

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

<b>1. Meeting:</b>	<b>Deputy Leader</b>
<b>2. Date:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> March 2013</b>
<b>3. Title:</b>	<b>Lexcel Inspection of Legal Services</b>
<b>4. Directorate:</b>	<b>Resources</b>

### **5. Summary**

Legal Services were inspected in January under the Lexcel Practice Management Standard of the Law Society. The inspection was positive and a copy of the inspection report is attached.

### **6. Recommendations**

**That the Deputy Leader notes the outcome of the recent Lexcel Inspection of Legal Services.**

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## **7. Proposals and Details**

The Law Society has authorised a practice management standard (Lexcel) to ensure excellent standards of customer care for both the public sector and private legal practices.

The section achieved Lexcel accreditation in 2005 and has maintained the quality badge since that date. Only approximately 25% of local authority legal teams have attained the award.

Lexcel inspections are undertaken on a full basis every three years, with an annual maintenance visit in the intervening years. The recent inspection, in January 2013, was an annual maintenance visit. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix A.

Issues highlighted in the report include:-

The implementation of the new staffing structure will clarify lines of supervision and have a positive effect on morale.

Recommendations from the previous inspection, in July last year, have been considered and acted upon. These have included the enhancement of file review procedures and more regular and meaningful supervision of staff.

Introduction of the latest version of the practice management IT system (Iken) will support new ways of working, e.g. the extension of workflows to new areas.

Some minor non-compliances were identified, all of which were corrected whilst the inspector was on site.

In addition the inspector made recommendations with regard to performance management, which will dovetail with the new structure and enable easier monitoring of and reporting on performance.

The Council is the only Council in South Yorkshire to have achieved Lexcel accreditation. The external verification will assist the Council in participating fully in any future exploration of Shared Services. The secondment of the Senior Business Support Officer to a neighbouring authority also involved in the Shared Legal Services project was considered to be an example of good practice.

## **8. Finance**

The inspection cost was £1,400 paid to Assessment North East and £300 to the Law Society, making a total of £1,700.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

Examination of the risk management procedures during the inspection provides additional assurance regarding the identification and management of risk. Holding the Lexcel standard places the service in a strong position to retain existing clients, attract new clients where appropriate and to develop a shared service for the region.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The provision of prompt, client-focussed legal advice underpins all of the core values and strategic aims of the Council.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

Lexcel Inspection report, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

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