

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers

Report to Commissioners' Quarterly Public Meeting, 24th June 2015

As Lead Commissioner I have a responsibility for the total pattern of intervention, and for specific improvements to ensure healthy democratic leadership and accountability.

The Commissioners' mission is:

To help the Council secure a safe environment for children and ensure good, sustainable services and regulation such that healthy democratic leadership and accountability can be restored.

Within the Commissioners' mission statement, I lead for the following areas:

- *A healthy local democracy, well-prepared to take back responsibilities and accountabilities, probably in stages. (Mission outcome 11)*
- *The full range of powers and accountabilities restored. Two Government departments will need to be convinced. (Mission outcome 12)*

I have set out to work on five areas which will help the Council move forward and enable a return to healthy democratic leadership and accountability:

1. Ensure the overall programme for intervention is well led, coherent, efficient and not wasteful of Rotherham taxpayers' funds.

- 1.1 Commissioners are entitled to fees and their legitimate and evidenced expenses. All payments are now on the Council's website but in fact no claims were made or paid until the end of May.
- 1.2 This intervention is unprecedented. This meant that ways of working with Councillors had to be designed, consulted on and finalised.
- 1.3 The Commissioners have adopted a target of winning extra funds for local use, to seek to at least, compensate for their costs.

2. Ensure the Council has a refreshed Vision for its future work, based on recent discussions with a cross section of local people.

- 2.1 The Leader of the Council, supported by Commissioners and staff has started a series of 21 roadshows to meet local groups and by using voting technology, to find out a lot about how these groups think about future priorities and about the future of their borough. By the date of the meeting some eleven sessions will have been completed – see attached schedule at **Appendix A** for further information. Opposition Party Councillors get the chance to replicate these discussions on Monday, 6th July. The Majority Labour group of Councillors have a session on the 27 July.
- 2.2 These views will inform the description of the Council's future intent but not bind it as it is impossible to guarantee those reached are fully representative. However the intention is to gain a sample amounting to over 1000 local views.

- 2.3 The Vision statement will inform the multi-agency Community Strategy which is due to be refreshed by 1st April 2016.
- 2.4 The Vision Statement will be put to a suitable meeting of Councillors around the end of the year for discussion and adoption.
- 3. Ensure the Council has a longer term Financial Strategy, linked to its refreshed Vision.**
- 3.1 The Council will likely face further erosion of its grant base. If it can accelerate local housing and business growth it might earn more. Otherwise it faces demanding budget decision-making.
- 3.2 This will be easier if overall priorities are clearer.
- 3.3 A budget forecast report is elsewhere on the Commissioners' meeting agenda today.
- 3.4 We will expect to bring forward such a refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy in the first quarter of 2016.
- 4. Play a part in the creation of healthier systems of local leadership and accountability, suitable to receive back the powers taken over by Commissioners in February 2015.**
- 4.1 Rotherham needs to deliver the Improvement Plan agreed by the Council on the 22nd May. Progress on this will pave the way for the restoration of normal powers and responsibilities.
- 4.2 On 8 May some 16 new Councillors were elected and together with those Councillors with longer service will need to power the Council forward. It is a particularly important time for Scrutiny to set even higher standards of working; for the Planning, Audit and Standards Committees to continue their important work to very high standards and the Advisory Licensing Board to get used to the execution of the new Licensing Policy. Area Assemblies must continue to flourish.
- 4.3 Work in this current period includes:
- a. Work to agree a new Local Code of Political Conduct, to augment the national code and signal a new determination by all Councillors to work both in Party Groups and together to maximise the Council's efforts.
 - b. The mobilisation of Preparation Training for potential candidates for 2016 elections.
 - c. Discussion about the implications of the proposed Protocol, which sets out how restoration of powers to Executive Councillors will be considered (**see Appendix B**).
- 5. Ensure the two Secretaries of State and their civil servant advisers are well informed and satisfied with the progress of the intervention.**
- 5.1 Commissioner Malcolm Newsam is keeping the Department for Education informed about progress in Children's Services. I have held regular meetings with civil servants at the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 5.2 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has been subject to Directions during the same period as Rotherham and in that case those Directions have had to be

amended and strengthened. No such adverse variation has been relevant in Rotherham.

- 5.3 The senior Civil Servant responsible for the Rotherham Directions will be present at the meeting.
- 5.4 The next formal progress report to Government from Commissioners is due end August 2015.

Sir Derek Myers
Lead Commissioner
1st June 2015