transport, water management, citizen involvement, green infrastructure etc.

Agreed:- That one elected member, from the Dearne Valley Area, be identified to participate in the study visit.

12.   MEMBERS AND CRB

Further to Minute No. 47 of the meeting of Cabinet held on 6th July, 2005, consideration was given to the latest known position regarding the existence/validity or otherwise of CRB checks for current Council Members. Possible transferability of certificates obtained by other organisations was discussed.

Agreed:- That a report be submitted to the next meeting.

13.   E-PAYSLIPS

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Head of Scrutiny indicating that, as part of the Council's cost cutting exercise, a decision had been made to provide, from October, only e-payslips to employees who could access the intranet.

It had also been agreed that members be included in the exercise.

To familiarise members with the 'Yourself' system, and assist members with access problems, an offer had been made to provide officer assistance.

Agreed:- That an e-mail be sent to all Members of the Council with clear and simple instructions regarding how to access e-payslips. Training then to be available for any members still having problems.

14.   DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting be held on Thursday, 21st October, 2010 at 2.00 p.m.