

**CABINET MEMBER FOR COHESION
19th June, 2012**

Present:- Councillor Hussain (in the Chair) and Councillors Beck and Burton.

E1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest to record.

E2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16TH APRIL, 2012.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet Member held on 16th April, 2012, were considered.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet Member be agreed as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

E3. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES/MEMBERSHIP OF PANELS/SUB GROUPS ETC - 2012/13.

Resolved: - That the following appointments to outside bodies and memberships of Panels and Sub-Groups for the 2012/13 Municipal Year be confirmed: -

LGYH - LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMISSION ON ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member for Cohesion.

MOSQUE LIAISON GROUP

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member for Cohesion.

ROTHERHAM CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU - Trustee Board

Councillor Beck, Senior Adviser, Cohesion.

ROTHERHAM DIVERSITY FESTIVAL STEERING GROUP

Waheed Akhtar, Community Engagement Officer.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION - ROTHERHAM ADVISORY GROUP

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member for Cohesion plus the serving Mayor (2012), Councillor Pickering.

WOMEN'S STRATEGY GROUP

Councillor Burton, Adviser, Cohesion.

CORPORATE EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY STEERING GROUP

Cabinet Member for Cohesion: - Councillor Hussain.

RMBC/VAR LIAISON GROUP

Cabinet Member for Cohesion: - Councillor Hussain;

Councillor Burton, Adviser for Cohesion;

Councillor Currie, Chair, Self-Regulation Select Commission.

E4. LOCALISM ACT UPDATE.

Consideration was given to the report submitted by the Community Engagement Officer, Commissioning, Policy and Performance, Resources Directorate, which provided an update following the commencement of the Localism Act. The implications arising from the specific provisions and the process for implementing the Act and communicating with stakeholders were also covered.

Each of the provisions of the Act were considered in detail and the actions taken within the Council to prepare for implementation were noted. The issues included: -

- **Planning: -**
 - Update on Localism and Neighbourhood Planning was presented to the Planning Board on 15th March, 2012.
 - A Neighbourhood Planning event had been planned for 6th July, to be facilitated by Planning Aid.
 - Financing issues around the examination of Neighbourhood Plans produced by neighbourhood groups, and potential referenda.
 - Potential conflict between the Local Development Framework and individual neighbourhood plans.

- **Asset Management: -**
 - Specific regulations had not yet been released, and further information would be provided when it became available.
 - A seminar took place on 17th April, 2012, to advise Members on the Register of Assets of Community Value, timescales, costs, compensation and publicity and awareness raising issues.

- **Community Right to Buy: -**
 - A Member Briefing took place on the issue of the Community Right to Buy and the Register of Community Assets, including definitions and criteria for inclusion.

- **Council Tax: -**
 - Rotherham's Council Tax was currently frozen, so there should be no immediate need for a referendum.
 - The Government would publish a percentage Council Tax increase each year, and any additional rise the Council sought to implement would trigger a referendum.

- **Community Right to Challenge: -**
 - There was a planned commencement date of 27th June for the Community Right to Challenge where people/groups would be able to express an interest in taking over the running of a Council Service;
 - RMBC were part of a Regional Procurement Group that had been collaborating to develop a pro-forma to address this provision when it came into place.

- **Housing: -**
 - A Member development session was held on 4th April, 2012, that covered tenure reform; homelessness obligation; housing register; welfare reform; Right to Buy; tenant's cash back schemes; social housing fraud and the RMBC Housing strategy.
- **VCS: -**
 - A presentation had been delivered that addressed RMBC's perspective to members of the Voluntary and Community Sector in February, 2012;
 - Further presentations included Neighbourhood Planning and information about a pilot scheme that had taken place in a rural area. Difficulties encountered were considered, including funding and knowledge issues, and issues relating to access to opportunity in deprived areas compared to more affluent areas.
 - Four VCS presentations on Neighbourhood Planning issues had been delivered by Planning Aid to TARA's and Parishes.
- **Governance: -**
 - Two Member Briefing Sessions had been held on issues relating to Governance;
 - The issues included changes to Standards Boards; role of members in leading or representing communities; pay policy between the highest and lowest paid employees and the role of scrutiny.

Issues in relation to financial implications of the Act were considered. These included: -

- The Council's requirement to have a regard to the interests of Council Tax payers, in response to the perception that Councils would be able to offer business rate discounts.
- Neighbourhood Planning issues and the costs of inspection and referendum.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be accepted and its content noted.

(2) That a separate workshop be organised in late July, 2012, for the Cabinet Member in relation to the impacts on the voluntary and community sector, and the Community Right to Buy and Right to Challenge provisions of the Act.

E5. SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME EDITION 2.

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Community Engagement Officer, Commissioning, Policy and Performance, Resources Directorate, which outlined updates to the Council's Single Equality Scheme. The document had been refreshed following legislative and organisational changes; statistical information and good practice information had also been updated.

The amended document was submitted at appendix one.

The revised document had incorporated information covering: -

- The five overarching equality priorities;
- Links to the Corporate Plan and work to improve the social and economic well-being of the Borough through the One Town One Community initiatives;
- Organisational changes within the Council and its governance structures;
- The eight equality strands of the Scheme were aligned with the 'relevant protected characteristics' of the Equality Act (2010) (age; disability; gender re-assignment; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation). It was noted that the Act specifically covered pregnancy and maternity and that marriage and civil partnerships were covered in certain provisions.

It was noted that efforts would be directed towards mainstreaming equality more effectively within Service and Directorate plans. Performance measures and targets within existing plans would need to be aligned to the protected characteristics.

Discussion ensued on the revised Scheme document and the following issues were raised: -

- The document would be further updated following the release of the Census (2011) information and statistics;
- Role of scrutiny in challenging the progress and outcomes of the Single Equality Scheme.

Resolved: - (1) That the refreshed Single Equality Scheme document be approved.

(2) That the document be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

E6. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING.

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Cabinet Member for Cohesion be held on Tuesday 10th July, commencing at 8.45 am in the Rotherham Town Hall.