

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
Report to the Members

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	20th June 2012
3.	Title:	Disadvantaged Areas
4.	Directorate	Neighbourhood & Adult Services

5. Summary

The Cabinet and Strategic Leadership Team have received a number of reports since the publication of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010 which highlighted a worsening of deprivation in the borough, particularly in some of our most deprived communities.

This report seeks approval for a new approach based on local leadership and a long term commitment from partners. The approach set out in the report is designed to complement the work to develop a Health and Well Being Strategy.

6. Recommendations

Agree the approach to tackling inequalities in disadvantaged areas.

Seek a commitment from Rotherham Partnership to the implement the approach set out.

7. Proposals and details

In the eleven most deprived neighbourhoods in the borough there is a concentration of people whose quality of life is significantly below the norm for other parts of the borough.

These areas have, in the main, suffered from long term deprivation and have featured amongst the worst in the country based on their rankings in the Index of Multiple Deprivation for many years.

In these eleven areas, people who are suffering from the effects of multiple deprivation are not finding opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Within these communities there is consistent evidence of low aspiration, which is characterised by a sense of resignation that poor standards of living and ill health, are the norm and people have low expectations of public services.

What do we want to achieve?

We need to change the character of an area, improve the opportunities available to people and improve the quality of life of individuals.

We need to help create a quality of life in each area that is more consistent with the rest of the borough. Recognising the long-term nature of the problem we must be realistic and aspire first of all to stop the gap widening and then begin to close the gap. Success will be able to be measured through a lower concentration of people suffering from the effects of Multiple Deprivation (an improved IMD score for each area) and by borough wide improvement. Success will not be achieved through the displacement of the existing population.

In overall terms it is clear that we need a long term approach that will survive changes in government and be based on local action, working within the policy framework of the time.

Our work will concentrate on what we can influence, what happens at a local level. We need to exploit national programmes and initiatives not be led by them.

Change the character of an area

Changing the character of an area may involve changes to the physical environment, provision of facilities, quality of services as well as changing the norms and values of people within the community.

We need to recognise that not every one of these eleven areas is the same, with the causes and effects of deprivation differing in each area.

Our starting point must be to develop a shared understanding of each area, a very detailed understanding of each area, with our partners. This will involve

understanding the type and distribution of deprivation across an area and within households. Developing this understanding will not be an overnight task with approximately 16,000 households living in the disadvantaged areas.

Ward Members have an intimate understanding of an area, particularly understanding the characteristics of the small number of dysfunctional households that consume a large proportion of our resources. This local knowledge is invaluable to professionals who are working in localities, trying to break the cycle of deprivation with the majority of families. Our ability to tap into this local knowledge will be dependent upon developing information sharing arrangements based on 'trusting relationships' not just simple, systems and processes.

There is significant evidence, from successful regeneration schemes across the country, that if you change the nature of service delivery and improve the physical environment of an area, in co-production with the people who live there, then that will in turn bring about a shift change in perception, pride and aspiration.

We must also face up to the fact that in some of these areas the quality of the facilities and services is significantly below the norm for the rest of the borough, contributing to low expectations and aspirations within the community. Consequently, public services will need to be ensuring that universal services are provided to an agreed minimum standard across the borough.

Improve the opportunities available to people

It is important to understand the impact of deprivation in particular areas if we want to help people take advantage of opportunities to improve their life chances.

We need to work with local people in each area to identify how services need to change to reflect their particular needs. There must be a recognition that we will not make any significant progress unless we engage and involve local people so that the changes that are made are changes that reflect their priorities. It is about doing the right things in the right order. We need to address the primary needs of people first!

Single agency responses to individual issues, for families and family Members experiencing multiple problems, no longer represent a sustainable way forward. There is a shared recognition that we should support and empower people in a holistic way, recognising their personal, family and community setting. Putting in place a workable arrangement to achieve this improved way of working will be one of the biggest challenges facing partner organisations in Rotherham.

We need to coordinate our activities and programmes with our partners who have a specific interest in a local area and can make a difference in that area. This will help improve our credibility with the local community. The local

community can tell us what works well, what doesn't, what might be better, what we can change together. If the community tell us that we have listened and responded effectively, that could be one way to measure our success. This will involve doing things differently, providing services that are needed at the right time in the right place.

Improve the quality of life of individuals

Improvements in quality of life will not result from simply changing the way services are delivered, they are dependent upon local people using these services more and taking advantages of new opportunities we can create.

Success will be dependent upon having a very detailed picture of the people and families within each area and working with them on an individual, as well as a collective basis. It is vital that we track improvement on an individual level and a community level. It will however take some time to build up this detailed picture and develop methods of keeping the information relevant given the transient nature of some parts of the community.

There is a broad range of initiatives designed to improve the quality of life of individuals in Rotherham, ranging from personalisation which is intended to enable people to improve choice and control, to initiatives that are intended to ensure the best start in life for every child, enable children and young people to maximise / fulfil their potential, assist people disengaged from the labour market to improve their skills and readiness for work, etc.

What is required is an over riding approach that will enable these initiatives to fit better together. The key to success must surely be about changing behaviours (which public services traditionally struggle with) rather than just changing services. If we are going to motivate people to become involved in changing services, we will need to respond to local values and perceptions, captured through the use of customer insight techniques. This will require changes to the way services are provided and accessed.

Some significant improvements can be made without additional resources. One of the biggest things we can do is to make sure that everyone receives all benefits due to them. The challenge is to deploy existing resources to target entitlements and claimants to ensure that all benefits are received. There are many services that are not accessed by some communities, (examples include health checks, library services), so we need to encourage usage and take up.

How do we engage and communicate?

When we start to engage with communities and organisations we need to be careful that we don't brand this work as 'disadvantaged areas'. Our collective commitment needs to be positive and needs a good strong identity. We need to communicate our messages in the right way so that the information is received, is understood and is welcomed.

Most importantly people will become interested and engaged when they see things happening. We need to engage local people through action and place an emphasis on equipping them to act for themselves.

It is obvious that we should take stock and learn from what we do well now - celebrating achievement, finding community champions and leaders who will help us. This needs to move some of the work carried out in the voluntary and community sector (and by VAR) up a gear. We need to work with known volunteers and community activists and develop a bigger pool of volunteers.

Increasingly our learning communities are becoming aware of their potential contribution to the wide community. We need to recognise the work of schools /academies as 'community anchors' that present us with an opportunity to influence the values of parents and young people and create different citizens for tomorrow.

Importantly, our engagement needs to be mainstreamed and requires culture change amongst the organisations that commit to address disadvantage in the borough. We need a principled approach that:

- Engages through **local people** leading changes themselves
- Engages through **motivating** people to behave differently
- Engages through **community leadership**, with local Members leading changes
- Engages through **partnership**: a collective commitment to respond differently in these areas
- Engages through **action**, with visible, accessible and empowered officers.
- Engages in a **smart way**: not just what and how but when we engage on certain issues
- Engages through the most **appropriate agency** to deliver change

Who needs to be involved?

- *Local community* – residents, local businesses, volunteers, influencers and activists.
- *Ward Members* need to lead the change, supported by the Leader, Cabinet Members and strategic directors
- *Key partners to the LSP*, including public services, learning institutions and private sector businesses

How will they work together?

Tackling such deep seated, complex issues in different deprived neighbourhoods can only be successful through locally led action.

The approach adopted in Chesterhill provides a framework that has worked before in Rotherham and was successful in harnessing political leadership. This was based on local action, with Ward Members exercising their community leadership role, supported by a Cabinet Member and a Strategic Director. Any proposals to change policy and strategy, resource allocation and service standards were referred to Cabinet and the Rotherham Partnership as appropriate.

At the end of the Chesterhill project it was clear that some of the measures of success were achieved through displacement. The Local Ambitions Projects were intended to pick up lessons from Chesterhill and tackle more of the underlying problems as well as the short term issues. Unfortunately, the withdrawal of funding by central government drew these projects to a halt. If nothing else the Local Ambitions Projects demonstrated that any future approach to tackle issues in disadvantaged areas cannot be *reliant* upon external funding.

Next steps

1. Act Now.

We need to start to act together immediately and not wait for data packs, plans, strategies, etc. Deal with the obvious now:

- Good quality public services delivered to the same standards as the rest of the borough
- Improve the quality of public realm, shifting resources if necessary to deal with litter and cleanliness
- Improve access and take up of services
- Maximise benefit take up

It is vital that we act with real purpose right from the beginning. Quick Wins will demonstrate to local people that we are serious – positive communication is critical at this stage.

This approach also requires us to develop different relationships with communities in less disadvantaged areas. This will require skilful communication and careful management if we are not to polarise views.

2. Develop a clear understanding of the area; a baseline.

This is about mapping and overlaying, getting a really detailed understanding of the area and its people. We need to know about the characteristics and composition of every household and street, what resources and assets are being used in the area – collectively across all partners – and what results we are achieving. This should identify any special initiatives we have in place,

such as *community first*, troubled families etc, how they relate and whether they could link together more effectively.

Understanding households is something that needs to be carefully handled so as not to give the wrong impression. We are not data gathering. Our understanding needs to be used to inform very local action and we need agreement about the way this is done and informal protocols about the use of information.

Gaining the trust of a community is critical and the engagement of voluntary and community sector organisations needs to be considered to allay any fears. Voluntary and community sector organisations need to work hand in hand with us, understanding and sharing our intentions, whilst also contributing their specific knowledge and expertise of local people and local problems. This will need a different type of relationship with the community and voluntary sector to achieve a sharing of information without compromising their independence.

We need a smart action plan that is practical, changes things we have control over quickly through task allocation, and identifies actions that need to be planned and agreed with other partners.

Our priorities need to be the same priorities of the local community – and address what's it like now – what needs to be changed right away - and what things should look like in the medium and long term future.

3. Engage people through action

There is a need set up simple governance arrangements and identify a local, dedicated 'professional' who will ensure that important public services are of high quality and are provided in a way that local people want to access them.

This requires someone who is experienced enough to keep a focus on outcomes, who understands how public services can work together, and who can win over hearts and minds to change the way things are done. This lead professional will be passionate and committed to see through significant improvements. This will require a focus on tasks and will identify changes in working practice to improve conditions, service design and take up.

We will need to give the lead professional freedom to act within certain boundaries and make operational decisions that will deal with immediate issues in a neighbourhood.

4. Long term strategies

Our strategy will need to be realistic and aim for incremental improvements - firstly not worsen, secondly to stabilise and then finally to improve.

We need to ensure that we don't do anything or make any decisions that worsen the situation in deprived neighbourhoods, or allow external factors to disproportionately affect disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

- We need to examine the effects of national social policy and welfare reform to understand their likely impact on geographic and interest communities.
- We need to examine existing policies and strategies to evaluate whether they currently disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities and look for ways of mitigating the effects of disadvantage.
- We need to identify changes in policies and strategies, revenue budgets, capital investment plans, standards and procedures to reflect the specific needs of each area over the longer term.
- We need to carry out impact assessments for any new developments, policies, etc.

In short, we need to ensure that borough wide programmes are relevant to disadvantaged communities.

5. Measure change in practical ways

We do not want to create an industry of measurement but will need to be clear that improvements in the Index of Multiple Deprivation are being achieved and local factors that result in Multiple Deprivation are being addressed.

Even if we start work immediately it will be 2016 before the IMD data will show what we had achieved, so we need to put in place our own agreed measures of how lives are improved.

The work in disadvantaged areas should link directly with the work of the Health and Well Being Board, complement the actions agreed as part of our Health and Well Being Strategy and other important strategic initiatives such as our local response to tackling troubled families and our partnership initiative to try to mitigate the effects of welfare reform on households in Rotherham.

It is important therefore that we recognise that we are already measuring some outcomes (we have started to build up data on troubled families, people on benefits, children in poverty, drug and alcohol misuse, A&E admissions, domestic violence, etc) so that we develop an approach that does not add to a collection burden nor result in public services chasing statistical output measures. We can do far more with the data that we already collect (neighbourhood mapping, etc) and can complement this information with customer insight and other qualitative methods.

We must try not to be led by statistical data, which can sometimes be misleading – but by changing lives by directly working with people individually and collectively. This goes back to face-to-face contact to get underneath the skin of the issues, employing tried and tested customer insight techniques.

Conclusions

In overall terms it is clear that we need a long term approach that will survive changes in government and be based on local action, working within the policy framework of the time. Our work will concentrate on what we can influence, what happens at a local level. We need to exploit national programmes and initiatives not be led by them.

The approach set out in this report will endeavour to change the character of the eleven areas, improve the opportunities available to people and improve the quality of life for individuals. We will need to have a clear understanding of the 11 areas and put in place an action plan that will firstly stabilise and then set out a clear strategy for improvement.

Engagement with local communities and organisations is critical to the success of this approach. Local communities will only become engaged when they see things happening. Our collective commitment across all organisations will need to be positive, have real purpose from the beginning and to act together immediately

8. Finance

Some significant improvements may be possible without additional resources. The approach set out in the report however will inevitably highlight issues around resource levels, resource allocation and the deployment of resources.

We need to identify changes in policies and strategies, revenue budgets, capital investment plans, standards and procedures to reflect the specific needs of each area over the longer term.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The report sets out an approach to dealing with some of the most difficult issues we face in the borough. It is recognised that this work constitutes a long term project and a challenge will be to maintain a level of commitment that survives changes in a national government and local organisations.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Due to the nature of this work it will have implications across a wide range of policy and performance areas.

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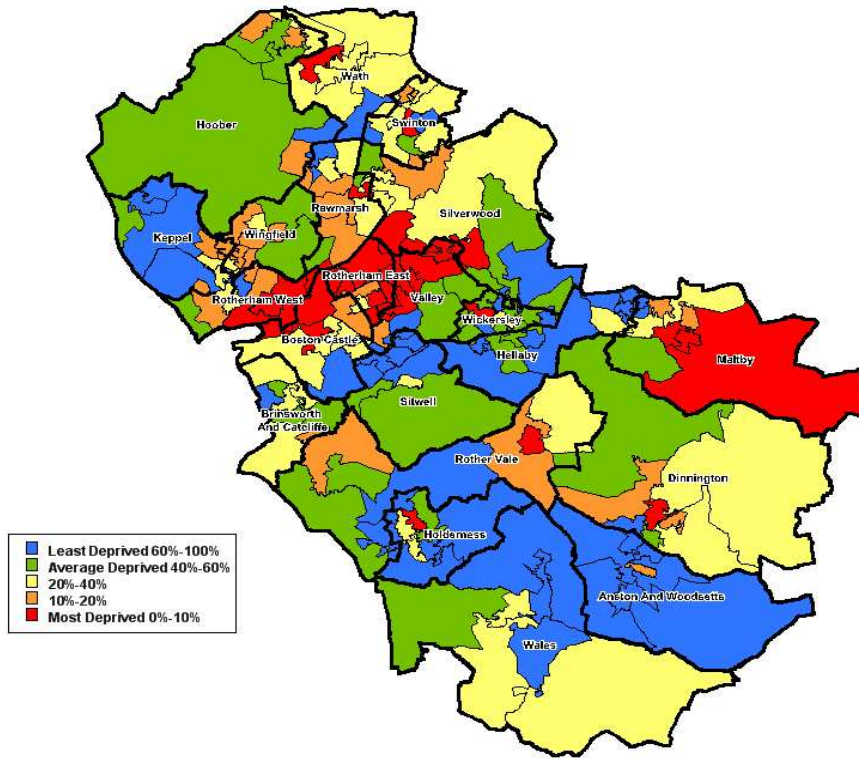
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Appendix A

Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010 Rotherham Borough
Ward boundaries shown



Appendix B Governance

- a) Ward Members exercising their community leadership role, supported by a Cabinet Member and a Strategic Director will be pivotal to success.
- b) Ward Members use and reshape local community networks to engage and involve local people and develop local actions. The action plans need to be locally led, supported by Cabinet who can make sure that any obstacles are removed.
- c) Ward Members supported by a lead professional who will access local professional networks and organisations through normal channels to communicate priorities, stimulate local action and reshape local provision.
- d) Ward Members meet regularly with Strategic Director and Cabinet Member, along with major stakeholders, to review their action plan and deal with any blockages that are holding up progress.
- e) Any proposals to change policy and strategy, resource allocation and service standards should gain the commitment of partner agencies to the changes through the LSP and be presented to Cabinet by the lead Cabinet member for the area.
- f) Cabinet receives overview reports comparing progress against baseline data.
- g) Scrutiny considers and reviews the effectiveness of new arrangements.