

RMBC And Parish And Town Councils Joint Working Group

Annual Report 2006-7

Foreword from Councillor Mahroof Hussain

Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement and Chairperson of the RMBC and Parish and Town Councils Joint Working Group.

Dear Colleagues

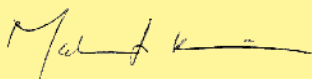
Welcome to the RMBC and Parish and Town Councils Joint Working Group Annual Report for 2006-7.

The Joint Working group have been meeting since January 2006 and are committed to improving and enhancing joint working arrangements between the two tiers of local government. This report outlines the major issues they have been involved with over the past 12 months.

The proposals contained within the Local Government White paper have ensured that Parish and Town Councils have been very much in the news over the past 12 months. The implementation of this Paper later this year and the continuing drive toward Quality Status in the borough will ensure that Parish Council issues remain in the spotlight.

I hope you enjoy the report and if you have any comments or suggestions please contact any of the members of the Joint Working Group listed on the back of the report.

Best wishes



RMBC And Parish And Town Councils Joint Working Group Annual Report 2006-7

Following the writing and negotiation of the Joint Working Charter the group have agreed a terms of reference. The Terms of Reference provide a clear focus for the group and its role in the future development of Joint Working relations and includes the following:-

Aims

- To encourage joint working and co-operation between the two tiers of local government through the framework provided by the Joint Working Charter.

Objectives:

- To monitor the terms of the Joint Working Charter
- To review the Charter on an annual basis
- To provide an annual report on the progress of the Joint Working Charter and the Parish Network
- To support and direct arrangements for the Parish Network events
- To progress issues raised by Parish and Town councils
- To consider regional and national issues effecting Parish and Town councils

Launch of The Parish Network

During January 2007 the Joint Working Group oversaw the launch of the Borough wide Parish Network. The purpose of the network is to bring together Parish and Town councils to share good practice, build networks, take part in learning activities and examine national issues effecting local government.

Those present at the first Network agreed a Terms of Reference including the following:-

- The meeting will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement
- The agenda will be shaped by and for Parish and Town Councils through requests made to the RMBC and Parish and Town Councils Joint Working Group
- The Network can make recommendations to RMBC, Rotherham Partnership and other bodies as appropriate dependant on the issues raised at the meetings

Meetings take place on a quarterly basis.

Revise The Joint Working Charter

In line with the terms of the Joint Working Charter the Annual review of the Charter took place between May and August 2007.

A sub group of the Joint Working Group worked on amendments based on:

- Comments from Parish and Town councils,
- National developments including the local government white paper,
- Representation at the Local Strategic Partnership and Scrutiny Panels,
- The creation of the borough wide Parish Network,
- The development of websites for Parish and Town councils

An expanded principal RMBC contact section, and Inclusion of contact details for all Parish and Town councils.

The finalised Charter will be presented to the Parish Network during October 2007.

Quality Status

The group have encouraged a programme of support for Parish and Town councils to reach Quality Status. The group invited Sheena Spence from the Yorkshire Local Councils Association to speak at the first Parish Network meeting about the benefits of Quality Status and answer any questions about working towards the award.

The group approved an action plan based on the findings of the self assessment questionnaire to support those Parish and Town council nearing a quality status application and approved a workshop event to take place for all parish and town councils actively working towards this award. The group are committed to promoting Quality Status through regular events at the Parish Network

Developing Parish Council Websites

The Joint Working Group secured funding for an initiative to provide websites for Parish and Town Councils. The funding has paid for the design and technical development of websites subject to a small annual hosting charge.

Each website will:-

- Comply to accessibility standards
- Have links back and forth to the RMBC site
- Allow for the citizen to pass comments, complaints and questions to the relevant Parish/Borough Council dept.
- The option for a Content Management System
- The option for moderated discussion boards for 'local chat'
- Be individually designed to each Parish Councils specification.
- Have a rotherham.gov.uk email account

In addition to this the group have approved work on a Parish Council portal on the RMBC website which will link to all existing Parish Councils websites and contain the latest information about:-

Activities of the Joint Working Group

The Parish Network

Information on the Joint Working Charter

Information about Quality Status

The Local Government White paper

The Parish Review

Links to external parish council sites

Contact details and meeting dates for each parish council

Local Parish Networks

Links to relevant external sites e.g National Association of Local Councils

Licensing Consultations

The RMBC and Parish and Town Councils Joint Working Group initiated discussions around 'good practice' with regard to consultation on licensing applications with Parish and Town Councils.

Although there is no legal requirement to notify Parish and Town councils of local licensing applications it was agreed that notification of applications would be sent to the relevant Parish or Town council.

Discussions are currently ongoing to extend this process to notification of gambling licenses.

Contribution To Borough Wide Reviews

During the course of the year the Joint Working group have contributed towards a number of Scrutiny Reviews examining high profile issues including;

Christmas Tree Lights - looking at the cost of the provision of trees, lights and the need to ensure best value for money, the situation with the current budget and the borough wide value of the Gateways initiative.

Highways - have on our daily lives, the influence of the design of a highway and what factors are of interest to the public.

The Parish Review - The group have received a number of updates on progress with the Parish Review and had opportunity to comment on the consultation plan.

The White Paper - The Joint Working group have considered a number of national issues effecting Parish and Town councils in particular the Local government White Paper, 'Strong and Prosperous Communities.' The group examined the potential issues raised by the White Paper culminating in a presentation on the implications for Parish and Town Councils by the Deputy Chief Executive of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association during the Parish Network launch during January 2007.

RMBC and Parish and Town Councils Joint Annual Report 2006-7

Membership of the Joint Working Group

The group is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement and consists of five elected representatives of Parish and Town Councils with support from officers of the RMBC Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Community Involvement Unit

Chair:

Councillor Mahroof Hussain

Cabinet Member for Communities and Involvement
01709 837175
mahroof.hussain@rotherham.gov.uk

Vice Chair: Councillor Jane Austen

RMBC Holderness Ward Councillor and
Aston cum Aughton Parish Councillor
0114 287 3485,
jane.austen@rotherham.gov.uk

The five elected representatives from parish and town councils are:-

Sue Kilcommons

Clerk to Catcliffe Parish Council
Contact details: 01709 548868,
catcliffe@hotmail.com

David Morton,

Clerk to Maltby Town Council
Contact details: 01709 814060
maltby.town@btconnect.com

Councillor David Smart,

Anston Parish Council
Contact Details: 01909 562903
thesmarts@dinnington1.freemove.co.uk

Councillor Pat Wade,

Aston cum Aughton Parish Council
Contact details: 0114 2879008,
patriciaw@talktalk.net

Plus 1 Vacant position

Supporting officers from RMBC

Nosober Latif

Area Partnership Manager Rother Valley South
Contact Details: 01909 568515,
nosber.latif@rotherham.gov.uk

Paul Griffiths

Community Leadership Manager
Contact Details: 01709 822667,
paul.griffiths@rotherham.gov.uk

