

**ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS**

<b>1. Meeting:</b>	<b>MEMBER DEVELOPMENT &amp; TRAINING PANEL</b>
<b>2. Date:</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April 2013</b>
<b>3. Title:</b>	<b>Report Writing and Plain English – Current Position</b>
<b>4. Directorate:</b>	<b>Resources</b>

**5. Summary**

This report summarises key issues with regard to the standard of report writing within Rotherham Borough Council and the provision of information in support of elected members.

**6. Recommendations**

**That members:**

- a. Consider the impact of previous action taken to raise awareness of the issues with RMBC staff**
- b. Determine whether more detailed evaluation is required.**
- c. Agree if further action is required following this assessment.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

Communicating and engaging with others is a key competency for all managers within Rotherham Borough Council, and report writing is an important element of this. Reports are used within the Council to support the work of officers; externally to communicate the position or view of the authority to partner or other organisations/groups; to inform and assist members in carrying out their duties, and to support the system of governance through Full Council, Cabinet, Delegated Powers, Scrutiny and other elected member meetings.

Reports can be used to summarise lengthy issues; translate complex or technical information into a language and format that is easily understood by the target audience and put forward recommendations to facilitate the decision-making process.

In addition, the style and content of reports (including spelling, grammar and punctuation) can impact positively or negatively on the reputation of the Council.

However, it has been identified on a number of occasions in the past that the standard of report writing – particularly in the context of providing information for elected members – needed to be improved.

In February 2012, the Members' Training and Development Panel agreed that guidance be issued across the Council to highlight the need for improvements to be made – particularly with regard to the use of plain English.

The views of elected members on the impact of this guidance are integral to determining whether further action is required.

## **8. Finance**

There are no costs associated with the further dissemination or implementation of guidance through standard RMBC staff communications channels.

It is the responsibility of individual managers to use the guidance and in turn their line manager to performance manage against the key communications competency within the performance and development review process. It may be necessary in future to identify further mechanisms for improving performance, such as additional training sessions, with potential cost implications.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

The Member Development Strategy aims to train and equip Rotherham MBC Members to take on the duties of the modern local councillor. Failure to put a comprehensive programme in place may limit the opportunity for councillors to develop their abilities and skills, which will in the long term, impact negatively on the effectiveness of the Council as a whole.

**10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

**11. Background Papers and Consultation**

RMBC Plain English Guide

RMBC Guidance for Reports to Members

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