1.	Meeting:	Area Chairs
2.	Date:	16th June 2008
3.	Title:	Assessment Framework for the Potential and Actual Impact of Community Asset Management (CAM) Proposals
4.	Programme Area:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

Community Asset Management (CAM) is a way of helping organisations in achieving financial independence, which in turn can cultivate entrepreneurship and reaffirm links with the community, by releasing building and land assets currently owned/managed by a statutory agency.

This paper describes an Impact Assessment Framework and the work currently being undertaken by a Neighbourhood Investment Team/EDS working group. It explains how the assessment should work, what the scores mean, and lays out the assessment questionnaire.

6. Recommendations

1. **That Members recommend adoption of the framework contained herein**

7.   Proposals and Details

The Quirk review has stimulated thinking within local authorities, statutory organisations and communities regarding the most appropriate management and ownership of assets currently owned by statutory organisations.

The Quirk review permits the council to look a fresh at how it can continue to serve the needs of communities and opportunities to encourage partners including the community and voluntary sector to support this aim.

Some assets will always be best owned and managed by the Council and the Quirk review recognises that where local authorities are best placed to manage assets to provide quality local services this should continue. However, some VCOs will aspire to take more responsibility for services, property and/or building to bring about a better quality of life and environment where they live.

The Council is required to develop a framework to enable assets to be owned and managed in a way which supports community and strategic needs

This paper sets out a framework outlining the steps necessary to ensure the VCO sector is able to be supported in providing services and managing land and property to deliver effective and efficient services throughout the Borough, providing an impact assessment framework that attempts to assess the project's potential before permission is given to go ahead; and an assessment of the projects impact following its completion (or at an agreed length of time after the project has begun).

A recent report from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO) also makes the following recommendations:

- Impacts assessment needs to be approached as a tool for enhancing performance improvement and organisational development within VCOs, not simply as a reporting requirement.

- It is crucial that impact is evaluated in a way that is meaningful to users and that any learning is acted upon.

- There is a clear need for skills development and capacity building in relation to the assessment of impacts for both VCOs working in rural areas and those organisations that fund them.

- The Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework, currently being developed by the Active Communities Directorate in the Home Office, should support exemplars of good practice in relation to the evaluation of impacts and act as a catalyst for development at a local level.

- Impacts assessment needs to be built in to projects rather than bolted on after the event.

- Assessment criteria should be negotiated during grant or contract discussions and should not be altered during the course of the programme except by mutual consent.

- VCOs and funders should consider the potential value of evaluating global impact rather than focusing on component projects in isolation. This should allow

organisations to produce a single impact report that they could 'passport' across different funders.

- A database of indicators of impact could be developed along similar lines to the successful Office for National Statistics social capital questions bank to meet the need of VCOs and funders for support in developing appropriate tools for assessing impact.

- Both funders and VCOs should think about the impact of impact assessment on activities they wish to support. In particular they will need to make a balanced assessment about any capacity that may be diverted from delivery activity towards assessment activity and make a judgement about the degree of assessment they require on that basis.

The attached framework follows many of these recommendations whilst remaining easy to complete yet providing all relevant information, including equal opportunity monitoring on a project's objectives. It provides a simple scoring process to help assist the organisations involved to assess a project's potential prior to being given the go ahead. By also allowing for a post assessment within the main document, it cuts down on the number of forms required, and allows an easy to track project development map that captures relevant comment.

The proposed procedure for the assessment of a community proposed asset management project[1] is as follows:

1. The community group/organisation contacts the local Area Assembly office or 2010 Neighbourhood Team to discuss their proposals informally with named council officers and discuss the capacity building opportunity.

2. The group is sent the Impact Assessment Form should this be appropriate.

3. The organisation returns the completed PART ONE self assessment form to the designated Assessment Officer who also answers the relevant questions.

4. If the PART ONE Assessment is rejected- for example because the proposed project is significantly contrary to other plans or priorities, then the designated Assessment Officer will write to the group explaining why the proposal has been rejected.

5. Should the assessment be recommended for support, the organisation should then complete PART TWO. They may request help and information from the relevant agencies to assist them.

6. The Part Two Section A of the form would then be provided to both the Lead officer of the Corporate Asset management team and the lead officer of the Neighbourhood investment asset management team. The appropriate officer, dependent on General Fund asset or Housing Asset, would complete PART TWO Section C and present a recommendation to CESART after appropriate service and Member consultation.

7. If the proposal is not supported the designated Assessment Officer will write to the group explaining why the proposal has been rejected.

8. If the scoring "passes" the proposal, then the application is sent to the REGEN Board for final approval/rejection with comments made on the form accordingly (PART TWO SECTION D).

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[1] As opposed to a RMBC proposed scheme which has an HMR managed procedure

9. If successful, the designated Assessment Officer will complete the Impact Assessment form either on completion of the project or at an agreed date to monitor the projects effectiveness.

8. Finance

The paper costs of producing the Assessment Form are negligible, but officer time in helping groups assess the viability of their project proposals is likely to be extensive, especially at the start of the process.

Questions need to be addressed as to who provides the support, who funds the support, how is the assessment of competency conducted.

Officers nominated to provide this service will need Impact Assessment training, and it is likely that RMBC will have to work with RotherFED in devising a community IA training programme.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

At this stage the risk is the ability of officers and groups to be able to conduct comprehensive impact assessments.

Furthermore finance proposed from external agencies such as the DTA to assist councils and community groups with CAM proposals are still, for the most part, just proposals.

This process ends with approval for the project 'in principle'. There will need to be a competency assessment and this inevitably will require a time lag as the competency will follow the setting up of new constitutions and legal structures to allow some community organisations to receive an asset or sign legally binding contracts with the council and others. It will in many cases require capacity building and an assessment of the management body and their business plan. It will require a clause within the memorandum of understanding and articles of association or IPS rules which clarifies what happens to the asset should things go wrong.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Delivery of the proposed pilot will have positive implications to RMBC policies and strategies regarding:

- Community Call for Action
- Our Futures 3 Devolving, Empowerment and Communities
  In particular OF3 objectives around Participatory Budget Pilot and Community Involvement Objectives and specifically **Ref 29.:** A clear set of evaluation criteria (including risk assessment) to enable us to understand capacity within the community will need to be devised to consider the benefits of community control of assets, allowing for consideration on a case by case basis

- The Community Strategy
- The Area Assembly agenda

11.   Background Papers and Consultation

Community Asset Management (Area Chairs Report)
Our Futures 3
The Quirk Review
Asset Management Procedures by Arnold Murray

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Appendix 1

Rotherham Council Impact Assessment for Community Asset Management (CAM) Proposals

The Assessment Framework

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT ASSET PROCESS REVIEW TEMPLATE

Instructions to Reviewers

The practice of Community Asset Management is constantly evolving and open for improvement to ensure that all stakeholders involved benefit as fully as possible. Use of this Review Template should:

– assist organisations and institutions to rate and thereby improve their projects and proposals in order to realize better project and development outcomes
– assist the principle budget holder (e.g. RMBC) assess the likely impact of supporting a scheme

The review template serves as a guide for the proposee, the reviewer and the REGEN Board (who will give the final go ahead for a scheme to take place) in analysing how suitable a proposal is. The template should be used as a guide in undertaking the review. The template can also be used as a reference to assist the planning and implementation of a CAM proposal should it be successful.

Structure of the Template

The review template is divided into two main sections:

– **PART ONE**: An **initial** SELF ASSESSMENT form. This section will enable groups to assess whether Community Asset Management is the correct way forward to achieve the outcomes desired.
– **PART TWO**: A **detailed proposal** section, allowing appraisal scoring, comprising a table with a series of questions on the following topics:
   o **The project's objectives**: questions related to the aims, objectives, methodology and approach of the project
   o **Practical implementation**: questions related to the practical implementation of the project, techniques used and how issues arising in the public process were dealt with; and,
   o **Practitioner and stakeholder attitudes**: questions related to the behaviour of various stakeholders and the practitioner in the public process.

Undertaking the Review

The following is a suggested review methodology:

- Read through the questions in the template prior to embarking on the review of the project. They provide a framework in which the review can be undertaken as well as providing a useful indication of the nature of information that has to be acquired;
- Review all relevant documentation on the assessment process and community asset management processes. This may include the Scoping Reports, other Assessment Reports, minutes of meetings, information documentation sent to stakeholders, comments submitted by stakeholders, advertisements, media reports etc;
- Review the legal requirements;
- If possible, interview key participants in the project from a variety of stakeholders groups. Interviews can take the form of on site interviews, email or telephonic interviews. Interviewing participants in the process will provide a more balanced and textured view of the public process than a review of documentation alone;
- Complete the template as outlined below.

Using the Template

As indicated above, the review template is divided into two sections.

a) PART ONE: Self Assessment Form

- Part 1 should be completed before Part 2. It should allow the proposing group to assess whether or not the project is truly applicable. ***The Group should not complete Part 2 until Part 1 has been reviewed by the nominated officer.***

b) PART TWO

- As indicated, there are a series of questions on aspects of the project and provides the interface to the technical aspects of the assessment process. These will be scored by the reviewer, but the applicant should also consider the question as a prompt to determine whether:

- **The aspect was complete and / or well done (Score C/ 10 Pts):**
  - Answering thus, implies that this aspect of the process represents best practice; legal requirements have been met or exceeded; or community participation in the process was/will be optimal.
- **The aspect was adequate (Score A/ 5 pts):**
  - Answering thus, implies that although this aspect of the process may not meet best practice requirements, and there is room for improvement, community participation in the process was not unduly compromised, and decision making would not be compromised. It also implies that this aspect meets legal requirements.
- **The aspect was poor and / or incomplete (Score I/ 0 pts):**
  - Answering thus, implies that this aspect has compromised the community's ability to meaningfully participate in the assessment; that legal requirements have not been fulfilled and/or that additional work is required to ensure decision making is not compromised.
- **Unknown (Score U/ 0 pts):** Answering thus implies that insufficient information is available on this aspect to enable the reviewer to make a judgement.

Generally speaking, a rule of thumb on the applicability of a proposed project going forward for consideration to the REGEN Board for support would be based on the points gathered, *although some conflicts with other priorities may also take precedence over the success or otherwise of an application.*

90 pts plus   =   Project passes initial assessment; pass to Steering Group with recommendation to proceed.

75 to 85 pts   =   Project has potential. Review Requested by Steering Group.
50- 70 pts   =   Not acceptable but assessor may request further detail
0- 45 pts   =   Not acceptable; project fails initial assessment.

PART ONE: Self Assessment Form

Name of Project: _____

Name of Organisation: _____

Contact Details: _____

_____

Lead   Officer   for   Assessment:

New	Existing

_____

1. Is this an assessment of a new or existing proposal?

2. What is the main purpose and aims of the project?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. List the main activities and outcomes of the Project?

_____

_____

_____

4. Who will be the main beneficiaries of the Project?

_____

_____

5. Do you have monitoring data available on the number of people who are using the existing service/asset and/or will be affected by your Project? If so, what are these?

_____

_____

6. Risk Assessment Relating to Quirk Principle.

6a. For the Organisation/Community Group and the Assessment Officer: *Please take your time and make as objective as possible your assessment of the following risks.*	Community Group Answers Y/N	Assessment Officer Answers Y/N
Does your organisation have the capacity to take over and manage the asset?		
Are you able to raise the funds needed to purchase or refurbish the asset offered?		
Are public bodies able to support your application?		
Does your organisation have the skills needed to effectively manage the asset?		
Are your plans representative of the wider community, inclusive to all, including vulnerable groups within your neighbourhood, and therefore used in the public interest?		
Are your plans sustainable?		
Do you have resources for professional/support staff?		

6b. For the Assessment Officer Only	Assessment Officer Answers Y/N	Reason for answer
Does transfer of ownership of this asset impair strategic objectives of the local authority and/or its LSP partners? **Are any of these significant enough to deny progress of the proposal?**		
Is there confusion and lack of awareness over roles, responsibilities and liabilities between the landlord and the organisation?		
Is there any conflict between conflicting community organisations over ownership or management of assets?		

PART TWO: FULL PROPOSAL AND ASSESSMENT

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
1. What is the project definition? *NOTE – insert name of the project being impact assessed (include also the full range of the management institution's duties and powers, ie. everything that the institution does, whether formal or informal, written or unwritten)*		**Has the Project kept to its original definition? If not, what has changed and why?**

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
2 – What is the aim, objective or purpose of the project? *NOTE – Wherever possible quote directly from function documentation linking with Vision, Aims, Values, Objectives and good practice for all stakeholders.*		**Has the project achieved its aims and objectives?** *If yes, please state how.*

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
3 – What outcomes are intended through this project and for whom? *NOTE – Outcomes are different from your aims and objectives. They should be very specific. For example an outcome may be that you will have held 10 community events within 12 months. Wherever possible in responding to these questions, be specific & name the stakeholders involved & base your answers on all the related requirements.*		**Has the project delivered against the key outcomes?** *Please list those outcomes achieved and those unachieved. If unachieved please list reasons why. Also list unexpected outcomes should there be any.*

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
4 – What factors will contribute to the intended outcomes of the project?		How did the project take full advantage of the factors?

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
5 – What barriers if any, could detract from the projects intended outcomes?		**How did the project mitigate against any potential negative factors?**

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
6 – How do the intended outcomes link with other institutions and groups? Does your project link with other projects within the neighbourhood or borough?		Did the project take full advantage of these potential links? How did the project make these links work?

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
7 – Who defined or defines the project and determines the intended outcomes?		**Was there continuity of resource within the project?**

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
8 – Who is responsible and accountable for implementing the project and what training have they had, or qualifications do they hold?		**In your opinion, did the project take full account of these skills and experiences?**

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
9 – Who are the stakeholders, both inside and outside the institution, who should be involved with this function? What roles do the stakeholders play in the implementation of the Project and how?		Were the stakeholders clearly defined and properly identified as having a part to play within the project? Were these stakeholders utilised correctly? Were any additional stakeholders involved at a later stage and if so, why?

Section A – General Information:	Score	This column to be completed by Reviewer post project (or on an agreed review date).
10 – Are there any concerns the project could have differential impact on the grounds of age, sex, religious, racial or ethnic origin and if so why?		**Did the project fulfil equal opportunities regulations?**

Section B: EXAMINE THE DATA AND RESEARCH AVAILABLE	Score
1 – What information (including data) is available and/or is needed, to inform the assessment of the impact of the project? EXAMPLES/THINKING PROMPTS: • Demographic data and other statistics • Recent research findings • The results of consultations or recent surveys (NB qualitative and quantitative data) • Information from groups and agencies directly in touch with particular groups in the communities we serve (for example, qualitative studies by trade unions and voluntary and community organisations) • Comparisons with similar projects elsewhere • Recommendations of inspection and audit reports and reviews • Recommendations/reports by representative groups/bodies	

_____   _____

Project Signature   Title

Date

Assessor's Comments

Section C: Assessors Comments
This section to be completed by the designated assessment officer prior to decision on support.

1. Does the project help RMBC achieve any other objectives? Or, does the project support any other RMBC initiatives/targets etc? If so, which? (add 5 pts per additional initiative)

2. Does the project conflict with any other objectives/initiatives/targets etc? If so, which? (deduct 5 pts per initiative)

	(Y/N)	**Final Score**
3. Overall, does the project meet the necessary criteria to progress?		

4. What are your reasons?

5. Any Further Comments

_____   _____

Assessor Signature   Title

Date

_____   _____

Assessor Signature following   Title
Review

Date

Section D: Comments by REGEN BOARD

Part 1: Initial Comments (on submission of proposal)

Part 2: Comments following final assessment (if applicable)

_____   _____

Signature (Part 1)   Title

Date

_____   _____

Signature (Part 2)   Title

Date