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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the summer of 2011, the Council undertook consultation with communities across Rotherham as part of the development of the Local Development Framework.

The consultation attracts a large volume of interest and comment from members of the public & elected members. Members acknowledge that aspects of the consultation process promoted strong feeling from some sections of the community and wished to examine how we do things to improve the process for next time.

This review sets out the feedback from members & officers involved in the LDF consultation and makes recommendations to Cabinet to strengthen & support the LDF consultation process in future years.

Terms of Reference

Members undertook a spotlight review at their Improving Places Select Committee meeting held on 7th December 2011.

In order to undertake the review, the commission worked as a focus group to share common interests & experiences in relation to the LDF consultation process. A Principal Planning Officer acted as facilitator supported by the Chair & Scrutiny adviser to guide the group on a predetermined set of topics.

During the review, the group received evidence from members of the Places Select Commission and officers from the Area Assembly & Parish Council sectors, in addition to Planning & Press officers.

Their help and co-operation with the review is gratefully acknowledged.

Summary of Findings

The review commences with an overview of the national & local policy framework relating to the Planning process. In 2004, the Local Development Framework was introduced to gradually replace the Unitary Development Plan. The Framework comprises a portfolio of documents, including the Statement of Community Involvement which specifies how stakeholders & communities will be involved in the 'putting together' of a development framework for the Borough.

More recently, the Coalition Government have introduced the concept of Neighbourhood Planning as an integral part of their Localism Agenda. This aims to give people greater ownership of plans & policies that affect their local area via a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Whilst the Planning Advisory Service strongly supports this process and urges elected members to get involved with neighbourhood forums, it must be stressed that any opportunities must sit within the existing hierarchy of LDF plans.

The LDF is also a key mechanism for delivering those parts of the Community Strategy that relate to the development of land or buildings. For this reason, the review found that stronger linkages between the vision of the LDF & the vision themes of the Strategy needed to be developed to support the objectives of the Core Strategy.

The review found many positive actions undertaken as part of the consultation process in 2011. For instance:

- The consultation plan reflected many lessons learnt from concerns raised in previous LDF consultations undertaken in 2009;
- The LDF Steering Group had also reviewed and contributed to the consultation plans for 2011;
- Many events & activities undertaken in 2011 worked well; for instance, leaflets & response forms available in local libraries, the use of a community planning specialist experienced in community engagement and the 20 drop in sessions offered around the borough;

The consultation generated a significant public response, nearly 7,500 representations were received. Whilst this was very welcome in terms of the level of interest and involvement by local communities, it did lead members and officers to conclude that further reflection on how we consult with local people was needed.

It was recognised that public meetings should to be held in a structured manner with clear criteria for holding such a meeting. If this was not the case issues around health & safety arose along with a lack of clarity as to how notes and comments made at the meeting were being fed into the overall consultation process. The review group have made recommendations to address these points.

The role of the Area Assemblies in the consultation process was recognised to be invaluable with planners attending coordinating group meetings to brief members & partners on the process. However, although the opportunities for residents to get involved in the consultations were extensive there was a feeling from some members of the community that some areas had missed out. There were several requests for bespoke meetings - some were facilitated, but not all requests could be resourced by staff.

Equally, the use of Parish Hall's was a great success with clear information given out by planners at drop in sessions, although the review found that more parish councillors needed to be contacted directly to get them involved with the activities.

Finally, the members felt that their role on the LDF Steering Group could be strengthened by adding an addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement setting out the roles & responsibilities of the elected member in their community leadership capacity. The review group acknowledge that this needs to tie in with the aforementioned role in neighbourhood planning.

Key Recommendations

A full set of recommendations can be found at Section 5 of the report.

Recommendation 1: LDF Steering Group

- The role of Elected Members on the Steering Group is strengthened in relation to their role in the Statement of Community Involvement. This means strengthening their ability to influence decisions around consultation proposals.

Recommendation 2: Localism Act 2011

- This relates to the linkage between Neighbourhood Planning Forums and the Statement for Community Involvement.

Recommendation 3: Community Strategy

- The Strategy should reflect the vision of the LDF with further work required to strengthen the integration between both documents.

Recommendation 4: Public Meetings

- That officer's of the Council attend public meetings subject to specific criteria. These are set out in Section 5 of the report.

Recommendation 5: Area Assemblies

- The review recognises the value of the contribution to the consultation process made by the Area Assemblies. The recommendations seek to enhance this role.

Recommendation 6: Council Officer's & Partners

- Officers & partners involved in consultation need to be able to be flexible under difficult & challenging circumstances. These recommendations seek to support this requirement.

Recommendation 7: Advertising & Marketing LDF Consultation

- This relates to standardising & expanding advertising for LDF Consultation literature.

Recommendation 8: Parish Councils

- The review highlights that Parish Council Members need more information & involvement in the LDF Consultation process. This recommendation seeks to redress this.

Recommendation 9: Elected Members & Training

- The review recommends a number of ways in which members can enhance their skills & knowledge on the LDF, Community Consultation matters & Neighbourhood Planning.

1 INTRODUCTION: WHY MEMBERS WANTED TO LOOK AT THIS ISSUE

During the summer of 2011, the Council undertook consultation with communities across Rotherham as part of the development of the Local Development Framework.

The Local Development Framework comprises a number of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that set out policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the Borough, along with Supplementary Planning Documents that expand on policies contained in DPDs.

The Council prepares the LDF as a statutory requirement under the 2004 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act with the need for effective community involvement being at the heart of the planning system with an emphasis on early involvement as plans are being developed.

The consultation attracts a large volume of interest and comment from members of the public & elected members; reflecting on this, Members acknowledge that aspects of the consultation process promoted strong feeling from some sections of the community and wished to examine how we do things to improve the process for next time.

This review sets out the feedback from members & officers involved in the LDF consultation and makes recommendations to Cabinet to strengthen & support the LDF consultation process in future years.

2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 Methodology

Members undertook a spotlight review at their Improving Places Select Committee meeting held on 7th December 2011.

In order to undertake the review, the commission worked as a focus group to share common interests & experiences in relation to the LDF consultation process. A Principal Planning Officer acted as facilitator supported by the Chair & Scrutiny adviser to guide the group on a predetermined set of topics. Focus groups are a qualitative data collection method, meaning that the data is descriptive and cannot be measured numerically.

2.2 Method

The purpose of the meeting was to debrief Members about how the LDF consultation process was received by the wider public and to reflect on any improvements to the consultation process that can be made next time the exercise is undertaken. The discussion considered Member involvement and their experience of the Local Development Framework consultation programme of activities.

2.3 Points for Discussion

2.3.1 Distribution of information

- How do we get key messages out to communities?
- How do we inform local people of community events?
- Language used – plain English but use of specialist jargon so people become familiar with “planning speak”

2.3.2 Venues

- Were the venues in the right locations?
- Were they accessible & located in the heart of the community?
- What is the best place for this type of consultation event?
- Were the facilities appropriate e.g. tables/wall space/refreshments?

2.3.3 Events

- Timing of events - should we have held longer drop-in sessions e.g. to 8pm or 9pm
- Number of events – were these sufficient?
- Was our approach appropriate? Consider costs of community engagement/consultation approaches?
- Were there sufficient officers at each of the events?
- How successful were the different types of events/workshops?
- Is the drop-in session an appropriate model to use in the future?
- Are there other consultation methods that can be used?

2.3.4 Communication & Working Relationships

- How well did we work with others e.g. other colleagues in the Council: Libraries, Community Engagement Team, Communications Team, Area Assemblies; the LSP manager
- How well did we work with external Partners: VAR, REMA, Women’s Groups, older people, disabled people, Rotherfed, Youth Cabinet, Yorkshire Planning Aid, Parish Councils, MP’s
- Can we do more as Area Planners to build closer relationships with the Area Assembly teams and Ward Members?
- What improvements to these relationships should be pursued?
- Further press releases? How many/to whom/when?
- Letters to respondents entered into Consultation Portal Database: when and what will be the cost?
- How frequently should they be contacted?

2.3.5 Libraries

- How successful was the library network for getting information out to local people
- Is there a need to meet and fully brief senior librarians of what we expect /what hard copy documentation is available and what information is available to download?

How easy is it for general public to comment on-line via their local library?

2.3.6 General Housekeeping / Miscellaneous Issues

- First Aid
- Risk Assessment
- Refreshments

2.3.7 Managing future consultation

- What further information is required to enable successful consultation at the next stage?

What do we do in the meantime to keep the wider public informed of progress?

3 OVERVIEW OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 National Level

3.1.1 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Local Development Framework)

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the name given to the system of Development Plans introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Local Development Framework will gradually replace the Unitary Development Plan.

Rather than a single plan, the LDF takes the form of a portfolio of documents:

- Local Development Documents comprise Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents;
- Statement of Community Involvement which specifies how stakeholders and communities are involved;
- A Local Development Scheme setting out details of each of the Local Development Documents to be produced – plus the timescale and arrangements for production;
- An Annual Monitoring report setting out progress in terms of producing documents and in implementing policies.

3.1.2 Localism Act 2011

The key points of the Act relating to this review are:

- The abolition of regional spatial strategies (RSS) as part of the planning framework and the return of powers over housing and planning matters to local authorities¹
- A duty to co-operate: the act includes a new duty on local planning authorities (and county councils in England that aren't LPA's) to 'co-operate in relation to the planning of sustainable development'
- The introduction of Neighbourhood Planning allowing with the objective of involving communities in neighbourhood development.

The government is radically reforming the planning system in an attempt to make it more locally driven and responsive with fewer centrally imposed requirements and restrictions. The Regional Spatial Strategies have been abolished and the National Planning Policy Framework is currently being reviewed in a bid to simplify it and decentralise planning policy where possible to the local level.

Neighbourhood planning

At the local level, the Localism Bill introduces a new concept called 'Neighbourhood Planning' which aims to give people greater ownership of plans and policies that affect their local area. It enables local people to put together ideas for development (relating to land-use or spatial matters) in their area via a "Neighbourhood Development Plan". Once adopted, this plan will form part of the statutory development plan with the District or Unitary Council.

The Localism Bill also allows communities to develop Neighbourhood Development Orders. These grant planning permission to a particular neighbourhood area. The Community Right to Build Order is a type of Neighbourhood Development Order focussing on new build.

The government wishes to support long term, sustainable economic growth to address housing need and economic downturn. There is a feeling however, that the current planning system is too top-heavy, confusing, and bureaucratic, meaning that communities often have little say in the planning stages of development where they live. This means that development can take place that is contrary to community wishes, is unsympathetic or unlinked to existing infrastructure, or that development is delayed or halted as a result of objections.

The government wants to change this by decentralising the planning system. It wants to empower local communities to have a greater say in, and responsibility for, development of detailed planning policy in their area, and give them the opportunity to bring forward small scale development themselves. Neighbourhood Planning is a tool for achieving this.

¹ The London Plan will be retained in the capital

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) is urging elected members to embrace neighbourhood planning, and to take a proactive role in helping to determine how this takes root in their local areas. Put simply, communities have been led to believe that they will be 'in the driving seat' when it comes to planning locally. But as the provisions make clear, neighbourhood forums need to work within the opportunities and constraints of the existing hierarchy of plans.

3.2 **Local Level**

3.2.1 **Community Strategy - 2012-2015**

Rotherham's new Community Strategy is currently being developed and includes a new single vision and three top priorities for Rotherham. The priorities are informed by local and national research and information based on inspection results, performance data and consultation with partners. They are also informed by consultation with local people about their priorities conducted during the last two years.

Vision – 'Everyone in Rotherham will have the opportunity to fulfil their potential'

Priorities

- Ensure the best start in life for children and families
- Provide additional support to the most vulnerable in our community
- Help local people and local businesses benefit from a growing economy

This Strategy should reflect the vision of the Local Development Framework with the integration between both documents assisted by emphasis on the linkages between the Community Strategy vision themes and the LDF vision and strategic objectives set out in the draft Core Strategy.

The LDF is a key mechanism for delivering parts of the Community Strategy which sets out the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Rotherham Borough. Therefore, the LDF and planning applications will be important in securing those parts of the Community Strategy that involve the use, or development of land and buildings.

3.3 **Consultation & Community Involvement Framework (CCI)**

The CCI Framework & Toolkit has been developed to support RMBC Officers & Partners undertake the process of community consultation & involvement. It makes an important contribution to the delivery of Rotherham's vision as set out in the Community Strategy above and sets the direction of travel for community consultation & involvement within the authority.

The CCI Framework & Toolkit must be recognised as an important element in the planning & undertaking of the consultation process for the LDF. The scrutiny review found that the CCI protocol was largely followed in the preparation of the LDF

Consultation exercise. However, we have included in the review a section on the management of expectations², as it is this aspect of the consultation that gave most cause for concern.

Research shows that most individual & communities will only want to be involved in CCI if they can see how a particular issue has a direct impact on their lives. The most successful CCI activities are usually those that involve people in practical or direct ways, such as 'Planning for Real' or improvements to a neighbourhood – these have been proved to be far more effective ways of generating interest & a more considered response than public meetings.

3.3.1 Local Development Steering Group

The LDF Steering Group is an internal group constituting Elected Members & key officers involved in the LDF process. Its principal function is to promote the timely and efficient preparation of the Local Development Framework. Informal discussion and debate within the Group is intended to prepare the ground for key decisions to be made within the normal publicly accountable reporting structures of the Council.

The current membership & terms of reference for this group can be seen at Appendix 1.

3.3.2 Local Development Framework

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out the process for Rotherham's existing development plan (the Unitary Development Plan) to be replaced by various planning documents in a new style Local Development Framework (LDF). The Local Development Framework is made up of a portfolio of local development documents. These include Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that are subject to independent examination and, when adopted, will form Rotherham's statutory development plan. Other documents will be supporting Supplementary Planning Documents together with the Local Development Scheme.

This is the project plan and programme, together with the Statement of Community Involvement (the public participation strategy) for the LDF process.

3.3.3 The Core Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out the overall approach to development in the Borough & must reflect the spatial strategy identifying the towns & settlements where new housing & land are required to support industry & business. Provision is also made for retail, leisure & supporting community facilities. In May 2009, the Core Strategy Revised Options document set out for the first time the 'major urban extensions' that would be required to accommodate Rotherham's increased housing target & the resulting release of Green Belt Land.

² See Paragraph 4.4 – Management of Expectations

3.3.4 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The SCI was formally adopted by the Council on 14 June 2006 and it is intended that this will be reviewed with a view to closer integration with the CCI Framework Strategy and future Community Strategy consultation arrangements.

Public consultation on the pre-publication draft Core Strategy was launched on the 4 July 2011 and ran until the 16 September 2011. Publication of a feedback report on the consultation was produced in Jan 2012. Publication and submission of the Core Strategy is anticipated in spring/summer 2012.

3.3.5 Sites and Policies Development Plan Documents

Potential development sites have been processed through the Sheffield/Rotherham Strategic Housing Land Assessment and an updated Employment Land Review. This has assisted in the refinement of the eventual spatial option for the Publication Core Strategy and in turn provided the basis for identifying supporting site allocations.

The Sites and Policies Issues and Options consultation stage was run in parallel with consultation on the pre-publication draft Core Strategy (4 July to 16 September). Further consultation within individual settlements to pinpoint specific site allocations is anticipated in summer/autumn 2012 following submission of the Core Strategy.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Consultation Plan - Background

A report to Cabinet on 8 September 2010 detailed and reviewed the previous consultation undertaken in 2009. Feedback from this consultation process highlighted the following areas to be addressed:

- People are not aware of the consultation relating to the LDF;
- There was not enough time to comment;
- Lack of understanding of the consultation material;
- Councillors commented that they were unaware of the volume & strength of public feeling that the consultation was likely to generate.

In response to these concerns, a review was undertaken with the LDF Steering Group³. A number of areas (below) were highlighted for more emphasis in future rounds of LDF consultations.

These were:

- advance briefing for Ward Members, MPs and Parish Councillors

³ LDF Steering Group Minute 12 on 18/09/09 and minute 22 on 16/10/09.

- improved liaison with the Area Assembly network
- closer working with Libraries and Parish Councils on consultations
- distribution of leaflets to every Rotherham household (subject to cost)
- early engagement with the local press
- more “capacity building” with local communities via Planning for Real activities
- more localised “road shows” for each community on potential development sites
- improved pre-publicity for consultations and local events
- less reliance on “traditional” unstructured public meetings

The detailed implementation of the consultation plan for 2011 was designed to include the above actions in addition to meeting the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement and any revised regulations governing LDF consultation. All consultation on the LDF to date has met or exceeded the requirements of the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), however, this review did find some areas that need to be updated in line with a changing policy context or amended to reflect member’s feedback of the process.

4.2 **LDF Consultation – summer 2011**

Specific meetings were held with Members of Parliament, Parish Councils, the Area Assembly network and the community library network to highlight the salient points in the Core Strategy and Sites and Policies Development Plan documents. These meetings also provided details of the consultation process and how communities and individuals could positively engage in it. Previous discussions had been held with Elected Members and others actively involved in the consultation process to highlight the key messages to be communicated.

Examples of the events & activities that worked well were acknowledged:

- Bassingthorpe Farm site (Greasbrough), the Save our Green Belt campaign group ensured that sufficient leaflets and response forms prepared by the Borough Council were available in the library and encouraged local people to use these facilities;
- For budgetary reasons, the Rotherham News publication had been withdrawn; therefore, information was distributed using the LDF database of contacts and Area Assembly network of contacts;
- Use of services from a community planning specialist (formerly employed at Yorkshire Planning Aid), now working for Planning Aid England and therefore considerably experienced in engaging people in public consultation processes;
- Successful use of more than 20 drop-in sessions (similar to road-shows).

The consultation process generated significant public response. Nearly 7,500 representations were received, the majority being objections. Over 6,000 of the objections were to the release of Green Belt land. A summary of these results can be seen at Appendix 6.2.

4.3 **Feedback on the Consultation Process**

4.3.1 Elected Members

The main focus of this review was to give members an opportunity to reflect on the LDF consultation process from their own personal experience and observation of responses from individuals & the communities in which they were undertaking their community leadership responsibilities.

In discussion, they raised the following points:

- The role of the Local Development Framework Steering Group was acknowledged to be largely an information exchange with planning officers and other members;
- Some Members felt that their involvement in decisions relating to the LDF Consultation process could be strengthened. This could be realised as a clearer role in the implementation of the Statement of Community Involvement with amendment or addendum to the Statement making explicit references to the role members will play;
- Discussing with Councillors the most appropriate methods for public involvement for their wards (relating to the specific issues that affect individual wards) and for the authority as a whole;
- Information, training and briefing documents provided for Elected Members needed to be consistent across all Wards;
- The 'Sites and Policies' document ought to be published at the same time as the LDF Core Strategy, as the Core Strategy includes the various development targets for new housing and employment land. An Infrastructure Delivery Study will identify where there are deficiencies in infrastructure;
- The implications of the Localism Act 2011 impacting on the inter-relationship between the local Neighbourhood Development Plans and the Borough-wide Local Development Framework;
- It was recognised that there were emerging issues associated with unstructured public meetings, some of which are arranged by persons and organisations external to the Borough Council. Such meetings can present Council staff with a number of concerns and issues. Examples of these are:
 - ✗ health and safety issues with particular concern around limited space and no controls on numbers attending;
 - ✗ notes taken at the meetings not being fed back into the consultation process;
 - ✗ Other issues encountered in these type of meetings are dominated by a specific group or individual;
 - ✗ No clear or structured agenda;

- ✘ The availability of a sound system.
- Finally, it was acknowledged that cost savings could be achieved by distributing documents by electronic mail (acknowledging the difficulties of mailing large documents).

4.3.2 Corporate Communications and Media

As with previous stages of the LDF process the Communications and Media Team was closely involved in supporting planning colleagues to convey information to the public in appropriate formats.

The Local Development Framework is a complex process and therefore clarity of message is vital to helping ensure the consultation is accessible to the public and is a useful process for officers, Members and the public to enable informed decision making.

Communications and Media Team members were involved in consultation steering group meetings and helped inform the process before during and after this stage of consultation. Practical help was provided throughout the consultation in the following ways:

- Media release and briefing to launch the consultation
- Attendance at and support for, Members' briefing
- Guidance on wording for publicity and information leaflets
- Media release outlining full details of consultation and list of public sessions
- Reactive media relations work as required during the consultation
- Attendance by officer at selected public consultation events to support work of planning officers
- Media release informing public of final chance to 'have their say' as the consultation came to a close.
- Use of RMBC Press Office twitter feed to provide updates on consultation

This work was complimented by support work for the LDF Team provided by the Information Team which sits with the Communications and Marketing structure. This team provided intensive support to create interactive web pages for the consultation through the RMBC website.

Both teams continue to provide support through work on feedback on the consultation which will be communicated to the media and public after being presented to the steering group later this month.

4.3.3 Role of Area Assemblies in the LDF Consultation Process

- To Support Planning in the design and implementation of Consultation Action Plan
- To provide opportunities for elected members to receive information on the issues in their Ward
- To facilitate the opportunity for all sections of the community to contribute to the consultation process.
- To support the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement

Members of the Neighbourhood Partnership Team met with Forward Planning early in the process to input into the design of the Consultation Plan.

The Area Assembly teams agreed to support the process by providing the following opportunities:-

- Planners to attend Area Assembly Co-ordinating Groups to give details of the proposed Consultation Plan and for elected members to have sight of the consultation materials and to allow elected member input into location of events
- To use Area Assemblies local knowledge and connections to arrange bespoke “drop-in” sessions and localised road shows in appropriate communities
- To use the Area Assemblies extensive networks to promote and advertise the consultation process.
- To support Planning Staff at events in dealing with residents questions
- To support with the practical side of the management of drop-ins, events and road shows i.e. refreshments, room set up, crowd management

What was successful?

- Planners attended all co-ordinating groups and gave detailed information on what would be going to public consultation in their ward. Draft leaflets were made available and elected members also had sight of the site allocations map.
- Elected members also had the opportunity to have advance warning of potential issues that may arise in their wards.
- Using the local knowledge of the Area Assembly teams and elected members, events were held in appropriate communities and where it was judged there was an information gap, additional meetings were arranged.
- Events were well publicised using Area Assembly mailing lists, websites, etc. Posters were also distributed to many community venues by Area Assembly Teams.
- The presence of Area Assembly teams at events helped to ensure that they were well staffed, and the events ran smoothly in terms of practicalities.

- The jargon, principles and concepts of the Local Development Framework can be considered complicated. Area Assembly teams were able to support residents to understand some of these issues.
- The use of large maps & plans was very much welcomed by people as they could visualise the proposals.

What were the barriers, problems and issues?

- Although the opportunities for residents to get involved in the consultation were extensive there was a feeling from some members of the community that some areas had missed out. There were several requests for bespoke meetings - some were facilitated, but not all requests could be resourced.
- Some events were very well attended and some less so - a number of public drop-in sessions had not been well supported and others had been attended by large numbers of people at venues unable to accommodate such numbers.
- Some complaints were received that events had not be advertised sufficiently.
- Some events were over-staffed - it was difficult to judge how many staff would be needed.
- Some parishes/groups/communities held their own meetings and this caused some confusion in terms of who was running the meeting and the information being provided.
- The process was resource intensive for the Area Assembly teams in terms of staffing at a time when less staff were available - the majority of the Council's resources and efforts were focussed on the drop-in sessions;
- This meant that resources were diverted from other aspects of the Area Assemblies' functions.
- The high cost of attempting to notify and consult all households throughout the Borough area was acknowledged;
- The limited use of workshops undertaken with Area Assembly Teams; difficulties were experienced in managing and facilitating workshops due to limited staff resources.

What could we do differently?

- The distribution of publicity materials in those areas where events were not well attended may need to be reviewed.
- Training on principals and concepts of the LDF for non-planners to enable them to more fully support residents attending events
- More co-ordinated approach with Parish Councils/local groups in terms of events and publicity.

- As some Parish Councils' memberships had changed as a consequence of the May 2011 elections - time should have been taken to provide briefings for the new Councillors;

4.3.4 Parish Councils

During the previous consultation there was substantial criticism from parish councils around their lack of involvement and the quality of the material prepared and the venues used for the consultation itself.

Prior to the 2011 consultation commencing, officers liaised with the parish council joint working group. They also held a session with Anston parish council to set out an approach to the consultation process that would involve parish councils facilitating the consultation and getting the information out to their local communities.

These meetings resulted in the following principles being established:-

- Agreed advance notice and early briefings for parish councils
- Agreed use of Parish Council's venues to facilitate drop in sessions as part of localised events for communities on potential sites for development.

Events and Meetings

Planning officers met with the Parish Network meeting to brief them in advance of the consultation start date. They discussed the plan for the consultation and outlined the principles behind the process. This meeting had representation from over half of the parish councils across the borough.

8 parish venues were booked to host information/drop in sessions covering the following communities:-

- Thurcroft Memorial hall
- Kiveton Park and Wales Village Hall
- Dalton/Thrybergh - Dalton Parish rooms
- Ravenfield parish hall
- Aston Parish Hall
- Bramley Parish hall
- Anston Parish hall
- Wickersley Community Centre

Parish Council were invited to give feedback to this review on the consultation process. Dalton, Aston cum Aughton, Ravenfield Parish Councils made the following comments with many more positive comments than negative ones.

What worked well?

- Good quality clear information
- Length of sessions excellent
- Using parish venue a success and would be happy to do it this way again
- Number of officers available good
- Drop in sessions more constructive than open public meetings
- The spread & number of sessions held was good – this helped to prevent overcrowding or turning people away as had happened with the previous consultation exercise in 2009.

What were the issues?

- No one came out to actually talk to the parish council members – only the core network group
- One Parish Council was not aware of any consultation taking place.

4.4 **Management of Expectations**

As part of defining the process of community engagement it is important to be clear with the audience or stakeholder about what is negotiable and what is set in stone. When dealing with policy and legislation issues, such as the LDF, aspects of consultation will be non-negotiable as there is already an existing framework.

However, it is still important to be clear about the type of community involvement the Council is planning to undertake and distinguish between what is meant by 'consultation' and 'involvement'.

Participation can be thought of as a five-rung ladder, where each rung represents a possible stance:

- Information: Merely telling people what is planned;
- Consultation: Offering some options, listening to feedback;
- Deciding together: Encouraging additional options & ideas, & providing opportunities for joint decision making;
- Acting together: Joint decision making then forming a partnership for action;
- Supporting independent community interests: Local groups or organisations are offered funds, advice or other support to develop their own agenda within guidelines.

Participation is a process that is managed by someone, allowing others involved more or less control over what happens. It is unrealistic to expect small groups to suddenly develop the capacity to understand or contribute to complex decisions required in major projects such as local planning.

They need training and the opportunity to learn formally or informally to develop confidence & trust in the process.

Caution is required when putting the theory into practice. The following reflects on a number of standard techniques and how these may be managed successfully.

4.4.1 Public Meetings

Meeting the public is essential, but the conventional set up with a fixed agenda, platform and rows of chairs is a stage set for conflict. As an alternative:

- Identify & met key interests informally;
- Run workshop sessions for different interest groups;
- Bring people together after the sessions in a report back seminar.

4.4.2 Leaflets, video's & exhibitions

These are useful tools, but it is easy to be beguiled by the products & forget what the purpose of using them is. In developing materials consideration could be given to:

- What level of participation is appropriate? Presentations may suggest minds are already made up!
- What response is sought – and can the organisation handle it?
- Could more be achieved with low cost materials & face to face contact?

4.4.3 Working through the Voluntary Sector

Voluntary bodies are a major route to communities and may have people and resources to contribute to the participation process. However, they are not 'community'

- There will be many small community groups who are not part of the more formalised voluntary sector;
- Voluntary groups are not necessarily neutral.

4.4.4 Summary:

- Many attempts at community involvement fail because organisations promoting involvement are unclear about the level on offer;
- The level of participation offered should be tailored to suit the situation – more is not always best, or even wanted, by communities;
- Participation is most likely to be successful when the different interests are satisfied with the level of participation in which they are involved.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Local Development Framework Steering Group

- The membership of the Group should be amended to include one Elected Member per ward to ensure representation across the Borough
- The role of Elected Members on the Steering Group is strengthened in relation to their role in the Statement of Community Involvement. This means strengthening their ability to influence decisions around consultation proposals.
- The Constitution of the Steering Group therefore is amended to enable recommendations to be referred to Cabinet for consideration.
- It is recommended that the LSP Manager attends the Steering Group meetings on a regular basis in order to work with members and planning officers to ensure that the links between the LDF & Community Strategy Visions are maintained.

5.2 Localism Act 2011

- It is recommended that a protocol for the integration of Neighbourhood Planning Forums be developed & attached as an addendum to the Statement for Community Involvement. This should set out the process of linking together the LDF consultation process and the proposals of the Neighbourhood Planning Forum with the overall vision of the LDF;
- The function of Community Planning undertaken by the Area Assemblies must be extended to take account of the new Neighbourhood Planning powers, so that Community Plans reflect the objectives & outcomes of the Forums.
- Elected members will need support in order to take a proactive role in helping to determine how Neighbourhood Planning takes root in their local areas. The review recommends that training & guidance is offered at an early stage in the development of neighbourhood forums so that the opportunities and constraints of the existing Local Development Framework hierarchy of plans are immediately recognised as part of the neighbourhood planning process.

5.3 Community Strategy

- The Strategy should reflect the vision of the Local Development Framework with further work required to highlight the integration between both documents. Emphasis needs to be focussed on the linkages between the Community Strategy vision themes and the LDF vision and strategic objectives set out in the draft Core Strategy.

5.4 Public Meetings

Officers of the Council will attend public meetings subject to the following criteria:

- That the meeting is formally chaired and the Chair (not necessarily a Members) has met with officers prior to the meeting to agree agenda, format etc.;
- Officers consult with Members prior to a public meeting to discuss agenda & probable issues to be raised;

- Before attending a public meeting, officers should be satisfied that all health & safety regulations are met and that the Council is able to meet its duty of care to them;
- Elected members are informed whether or not council officers will be in attendance;
- That hospitality arrangements are reviewed – such as the provision of refreshments, acoustics/sound systems etc.
- That public meeting's are held if they are judged to be the best means of communication for the issues and all other options have been considered.

5.5 Area Assemblies

The review recognises that Area Assemblies are an ideal vehicle for consultation with the local communities, parish councils & elected members. Therefore, for future LDF consultations:

- Area Assembly staff should be involved in the planning of the consultation exercise;
- As non planners, AA staff require more training on the LDF principles to enable them to support residents & others attending events
- More resources need to be focussed on promoting & facilitating community workshops at Area Assembly level.

5.6 Council Officer's & Partners

Officers & partners involved in consultation need to be able to be flexible under difficult & challenging circumstances. Recommendations to support their work are:

- Be prepared to tear up the script and adapt your programme to the situation e.g. late arrivals/early departures from workshops. In essence work more on the community's terms.
- Need for lead-in time and greater effort in establishing contact with key community workers to cascade information out.
- Tailor programmes to the anticipated audience.
- Consider the need for refreshments for officers, volunteers and the wider public
- Planning 'jargon' is seen as fundamental to the consultation process as used in national & public spheres. However, all effort should be made to provide clear explanation of the interpretation to support understanding by non planners & community members;
- Increase the visual support included in the process by using maps & diagrams in public arena's;
- Alignment of information relevant to specific areas may help to focus consultation in specific areas.

5.7 Advertising & Marketing LDF Consultation

- Advertising for meetings, events & focus groups etc, should be standardised across the Borough by creating a 'brand' for all LDF literature;
- Expand the distribution of leaflets as these were thought to be excellent in their content & information offered.
- Identify more sites for advertising & leaflet distribution: e.g. national food chains/stores & local newspapers to include leaflet drops;
- Parish Council Websites should be used for publicity re LDF Consultation process & advertising events & workshops.
- Ensure careful use of colour coding on LDF maps (indicating designated areas for planning use) is clear and distinct to avoid confusion.

5.8 Parish Council Members

- Members need to be involved from the outset of the process
- They require training – this could be doubled up with Area Assemblies;
- Planning officers should attend a Parish Council meeting to brief members – local adjacent parish councils could double up on this exercise;

5.9 Members & Training

- The review recommend that Elected Members receive further training in the Management of Public Meetings;
- Also, provide awareness training for elected members on the most frequently used consultation techniques with emphasis on interpretation of the results;
- Encouraging Members to attend selected consultation events (e.g. focus groups) as observers;
- Submission of the results of key LDF consultations to be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board.
- That each new Municipal Year, Member induction includes training on the LDF process, Neighbourhood Planning & Community Consultation methods.

6 APPENDICES

6.1 LDF Steering Group Constitution and Terms of Reference

6.1.1 Constitution

The purpose of the Steering Group is to provide a forum for corporate discussion and political guidance on all aspects of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and to oversee the statutory process of preparing LDF Documents. This was approved by Cabinet on 28/04/10 and Council 21/05/10.

This requires:

The Steering Group to have some decision making over routine LDF matters (excluding matters of policy) as set out in the Terms of Reference below.

The Chair of the Local Development Framework Steering Group (in consultation with the Director of the Planning and Regeneration), will invite appropriate Cabinet Members as required by agenda content. Appropriate ward members and parish council chairs may be invited to attend matters of specific local interest.

Appropriate items are to be referred to Strategic Leadership Team, Cabinet and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Board. Steering Group minutes are to be included on Cabinet agenda.

Major issues to be dealt with in an open seminar for all Council Members or reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board (formerly Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee) as required.

The LSP Director to receive Steering Group agendas and minutes with attendance prompted as appropriate. Other stakeholders to be invited to attend appropriate meetings as required.

The following corporate representatives to receive agendas and minutes and to attend meetings as appropriate:

- Resources Directorate (Legal and Democratic Services and Policy and Partnerships)
- EDS Transportation Unit
- EDS RIDO
- EDS Culture and Leisure
- EDS Waste Management
- Housing and Neighbourhood Services (Housing Strategy/HMR Team, Neighbourhood Development & Environmental Health)
- Children and Young People's Services (School Organisation and Planning)

6.1.2 Terms of Reference

Matters referred to Council

- Adoption of all Development Plan Documents (including Proposals Map)
- Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement
- Resolution for the Local Development Scheme to come into effect
- Approval of all Development Plan Documents (including Proposals Map) prior to publication and submission to the Secretary of State
- Withdrawal of Development Plan Documents

Matters referred to Cabinet

- Approval of draft Development Plan Documents prior to public consultation
- Approval of major revisions to the Local Development Scheme (that have significant corporate priority and resource implications)
- Endorsement of the Council's consultation response on emerging policy in the Regional Spatial Strategy (or replacement statutory documents)

Routine matters for consideration by the LDF Steering Group

- Draft Development Plan Documents (including Proposals Map)
- Sustainability Appraisal of Draft Development Plan Documents
- Draft Supplementary Planning Documents
- Annual Monitoring Reports
- LDF Consultation Plan
- Employment and housing land forecasts and requirements
- Evidence base studies and findings
- Settlement capacity findings and potential site allocations
- Draft Master Plans
- Regional and sub-regional planning issues and interaction with the LDF
- Minor amendments to, and updating of, the Local Development Scheme
- Planning Inspectorate Service Level Agreement and Examination arrangements

Appropriate reporting and approval arrangements for these matters (and any others not anticipated above) will be agreed by the Chair of the LDF Steering Group in

consultation with the Director of the Planning and Regeneration and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services).

6.2 Summary of Consultation Feedback

CONSULTEES : REPRESENTATIONS		
	Consultees	Representations
Core Strategy	91	643
Sites & Policies:	1,171	1,795
(Standard letter/petitions)	5,003	5,003
Total:	6,265	7,441

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED FROM CONSULTATION (04/07/11 to 16/09/11)			
DRAFT CORE STRATEGY AND SITES & POLICIES / ISSUES & OPTIONS			
Received By:	Core Strategy	Sites & Policies	Total
Individual Letter	102	1,106	1,208
Web	86	326	412
E-mail	455	363	818
Others:			
Standard Letter / Petition	0	5,003	5,003
TOTAL:	643	6,798	7,441
Response:	Core Strategy	Sites & Policies	Total
Object	295	1,364	1,659
Standard letter objections	0	5,003	5,003
Support	117	126	243
Support with conditions	89	59	148
Observations	142	225	367
Site Response Forms	0	21	21

Late Reps - Received after 16th September cut-off
Anonymous Reps – no details

74
102

SITES & POLICIES

REPRESENTATIONS ON THE LDF SITES & POLICIES / ISSUES & OPTIONS - JUNE 2011				
Document Section		Issues:	Number of Responses:	
			Individual	Standard letter / petition
Chapter 3	Site Allocation Methodology	Issue 1	19	
Chapter 4	Designations	Issues 2 to 18	77	
Chapter 5	Development Management Policies	Issues 19 to 23	39	
Annex 1	Site Options Response Form		21	
Appendix 1	Site Options in Rotherham Urban Area	Issues 24 to 27	316	
	Bassingthorpe Farm (Broad Location for Growth)		102	986
Appendix 2	Site Options in Dinnington, Anston and Laughton Common	Issues 28 to 31	262	
	Dinnington East (Broad Location for Growth)		1	1,878
Appendix 3	Site Options in Wickersley, Bramley and Ravenfield Common	Issues 32 to 35	289	
Appendix 4	Site Options in Wath upon Dearne, Brampton and West Melton	Issues 36 to 39	30	151
Appendix 5	Site Options in Kiveton Park and Wales	Issues 40 to 43	248	
Appendix 6	Site Options in Maltby and Hellaby	Issues 44 to 48	102	1,363
Appendix 7	Site Options on Aston, Aughton and Swallownest	Issues 49 to 52	47	
Appendix 8	Site Options in Swinton and Kilnhurst	Issues 53 to 57	88	193
Appendix 9	Site Options in Catcliffe, Orgreave, Treeton and Waverley	Issues 58 to 61	27	
	Waverley (Broad Location for Growth)		0	
Appendix 10	Site Options in Thurcroft	Issues 62 to 65	54	98
Appendix 11	Site Options in Non-Green Belt Villages: Thorpe Hesley, Todwick, Harthill, Woodsetts and Laughton-en-le-Morthem	Issues 66 to 68	69	334
Appendix 12	Site Options in Green Belt Villages		2	
Appendix 13	Automatically excluded sites		0	
Appendix 14	Methodology: Identification of Site Allocations		2	
TOTAL:			1,795	5,003

Standard letters and/or petitions (Objections):	Names:
Dinnington / Anston (re building on Green Belt)	1,878
Maltby (Stainton Lane, Site LDF0271)	1,363
Bassingthorpe Farm (re building on Green Belt)	986
Thorpe Hesley (re 4 sites)	334
Swinton (Piccadilly Fields, Site LDF0775)	193
Wickersley (Sorby Way, Site LDF0371)	127
Thurcroft (New Orchard Lane, Site LDF0441)	98
Wickersley (Sites off Morthem Road)	24

7 THANKS

7.1 RMBC Officers

Andy Duncan – Principal Officer – Forward Planning
Helen Sleight – Principal Planning Officer - EDS
Andrea Peers – Area Partnership Manager
Paul Griffiths – Community Liaison Officer (Parish Councils)
Ann Todd – Press & Publications Officer
Zafar Saleem – Community Engagement Manager
Michael Clark – Rotherham Partnership

7.2 Members of the Places Select Commission

Cllr Jenny Whysall – Chair

Cllr Alan Atkin
Cllr Jenny Andrews
Cllr Christine Beaumont
Cllr Barry Dodson
Cllr Jacquie Falvey – Vice Chair
Cllr John Gilding
Cllr Dave Pickering
Cllr Chris Read
Cllr Pat A Russell
Cllr Kath Sims
Cllr John Swift
Co optee – Mr J Carr
Co-optee – Mr B Walker
Parish Cllr – Clive Jepson

7.3 **Apologies for Absence**

The Mayor – Cllr Sean Wright, Cllr Sue Ellis, Cllr Alan Gosling, Cllr Jane Havenhand, Cllr Frank Hodgkiss, Cllr Lyndsay Johnston, Cllr Christopher Middleton, Cllr Jeb Nightingale, Cllr Rose McNeeley, Cllr Amy Rushforth, Co-optee Mr Derek Corkell, Co-optee Mr C Hartley