

# The Rotherham Members Handbook 2012

Dear Colleague

Welcome to the Member Handbook for Rotherham. I hope that you will find it useful for finding your way around the Council. The handbook is just part of the support available to you as a councillor. Make sure you find out more about other help you can get (from mentoring to training courses etc)

We are clear that investing in councillors is as important as investing in our officers. The Members' Training and Development Panel, made up of Members from all parts of the Council, is committed to helping all Members to be able to work as effectively as possible on behalf of their communities.

There are many resources available to assist you in your role, please see the contact details and useful links on pages 29 & 30.

The handbook will be updated on a regular basis so please let us know if you have any comments or if there is any other information you think would be useful to add.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Stone', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Roger Stone  
Leader and Chair of the Members' Training and Development Panel

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# Introduction

## Did you know....

1/2 of the Borough is rural, making it a haven for walkers

Population is around 254,600 with a vibrant mix of people, cultures and communities  
- Minority ethnic population is now 7.5 %

Levels of crime have fallen in recent years (domestic burglary)  
- violent crime is less than half the national average

Average unemployment rates  
- 75% in 2004  
- 67% in 2011 (below the English rate of 70%)

Unemployment rate 9.8% in 2010/11 (above the national average of 7.8%)

School buildings are being transformed with the help of £240m plus Private Finance Initiative

2011 was a record year for GCSE and A-level performance

Rotherham has transformed itself over the last two decades to play a major role in the forefront of regeneration in South Yorkshire. The borough has a proud industrial heritage which has made the transition to a more modern economy.

Rotherham is a thriving Borough, and a great deal of work is being carried out through the Town Centre Initiative and Rotherham Renaissance, which aims to transform the town centre and waterfront areas over the next 15 years. There are attractive pedestrianised areas and a redeveloped Centenary Market.

There are numerous historical attractions, including the spectacular ruins of the Cistercian Monastery at Roche Abbey, the world famous Rockingham Pottery Collection and the award winning Clifton Park Museum which has recently been refurbished. The science and adventure park at Magna, set in a former steelworks has won numerous awards and accolades for innovation and attracts thousands of visitors. The Borough also has a Civic Theatre, Arts Centre & Gallery and Youth and Dance Theatres.

It has excellent transport links to the rest of the country, served by M1 & M18 motorways and extensive rail and bus services. There are five airports nearby, including Robin Hood airport which is less than 20 miles away at Finningley.

The quality of life in Rotherham is good and the cost of living is significantly less than the UK average. House prices have risen rapidly in recent years but remain more affordable than the national average.

Health in Rotherham has traditionally been poorer than average and life expectancy is below that in England as a whole, although rising. Rates of coronary heart disease have reduced significantly over the last 10 years.

Rotherham has 5 leisure centres. The centres offer a variety of sports facilities which include swimming pools, gyms, workout classes, squash courts and sports halls.

The new Civic Building "Riverside House" is now open on the old Guest and Chrimes site, opposite the Police Station. The majority of Council Services are provided from here e.g. Council Tax, Registrars, Library Services.

On the same site as the Civic Building will be the Rotherham United's new home – The New York Stadium which is planned to open later in 2012

# Getting Started

## Your role as a Councillor

So you've been elected. That might turn out to have been the easy part. You have taken on a role that does not have a job description and you'll sometimes feel as though you have to make up the rules as you go along. Done well, it could be the most rewarding thing you'll ever do. You'll be involved with individuals and groups with a range of problems and priorities. Different people will have different perceptions about you; some will think being a councillor is a full-time job for which you are handsomely paid; others will hold you responsible for things that happened (or didn't happen!) before you were elected.

## Representing the people

That means speaking up for individuals and groups in your area, whether they voted for you or not. And you won't always agree with them because you have to consider the wider needs of the community as well as individual concerns. Talk to fellow members about how they keep in touch with their constituents. Regular surgeries (where people come to see you with their problems and requests) are the most common method, but there are others.

## Political accountability

As a member you'll share in collective political decisions. Electors will keep an eye on whether you are keeping your manifesto promises. You will need to be prepared to answer for your actions as well as those of any group of which you are a member. If you are an opposition member, the role of checking and questioning the decisions of the controlling group will fall to you. You also have an important role in putting forward political alternatives to the Council's policies.

## Community leadership

An important part of the job is working with groups and organisations to build up a bigger picture of what actions would best serve your community. For example, you will need to build links with the police, the health service, Jobcentre Plus, Parish Councils and local groups. Good relations with these bodies will also make it easier for you to speak to them on behalf of your constituents.

## Representing the Council

You may be called on to represent the Council on organisations such as charities, trusts or voluntary groups. Here you will have to make sure you can put forward the views of the Council and, importantly, report back to the Council on what has happened.

## Officer Support

All officers of the Council are here to help you but knowing where to start can be daunting. Initially ask staff in Scrutiny, Democratic Services or Secretariat as they are likely to be the people you will see on a regular basis.

### Tips...

Do what you say you will do

Give copies of letters you write on behalf of the people and the replies

Seek advice from experienced members as soon as possible

Find out what training is available through online resources, secretariat or member support

# Getting Started

## Looking After Yourself

If you are not careful being a councillor can take over your life! There's always a meeting to go to, an agenda to read, casework to deal with and a Ward matter to attend to. You owe it to yourself and your family, friends and employer to keep it all in perspective and to make time for a life outside the Town Hall.

## Organise your life

Get into a routine so that you make time to do your council work for example by setting aside one evening a week or part of each weekend for casework. A filing cabinet will help you keep your papers in order. Some people find an answer phone (on a council business only phone line) helpful to pick up calls when they are out at meetings. Use your council diary and the Calendar section of Outlook on your Laptop to keep up to date.

## Do your homework

Effective Councillors are those who know what they are talking about. No matter what the issue is, or how big/small it is, if you know the facts inside out you will do a much better job than if you just 'lash out'. Your colleagues on the Council will respect your efforts and importantly they are more likely to take you seriously if you know what you are talking about. If you don't know the answer, admit to it, but always promise to find out and report back.

## Always respond to invitations and letters

If you are not able to attend let people know by sending your apologies. You should always respond to letters even if the reply is not what the correspondent wants to hear. The reply need not be long but it should be prompt, polite and accurate.

## Know where you're going

Real progress is the sum of a number of actions you've taken to achieve a specific goal. This won't happen overnight. So you've got to know where you're going before you set out. You need vision and you need to set out your objectives. What does get results is then pursuing that goal by taking action.

## Carry people with you

If you try to do everything alone, you'll end up that way. Don't allow yourself to become isolated. Work with others to achieve things. Getting other people to support your ideas means understanding what they want, what motivates them and giving them credit. But when people don't go along with you, remember that there are future alliances to build - so don't sulk publicly.

## More unity and less division

Some issues that affect the local community can unite politicians of all parties. Some projects are more likely to be successful if they have the support of all politicians, so try to find and exploit your common ground.

Tips..

Learn to say no..

Is it urgent or important? Know the difference

Don't accept every invitation to a meeting...

Prioritise the most important meetings

Ask a colleague to attend in your place

Don't try to read every report

Make time for friends and family

Set aside a "non council work" day

Don't neglect yourself - eat well

# Personal Effectiveness

## Listening

Listening is one of the least valued of all skills and yet it's the most important. Listen not only to what people say but also watch how they say it. Listen to experts and people who have been around for a while. Keep a note of all the interesting things that you're told (even if it's just a mental note). Practise listening even when you're not interested and try to recount what you've been told.

## Networking

Building productive relationships with others is a critical skill. Remember everyone has their own priorities and they will want to use their time productively. If you present yourself as someone who can help them, they'll be more than happy to work with you. Network strategically. Think in advance of the kinds of people, skills and contacts you'll need and set out to find them. It probably sounds a bit ruthless but in a mutually productive relationship others will be thinking the same way.

## Practice rapport-building skills

Getting on with people is vital in any sphere of life. You may begin by believing that just because you are a councillor you will automatically earn respect. Think again. Respect has to be earned as much in the Town Hall as it does in the rest of the world. So practise building a rapport – understanding others' points of view, knowing their concerns, listening to their views and desires, speaking in their language, being respectful and honest.

## Hone your influencing and negotiating skills

There are many ways to make things happen and when you want to get things done you'll need to bring all sorts of skills into operation. When you want to change hearts and minds, plan your approach. Get feedback on your negotiations. It's important to know as much about failure as it is about success.

## Don't be afraid of asking questions

Some people won't ask questions on things they don't understand. Part of the privilege of being a councillor is being able to ask obvious or "daft" questions. You are asking them on behalf of people who don't get into the corridors of power. If you start off by challenging jargon when you hear it, you should avoid the trap of using it when you have learned more about the subject.

## Tips...

Get to know your own strengths and weaknesses

If you don't address your weaknesses you won't grow into the challenging role that you're about to undertake. You can always build on your strengths.

Organise a filing system  
- Keep a reference system i.e name of meeting; nature of business, key words; useful links

Don't underestimate the willingness of others to help you put your hands on the right stuff at the right time.

- Officers are there to support you.

# Support for you

## Allowances and Expenses

### Basic Allowance

Members are entitled to an annual allowance of £12,130 which includes some travel and subsistence allowance within the Borough. They are entitled to claim legitimate expenses for going about their council business outside the Borough only. All claims should be completed on the forms available from Secretariat and handed back to this office by the last day of the month for payment on the 18th of the following month. All relevant details should be provided for clarity and claims including receipts must be made within 3 months of the expenditure.

### Special Responsibility Allowances:

Full details are available from the Council's Constitution, Appendix 8

## Community Leadership Fund

The Community Leadership Fund was established in 2003 to enable members of the council to address local priorities, support grassroots groups and quickly instigate changes in response to local opinion.

Each councillor has £1000 per year to spend, at their discretion, on issues both within their local Ward or on borough wide initiatives that benefit local people.

The scheme is extremely popular and hundreds of projects are supported each year that contribute to the achievement of the Councils' key priorities.

For further information on the scheme, application forms and advice on project proposals please contact Paul Griffiths on 01709 823159.

## Secretariat

(the list is not exhaustive – please contact Sue/Hayley for further details):-

- Word-processing and correspondence, including forms, tables, graphs and reports and sending e-mails on your behalf. Processing of Councillor Surgeries onto the surgery system (e-casework). You can use these services face to face, dictate by phone, and send details by fax or email.
- Providing assistance in professional presentation of your documents
- Issuing a monthly information sheet, giving details of councillors' surgery locations and times and processing invoices for hire premises.
- All Member conference arrangements including booking of places, hotel reservations, train tickets and arrangements for other transport.
- Booking onto any sessions from the Member Development Programme
- Office Equipment/IT – IT Equipment, mobile phones, printer cartridges, business cards and compliments slips
- Updating Member Websites with new or additional information.

# Member Development

Members come into office with a wide range of experience, knowledge and skills. As part of your induction, you will be offered a personal development interview which will allow you to discuss your training needs and find out about what training and development is available.

Member Development is co-ordinated by the Member Training and Development Panel, Chaired by The Leader, along with a committee of councillors, new and old who have an interest in making sure that a range of training events are available to meet your development requirements. These include traditional courses, workshops, further reading and e-learning. A full programme of development sessions is produced. This is sent to all councillors and also to all Town and Parish Councils. Other support available includes the opportunity to have a Member or Officer mentor to help you find your feet in the first few months. Previous programmes have included Speaking off the cuff; Emergency planning; Scrutinising the budget; Equalities and Diversity and Time Management.

People are key to the Council achieving improvement in its services and being representative of their communities. It is essential that we have the **right people**, with the **right skills** in the **right place** at the **right time** to maintain and improve existing and future services. This needs to be addressed across all of the Council, including Members. The Member Development Strategy aims to ensure members are properly supported and have the appropriate knowledge and skills to carry out their roles. The programme is based on local priorities as identified in the Council's corporate plan and Members individual skills needs identified in the personal development planning process. The programme is delivered using a variety of methods including e-learning. This will suit the needs of different learners, as well as make learning more accessible to Members. The programme will cover:-

Ward – (case work, emergency planning, equalities & diversity)

Portfolio – (leadership, understanding service areas, policy agenda)

Overview and Scrutiny Select commissions – (effective questioning, health reforms, scrutiny of performance and budgets)

Regulatory – (updates on planning and licensing)

Partnership (working in your Area assemblies, representation at other Bodies)

E-agenda (regular contact with the public, new forms of media and electronic communications)

Individual needs - (presentation and communication skills, Champion interests of the local community)

## IT Issues

Whilst you will receive papers for any group on which you sit e.g. Scrutiny Committees, everything else will need to be accessed via the internet/intranet. If you have never switched on a computer before, training will be provided - Please "DON'T PANIC"... and for those of you who are more confident training courses will also be provided to become familiar with how Rotherham is set up. Contact Jean Tracey for IT training.

Each Councillor will have a webpage which will be set up by the Council. Maintaining the page will then be up to you (again, support can be gained via secretariat). To help you in your work as a Councillor, we will provide IT support and equipment (if required). You can access the Council's network using your own computer equipment or broadband. HOWEVER if you don't have equipment or broadband, we can provide a laptop, printer and install broadband. You can also use your own mobile phone if you prefer or we can provide one.



# Representing Your Ward

## Introduction

Councillors are the only people at a local level to be elected by the people of Rotherham to represent them. It is this elected role which gives legitimacy to the claim that councillors are community leaders for they have submitted themselves to the test of the ballot box and have been endorsed by the electorate.

Most councillors will have stood for election in the area where they live. Often they will be school governors, members of numerous clubs and societies, churches, mosques, choirs, tenants associations etc within their wards. If they are not members, they will still know of the activities of many other organisations.

Put together a checklist of local contacts and stakeholders e.g. Police, health organisations, schools, voluntary groups, BME communities etc in your ward. The information put together by Area Assemblies is a good starting point. Your Area Partnership Manager is able to help. Find out more about the wider area and what the plans for it are from your Community Involvement Officer. Go out to meet people/groups in your ward and make yourself known as the local councillor. Make these meetings the first of regular meetings with stakeholders in the ward.

Often communities are not in one geographical place but are scattered throughout the borough or over several wards e.g. the Chinese Community in Rotherham. Asking other organisations e.g. REMA to help to build links will allow you to reach all the various communities in your wards. For more information about your ward look at the ward profiles which have been put together by the research and statistics officers of the council. You will find them at: <http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/info/200088/statisticsandcensusinformation/699/researchandstatistics/1>

## Surgeries

Working in the ward as a councillor means taking up individual casework on behalf of the electorate. Most councillors hold regular surgeries in their wards. This is a recognised, almost traditional duty to which members across the political divide attach great importance. It fulfils that part of the Rotherham constitution which states:

“All councillors will deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving particular concerns or grievances.”

You may wish to discuss with your ward colleagues how best to arrange your surgeries. Will you want to hold them in the same place at the same time, will you want to spread them around the ward, will you want to try “roving surgeries”? Keep in mind the need to ensure that you are keeping yourself safe at all times.

# Personal Safety

The relationship between councillors and the communities they serve is at the heart of what being a councillor is all about. The face-to-face contact where constituents can share problems and concerns is vital to making that relationship work. The following advice is based on that issued by the Local Government Association and aims to help councillors carry out their role safely and effectively.

## Introduction

An important role of councillors is to keep in touch with their communities. This includes helping individuals with any problems they might have. Often this extends beyond just the delivery of council services. These contacts are usually rewarding and non-adversarial. Councillors become experienced in calming down and treating with respect and sympathy angry and frustrated residents who often resort to their elected representative when they feel that they are getting nowhere in resolving their problems through other channels.

The purpose of this guide is not to make councillors nervous but to set out what personal safety measures can be taken to prevent and to deal with those rare circumstances when they might find themselves in situations where they become anxious for their safety. In general terms, the guidance follows advice given to others who by virtue of public duties or employment meet many people whom they do not know.

## Ward Surgeries

The arrangements each councillor makes will vary according to local circumstances and it will be a fortunate councillor who can find premises for their surgery which meet every aspect of good practice and are also accessible to their constituents. What follows are suggestions about how to make a surgery safe and effective. Most councillors will go through their entire service on the Council without experiencing any problems but a little time given to preparation and planning can reduce the already small risk further.

- Do not hold surgeries alone in an otherwise empty building. Try to get someone to act as receptionist. This not only makes you safer but makes it much easier to manage a busy surgery. If you are currently doing surgeries alone, discuss how this can be changed with fellow councillors or council officers.
- If you cannot avoid doing surgeries on your own, make sure you remember a few simple guidelines. The layout of the room should suit you ie you should sit nearest to the door with the constituents seated on the other side of the table. Seating is best set out at an angle of 45 degrees (seating directly opposite can be confrontational).
- If there is no separate waiting room, try to ensure that the waiting constituents are as far as possible away from those whom you are talking to.
- Make sure there are no heavy items in the room that could be used as weapons.

If you are at the stage of looking for suitable premises in which to hold a surgery, try to get a space with as many as possible of the following features:

- Council premises (eg libraries) during opening hours or other premises where there are many other people about.
- Premises where the names of any visitors for councillors are recorded.
- Premises where there is a comfortable waiting area Try to ensure the surgery (interviewing) room:

# Personal Safety

## **Check if the room:-**

- is in view of the reception or public area;
- is connected to the reception by an alarm and there is a procedure for dealing with a call for assistance;
- has a vision panel in the door;
- is decorated in calming (pastel) colours;
- has a swift means of escape and any visitors are not able to lock the door from the inside.

## **Dealing with emotional constituents**

It is inevitable that some of the people you will meet will be angry or upset. You need to be prepared to handle all types of emotion. For example, it is worth having some tissues on hand. Councillors have to develop the quiet skill of being concerned about constituents' problems without being so involved that they become too emotional to be of help. Calmness in the face of whatever comes up will help you and your constituents. You may find that racist or other offensive remarks are made. If they are directed at you - do not respond - this will only make the situation worse. Instead, bring the interview to an end as quickly as possible. If they are more general remarks, you should state that this is not acceptable and that you cannot continue the interview. Often this will elicit an apology. Otherwise ask the person to leave. However, you must use your own judgement and if you are alone and in a vulnerable situation, do not put yourself at risk no matter how angry the remarks make you.

## **Home visits**

Councillors do sometimes visit residents in their homes especially those who are elderly or disabled or where they simply want to see for themselves the conditions that are the subject of complaints. It is for each councillor to decide whether a particular visit should be made, especially if the person to be visited is unknown to the councillor. Most councillors trust their own instincts as to whether to meet someone alone. Sometimes the councillor might prefer to be accompanied by a ward colleague or obtain an initial report from council officers or invite the person to a more public place. It is always advisable for you to keep a record of your whereabouts. If necessary, you can let the person whom you are visiting know there is such a record or that you are expected at another place by a certain time etc. or make a call on your mobile phone during the visit.

## **Personal callers**

Most councillors seek to maintain a balance between their personal and public lives and do not want to encourage any callers at their private homes. Good publicity by the authority as to how to contact councillors and details of ward surgeries reduces the chances of unwanted callers.

# Personal Safety

## **Malicious and nuisance telephone calls**

Councillors occasionally get the odd nuisance or abusive call. Although such calls are likely to be rare, you might become the target of a persistent, anonymous caller with a grudge against the Council. These calls need to be dealt with in accordance with police advice:

- keep the caller talking;
- note any clues the caller may provide as to sex, age, accent etc;
- listen for any clues as to the caller's motive and intention;
- write down the details immediately to assist police at a later stage;
- listen for background noise that may provide valuable information (eg railway sounds, industrial noises, machinery, music, animals);
- inform the police;
- inform the Council.

## **Mail**

As with telephone calls, councillors on rare occasions can become the target of malicious anonymous letters. Any such letters should be given immediately to the police.

## **Car safety and parking**

You need to take the same precautions as most car owners do:

- consider whether an area will be dark and isolated when you return to your car;
- park, where possible, under street lighting;
- lock the car doors as soon as you get into the car;
- take boxes/bags to the car when other people are around.

## **Reporting incidents**

Any incidents of concern, even if fairly minor or 'near-misses', should be reported to the Chief Executive. This enables the authority to undertake proper monitoring and decide if any action is needed to prevent a recurrence. You may also consider it advisable to warn ward colleagues.

## **Training**

Local authorities have responsibilities for the safety of councillors while on council business as they do for their officers. Training is available, please ask the Member Development Officer

## **What to do after your surgery....**

In Rotherham we have a system called e-casework, an easy to use email system developed by Councillors for Councillors, which allows you to put your surgery casework through to the relevant officer and then monitor the progress being made. An important feature is that the case is not closed until you as the member believe that it has been resolved.

More information is available through secretariat

# Ethics & Standards

## The Code of Conduct

On accepting office, councillors are required to sign the Code of Conduct, a set of provisions that guides councillors towards the standards of behaviour expected of them. They are also required to complete a Register of Interests Form and to ensure that this is kept up to date.

This includes details of any organisations to which you belong, land or property owned by you etc. If your circumstances change e.g. you move house, this should be recorded in the Register of interests. More advice on this can be obtained from the Monitoring Officer – Jacqueline Collins on 01709 823500

All councillors and co-opted members are covered by the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct covers areas of individual behaviour such as councillors not abusing their position or not misusing their authority's resources. There are also rules governing registration and disclosure of interests. Whenever they are conducting council business or representing the council, councillors are bound by the code. Two provisions of the Code of Conduct apply regardless of whether or not councillors are conducting council business. They may breach the code if at any time they act in a way that brings their authority or office into disrepute, or use their office to improperly secure for themselves, or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage.

Under the Code of Conduct councillors have a positive obligation to:

- promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person
- treat others with respect
- not seek to improperly influence decisions to the advantage or disadvantage of themselves and anyone else
- listen to advice from their monitoring officer or chief finance officer in relation to the legality of decisions
- only use the resources of the authority in accordance with its requirements
- make sure they don't misuse the authority's resources for political purposes,
- unless it is part of the functions of either the authority or their elected office.

Councillors have an obligation not to:

- compromise the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the authority
- disclose confidential information without valid consent
- prevent anyone getting information they are entitled to
- bring their office or authority into disrepute at any time use their position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of themselves or anyone else.

# Ethics & Standards

## Member Officer Protocol

There is a formal Member-Officer protocol which lays out the ways in which Members and officers will work together. (This is an Appendix to the Council Constitution) Both Members & Officers are bound by their respective Codes of Conduct which seek to promote the highest ethical standards. This protocol supports those codes and is intended to promote mutual respect between members and officers with regard to their respective roles (as set out in the Protocol) and in the Council's Constitution.

In order to ensure the business of the Council is transacted in an effective and efficient manner and with a view to ensuring that the Council is not brought into disrepute, the key guiding principles for members and officers have to be openness, honesty, fairness, transparency and treating everyone with respect.

## Working with officers

Politicians focus on outcomes - what will happen. Officers broadly make those things happen. It's a partnership. Both parties are important.

## Understand their pressures

Resources are tight and often there is little or no capacity but Officers can reorganise priorities and will support you.

## Help officers see life from your point of view

Politics can be frustrating. Managing the competing pressures on your actions, given the various groups you represent can be very hard. Not all officers know what its like and few will know what you face at that moment. Share and help them to appreciate your perspective.

## Declarations of interest

The Constitution lays out guidance on when you should declare an interest at a meeting. Interests are determined as being Personal or Prejudicial. As a rule of thumb:

- A personal interest in a matter is one that can be reasonably regarded as affecting the individual, family or friend more than other people in the area. If a councillor has a personal interest they can stay, take part and vote at the meeting. The code of conduct was designed to encourage participation in an open manner, not restrict participation.
- Under the code of conduct, the test for determining whether a councillor has a prejudicial interest is if someone who knew all the relevant facts would view a councillor's personal interest in an issue to be so great that it was likely to prejudice the councillor's judgement of the public interest. If a councillor has a prejudicial interest they must leave the meeting. The councillor must leave the room entirely and not seek to influence any decision-making.

## Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality Received

A member must within 28 days of receiving any gift or hospitality over the value of £25, provide written notification to the authority's monitoring officer of the existence and nature of that gift or hospitality. A member must similarly provide written notification of gifts and hospitality received on more than one occasion during a twelve month period from the same person or body, even though each gift or hospitality is of a lesser value than £25, unless the gifts are of nominal value for publicity purposes. Help and advice is available from the Monitoring Officer.

## Political Groups

In order to become a member of a political group of the Council a Councillor has to formally declare his/her intention to do so by completing the appropriate form which also has to be countersigned by the Leader of that particular Political Group and submitted to the Chief Executive.

# The Full Council

All Members of Rotherham MBC are required to attend meetings of the full Council, together with a wide variety of other meetings (Scrutiny Select Commissions, Area Assemblies, Regulatory Boards, working parties etc). Many of the meetings take place at the Town Hall, Rotherham, although some will be held at different locations throughout the whole Borough area.

## **Meetings of the Full Council**

The whole Council meets every six weeks, with the meeting chaired by His/Her Worship, the Mayor. Members are able to ask questions and consider the minutes of the various meetings which have taken place during the preceding six weeks' period. Very often, recommendations are made by other meetings (eg: about creating new Council policies, or revising existing policies), which have to be considered and resolved at the full Council meeting.

The full Council is the sovereign body of the local authority, with a principal role of policy making. The Council has sole authority to set the annual budget and the amount of Council Tax to be levied on residents.

The Council meeting is a formal occasion. It is traditional and expected that members will stand when the Mayor enters - a sign of respect for the office of first citizen of the authority. The Mayor is the Sovereign's representative in the borough. At times the proceedings can take the form of a ritual, particularly during the election of a new Mayor, while on other occasions it will be more like a party debate. However, at all times the proceedings are strictly governed by the Council's Constitution and the legal structures of the Local Government Acts. The format may appear to be complicated and involved but it will raise few problems for the newly elected member who wants to make a straightforward point or to ask a relevant question.

Courtesy and respect for fellow members and council officers are key requirements of behaviour both in Council and Committee - dispute and argument there may be, but personal animosity and party dogma should not take priority over the normal everyday business of the Council. The purpose of Standing Orders is to provide a structure and a set of rules which govern the conduct of meetings. Members of Council are all provided with copies of the standing orders relating to meetings. Make sure you read and understand them.

## **Voting at Meetings**

The accepted method of voting at all meetings is by a show of hands. Standing orders enable a full recorded vote to be taken, provided that the majority of members are in agreement. Also, Councillors may have their own individual vote recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

## **Access to Meetings**

The vast majority of meetings of Councillors are open to the public and the press. Councillors, therefore, may also attend meetings to which they have not been appointed and have the same rights of access to information as an ordinary member of the public and the press.

Councillors may also have access to private documents from meetings of which they are not members. In such cases, they are required to establish a "need to know" that information (ie: the information is essential for them to perform their duties as a Councillor).

Whenever a meeting is to consider an item in private, the law requires reasons to be given as to why the public and press are being excluded from the meeting. In Rotherham any report which is to be considered in closed session will be printed on yellow paper to denote that it is confidential. Disclosure of this information would be deemed to be a breach of the Code of Conduct.

# The Full Council

## **Agendas for Meetings**

Agendas for all meetings of the Council are distributed by Democratic Services, who issues Councillors with a formal summons to attend a meeting. Legislation requires five working days' notice to be given for meetings. The agenda lists the items to be considered at a meeting, with most items usually supported by a written report prepared by a Council officer. These agenda items form the basis for Members' debate and decision-making at meetings. It is commonplace for Council officers to attend meetings to present the reports and provide advice about the subjects under discussion by Members. It is not permissible for "any other business" to be raised at meetings. However, the Chair of a meeting is empowered to allow consideration of items which are deemed to be urgent. These should be raised before the meeting.

## **Minutes of Meetings**

Records, in the form of printed minutes, are maintained for all of the different types of meetings which Councillors attend. The minutes of meetings are produced by Democratic Services' staff and are made available as a public record of the Council's proceedings. Minutes of one meeting are submitted to the next meeting for confirmation as a correct record, but it is not possible for the nature of a decision and minute to be changed. During the week before each full Council meeting, Members receive a delivery of the books containing the minutes of meetings. The agendas, reports and minutes of meetings are also available via the Council's internet web site.

## **The Forward Plan**

Local Government law requires the Council to give advance notice of some of the decisions which are to be taken by the Executive Members. Notice is given by including these matters in the Council's Forward Plan, a document which is updated each month. Some of these decisions are defined as key decisions, i.e. matters usually involving substantial expenditure or affecting a large part of the Council's area.

## **The Council's Constitution**

Extensive details of the Council's decision making responsibilities, methods and scheme of delegated decisions are contained in the Constitution. As this does change from time to time and is a fairly vast document with many appendices it has not been attached here but is available to view (and download) see link on page 29

### **Why is Attendance at Meetings Essential?**

Although it is not essential for all Councillors to attend each and every meeting, a member may be disqualified from office if s/he fails to attend a meeting throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of her/his last attendance (Local Government Act 1972, Section 85). This ruling applies to meetings of the full Council and to any other Board or Panel of Councillors, etc. to which a Member has properly been appointed.



# The Full Council

**The Mayor** is elected by the Council annually and performs a ceremonial role as the representative of the Council and its citizens as well as being responsible for:

- upholding and promoting the purposes of the Constitution, and interpreting the Constitution when necessary;
- presiding over meetings of the full Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community;
- ensuring that the full Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to local communities and the place at which members who are not on the executive are able to hold the executive and committee chairmen to account;
- resolving any dispute on the interpretation of the Council's standing orders and any Council proceedings;
- promoting public involvement in the Council's activities; and
- attending such civic and ceremonial functions that the Council and he or she consider appropriate.

The Mayor is recognised as being, in his or her own Borough, the official representative of the Crown, and therefore takes precedence over everyone except members of the Royal Family and the Lord Lieutenant. If you would like the Mayor to attend an event in your ward or arrange a group to visit the Town Hall, please remember that he/she is very busy and gets booked up fairly quickly so do try to give as much notice as possible to avoid disappointment.

## **The Leader**

While the Mayor is the Civic head of the Council, the leader is the political head of the council. The Leader of the Council is appointed at the Annual Meeting of Council. He/she will usually be the Leader of the Majority Group.

The Council Leader is a member of the Cabinet and chairs its meetings. The Leader plays a key role in developing policies, making spending plans and establishing priorities for Council action. In considering such matters, the leader will work closely with other councillors and senior staff. The Leader is supported by the Deputy Leader.

## **The Cabinet and Cabinet-Member Meetings**

Ten Members of the Council are appointed as Executive Members and collectively meet every two weeks as the Cabinet under the chairmanship of the Leader of the Council. It is a principal role of the Cabinet to establish Council policy on a wide range of issues and in some cases make recommendations to full Council. Separately, individual Cabinet Members meet with their advisers to consider matters affecting their own portfolios of responsibility. At present these are the areas of responsibility. The Cabinet Members are agreed at the Annual Council meeting. (appendix 9 of the Council Constitution gives further details)

Town Centres, Economic Growth and Prosperity  
Community Development, Equality and Young People's Issues  
Safeguarding Children and Adults  
Adult Social Care  
Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods  
Waste and Emergency Planning  
Lifelong Learning and Culture  
Health and Wellbeing

# The Full Council

## **The Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee comprises five non-executive Members. The Chair is neither a Member of the Cabinet nor of a Scrutiny Panel to ensure impartiality.

The main purpose of the Audit Committee is to give independent assurance to elected members and the public about the governance, financial reporting and performance of the council. It also scrutinises the council's financial management and reporting arrangements and provides an independent challenge to what the council has in place. The Audit Committee oversees a number of control strategies such as risk management, the authority's governance and assurance statements, and anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements. It helps raise the profile of these issues within the council, as well as providing a forum for the discussion of issues raised by internal and external auditors. In this way, it enhances public trust and confidence in the financial governance of a local authority.

The Audit Committee's terms of reference are set out in detail in the Council's Constitution.

## **Planning Board**

The Planning Board is made up of 14 members and meets three weekly, to determine planning applications which cannot be dealt with by officers under delegated powers, this equates to 7-10% of all planning decisions made. The Board tends to focus on the significant housing and employment applications across the borough. The Board will also consider reports from Officers in relation to policy issues, and some service improvements and amendments. Decisions of the Planning Board are NOT subject to call in.

The "Probity in Planning" Code of Conduct lays out how all Members should approach Planning matters. If in doubt at any time, contact the Head of Planning & Transportation

The Planning Advisory Service provides free information to councillors. The site is at <http://www.pas.gov.uk> It is also possible to sign up here for a regular information update service by email.

## **Licensing Board**

The Licensing Board is made up of 21 members and generally meets monthly, unless a special meeting is called, to determine a wide range of applications dealt with by the Licensing Team. The Board will determine applications for licences that are contentious and/or cannot be dealt with by Officers under delegated powers. Most of the business is in relation to hackney carriage/private hire applications, although the Board also determines applications for 'sex shops', some public collections, and other smaller scale permission. The Board will also consider reports from Officers in relation to policy issues, some service improvements and amendments and changes to local conditions, which are approved by the Licensing Board.

# The Full Council

## Licensing Committee

The Licensing Committee determines contentious applications and reviews of licences in respect of the Licensing Act 2003. The Licensing Act deals with issues in relation to the sale or supply of alcohol, regulated entertainment and late night refreshment. When determining applications, the Committee is sub-divided into a Committee of three Members, with one acting as the Chair. The decisions taken by the Sub-Committee are deemed to be taken on behalf of the larger Committee. Members may sit on one or both of the Committees. Members sitting on the Licensing Committee need to be flexible as hearings take place throughout the year, as and when applications and objections are received. On rare occasions short notice is given to deal with serious incidents and breaches of licence conditions. Decisions of the Licensing Board and the Licensing Committee are NOT subject to call-in. For further information, please contact the Licensing Team on (01709) 823153.

Another useful site is <http://www.lacors.gov.uk/> which updates councillors on all local government regulatory matters. It is also possible to sign up here for a regular information update service by email.

## The Standards Committee

This Committee was established by statute to consider issues concerning the conduct of Elected Members. Complaints about the conduct of individual Borough and Parish Councillors are referred to the Standards Committee. The majority of its membership comprises people who are not Borough Councillors. The Chair of this Committee is always an independent member.

It should be noted that changes are being made to the Code of Conduct and the Standards Committee as a result of the Localism Act 2011. The amendments will be approved by Council during the course of 2012. All councillors should note these changes as they are agreed. However, any councillor with a particular enquiry should contact the Monitoring Officer.

## Area Assemblies

All Members of the Council are automatically appointed to one of the seven Area Assemblies, according to the electoral Ward they represent. The Area Assemblies usually meet at a convenient venue within the area on a six weekly basis and consider issues relevant to that geographical area. Meetings of the Area Assemblies are open to the public who help to develop the work of the Assembly through Community plans.

The Chair of each Assembly is an elected Member. They are responsible for the overall direction of the Assembly's work and for ensuring that decisions are implemented. They also chair the Area Assembly co-ordinating Group which comprises the nine Members for the area, three Community Representatives elected through the Assembly and six Partners eg Police, Parish Councils, PCT etc.

Further details of the Council's meetings structure may be obtained from Democratic Services

# Overview and Scrutiny

## Overview and Scrutiny

This section is intended to provide useful information for Members on Rotherham Council's scrutiny function. All non-executive councillors (i.e. not on Cabinet) are expected to be a member of at least one Overview and Scrutiny Select Commission.

Select Commissions are responsible for holding local decision-makers to account, reviewing the council's performance, and suggesting ways to do things better. These Commissions are led by Councillors from all local political parties: their reviews are impartial and evidence-based. Once a review is complete, the Commission produces a report with recommendations to the Cabinet about how to improve local services.

Overview and Scrutiny is not just about the Council, it's about the whole borough. The Commissions have a remit to ask questions of all public services in the borough (like local Health Services and the Police).

## What we don't do

Unless an issue is of wider community significance, Scrutiny does not get involved in individual cases. These need to be addressed by the appropriate Directorate or Service, the relevant ward councillors or with the Cabinet Member responsible for the matter in question. Nor does Scrutiny deal with individual complaints. These can be dealt with through the Council's complaints procedure. There are a limited number of other topics which are not appropriate for scrutiny, such as matters that are subject to legal proceedings, eg adoptions or planning decisions.

### Call-in

Scrutiny has the power to hold the Cabinet or Cabinet Member to account for their decisions through the 'call-in' procedure. OSMB can recommend that a decision is reconsidered by the person (or people) who have made the decision. This may be the Cabinet, an individual Cabinet Member or an officer if it is a key decision as outlined in the Council's Forward Plan

### Where do I find the full procedure?

See Rotherham Borough Council Constitution 'Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules' (Appendix 2, Part V) for Call-in Process in. Copies of this are available from Deborah Fellowes, Statutory Scrutiny Officer, tel 01709 822769 or via email at [deborah.fellowes@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:deborah.fellowes@rotherham.gov.uk).

### Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

CCfA enables any Member to ask OSMB to investigate an issue affecting their ward, particularly issues that remain unresolved despite all efforts to get them fixed. It could be any long-standing issue that previous attempts have failed to address e.g. problems with a bus route or provision of play facilities. It is not just about 'Council;' matters; it may be any issue that affects the Borough or its inhabitants.

**Overview & Scrutiny Management Board (meets Fridays on a fortnightly basis)**

- Call-in
- Councillor Call for Action
- Designated crime and disorder committee
- Consider matters relating to equalities and diversity and the Council’s specific initiatives to promote them
- Co-ordinate and prioritise O&S’ work programme, liaising with other bodies as appropriate
- To assign overview and scrutiny work as it considers appropriate, to the various commissions
- To make recommendations to the Cabinet or to any partner organisation on issues scrutinised relevant to those bodies, and where appropriate, direct to Council

**Select Commissions**

<b>Self-regulation</b> (meets 6 weekly on Thurs)	<b>Health</b> (meets 6 weekly on Weds)	<b>Improving Lives</b> (meets 6 weekly on Weds)	<b>Improving Places</b> (meets 6 weekly on Weds)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scrutinise and raise issues as part of the self regulation process or through external assessments (peer review, inspection etc)</li> <li>• monitor and hold to account the performance of service delivery within RMBC and its partners etc with particular reference to the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy</li> <li>• monitor whether efficiency savings are achieved or exceeded</li> <li>• scrutinise the annual budget setting process and MTFS</li> <li>• co-ordinate the carrying out of value for money reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be the Council’s designated scrutiny body for any issue relating to health and the public health agenda</li> <li>• Partnerships and commissioning arrangements in relation to health and well-being and their governance arrangements</li> <li>• Health improvements and the promotion of wellbeing for adults and children of Rotherham.</li> <li>• Measures to address health inequalities</li> <li>• Food law and environmental health</li> <li>• Issues referred to it by the Local Involvement Network (or successor body)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Every Child Matters agenda</li> <li>• The ‘Think Family’ and early intervention/ prevention agendas</li> <li>• Other cross-cutting services provided specifically for children and young people</li> <li>• Employment and skills development.</li> <li>• Non-health related adult social care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community cohesion and social inclusion and the Council’s specific initiatives to promote them;</li> <li>• Tourism, culture and leisure services and strategies</li> <li>• Borough Wide Housing and Neighbourhood Strategies</li> <li>• Economic development and regeneration strategies;</li> <li>• Environment and sustainable development</li> </ul>

# The Budget

This is a time of unprecedented change for local government. The government is finalising its proposals for local authority retention of business rates and localisation of support for council tax. At the same time, public expenditure has been cut to cope with Britain's deficit. Overall total service expenditure by local authorities in England fell in 2011-12 to just over £99.5bn – a decrease of 5.7% compared to 2010-11. This was the first fall in spending since council tax was introduced in the early 1990s. Spending levels for 2011-12 have reduced to near 2008-09 spending levels.

In Rotherham, such a significant and swift withdrawal of Central Government funding and grant allocations to local councils resulted in the Council facing a £30.3m resources gap in 2011/12 and a further £20.4m gap in 2012/13. This is on top of the extra £10m funding that the Council had to find in 2010/11 as a result of Government resources being withdrawn by the Coalitions Emergency Budget (June 2010).

The Council's total Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy are drawn up by Cabinet and approved by Full Council. Within this overall cash limited Budget, detailed budgets are set for Directorates, which take account of policies and priorities, in accordance with the Council's declared objectives and plans. Proper management of the Budget ensures that resources are used for their intended purposes and are properly accounted for. Budgetary control is a continuous process enabling the Council to review and adjust its Budget during the financial year.

Strategic Directors, Directors and Budget Holders are authorised to incur expenditure in accordance with the estimates comprising their Budgets. It is the responsibility of the Strategic Director to ensure that their budget is not overspent, that there is budgetary provision for all expenditure and that an accountable Budget Holder is identified for each item of expenditure incurred and income generated by their service area.

## **Where we get our money from:**

### **Gross Expenditure Budget:**

Council Tax	14.68%
Collection fund surplus	0.36%
Dedicated Schools Grant	28.82%
Council Tax Freeze Grant	0.37%
Formula Grant	18.13%
Fees charges & other grants	37.64%

### **Council Tax**

Band D Council Tax (for the Council only) is set at £1,230.03. Band A is set at a Tax of £820.02, a Band B Tax of £956.69 and a Band C Tax of £1093.36 per year. 86% of properties in Rotherham are classed as Band A (54%), Band B (19%) or Band C (13%). This excludes Parish and South Yorkshire Police and Fire and Rescue Precepts.

# The Budget

## Set out below is the agreed net Expenditure Budget for 2012/13

Directorate	£'000
Neighbourhoods & Adult Services	77,431
Children & Young People's Service	35,684
Environment & Development Services	55,157.92
Resources	20,024
Central Services (incl ITA and other levies)	24,993.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>213,290</b>

The Budget Book also details the spending plans and sets out details of staff within the Council who are involved in the management of the Council's Budget. It provides information about their roles and responsibilities.

<http://intranet.rotherhamconnect.com/C1/C12/Financial%20Services/Misc%20Finance%20Documents/Budget%20Book%202012-13%20.pdf>

The council's budget process is ongoing throughout the year. The budget is recommended by Cabinet and agreed by Council in early March each year. Soon after this point works begins on options for the Medium Term Financial Strategy and proposals for savings are explored by Scrutiny and open to consultation by the wider public.

CIPFA publishes a brief guide to local government finance for councillors

(<http://intranet.rotherhamconnect.com/C9/C13/Key%20Financial%20Reports%20%20Document/Councillors%20Guide%20to%20Local%20Government%20Finance/A%20Brief%20Guide%20to%20Local%20Government%20Finance%20for%20Councillors%202012.pdf>)

# Performance Management

## Performance Management

Performance management, or PM, rarely sets political pulses racing. But performance management is far from just being a technical activity. It represents the practical steps that are needed to turn the vision councillors have for our local community into a reality.

There are clear parts to be played by councillors performing various roles – executive, scrutiny, community leaders – as well as by officers. In particular, as councillors, we need to set clear political priorities and ask the right questions of officers, in order to make sure that policy decisions are being carried out and that our citizens are being well served. We also need to be prepared to shift resources towards particular priorities if the evidence shows they aren't yet being achieved.

There are several definitions of performance management. For this section, we're using: "performance management is taking action in response to actual performance to make outcomes for users and the public better than they would otherwise be."

Performance management is about both the systems and culture that turn ambition into delivery. In essence:

- what do we want to do?
- how do we intend to do it?
- how well are we doing it?
- what should we do next?

This emphasises that performance management should be embedded in everything an authority does and that it is a continuous process. In extreme cases, we may have to decide, based on the information we can gather from the front line, that our whole approach is unrealistic or badly thought-out. For example, we may need to use resources differently or work with new partners. More routinely, we may find that the way we have planned to do it isn't working and that we need a new plan or that some things that we do are working very well and those successful approaches are shared and adapted.

Performance management is at the heart of good management. Our performance framework is based on measuring how we meeting the 29 priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan.

Each Cabinet Member will oversee performance in their directorates - the overview of performance information based on performance is routinely submitted to the Self-Regulation Select Commission. Other commissions may pick up on individual performance issues as part of its work, whether inside or outside of the council. For example, hospital discharges, waiting times for housing repairs or tackling anti-social behaviour.

By doing all these activities, it helps to ensure that we are achieving what we set out to do, giving value for money and making life better for our citizens. It is also intimately linked to good political decision-making, since it involves using information about how things are to decide how to make things better.



# Rotherham Partnership

**The Rotherham Partnership** is an organisation that brings together Rotherham's public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to work together to improve Rotherham. It is the accredited Local Strategic Partnership(LSP) for Rotherham.

The Rotherham Partnership is the borough's response to the need for more effective structures for partnership working on the wide range of government programmes and initiatives that require joint sector working and community involvement. It has widespread involvement with organisations in Rotherham

The Rotherham Partnership team supports the work of the Rotherham Partnership Board and Chief Executive Officer Group. The team has responsibility for the production of Rotherham's Community Strategy. Rotherham is currently refreshing what will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Strategy. It will set out the partnerships new long term vision and priorities for the next 3 years. This is developed jointly with Rotherham voluntary and community, public and private sectors and local elected representatives. The Rotherham Partnership Board agreed that the new vision is that:

***“Everyone in Rotherham will have the opportunity to fulfil their potential”***

This overarching vision will be underpinned by three high level priorities which have been agreed by the Partnership Board:

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

These priorities aim to address some of the most pressing challenges facing our borough at present. The full version will be published later this year.

# Equalities and Diversity

The Equality Act is the most significant piece of equality legislation to be introduced for many years. It is there to strengthen protection, advance equality and simplify the law. Ninety per cent of the act came into force on 1 October 2010. The rest of it includes Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which comes into effect in April 2011. The Equality Act brings together, and significantly adds to and strengthens, a number of previous existing pieces of legislation, including race, sexual orientation and disability.

Equality is about ensuring that all people are treated equally. This does not mean treating everyone the same, but means recognising the differences in life situation in experience and ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all people, taking their needs into account.

This definition recognises that:

- equality is an issue for all
- we don't all start from the same position and to create a fair society we must recognise different needs.

The Council takes its equalities duties very seriously. Rotherham was the first council in the country to achieve Excellent level under the new Equality Framework for Local Government in 2009.

All councillors are expected to carry out duties serving all members of the community equally, fairly and without discrimination in accordance with the council's equality and diversity policy and the code of conduct for members. Your role as a councillor includes:

- ensuring that people are treated with dignity and respect
- knowing your local community; understanding its make-up and its different needs
- making sure that council services meets the needs of its diverse population
- engaging with and listening to all sections of the community

It is mandatory for all elected members to undertake the e-learning modules on Equalities and Diversity. For further details contact Jean Tracey

For further information contact Zafar Saleem on 01709 822757 or via email [zafar.saleem@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:zafar.saleem@rotherham.gov.uk)

# What is Corporate Parenting?

## A Councillor's Guide

Every year thousands of children leave their homes, through no fault of their own, because of family problems, abuse or neglect. At the moment Rotherham has 415 (01.11.10) children and young people Looked After. These children and young people are not the sole responsibility of one particular department. The whole Council has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parents would do for their own children and Councillors play a key role in that. As a Corporate Parent you have a right to and a duty to question ways of working. The scrutiny and executive functions and processes also offer you avenues through which to act.

## Being a good Corporate Parent means we should:

- Accept responsibility for children and young people in the Council's care.
- Make their needs a priority.
- Provide ongoing support and encouragement.
- Ultimately want the same outcomes that any good parent would want for their own child.

## Reasons Why Council Needs To Act Together

- It is important for children who have been separated from their families to know that 'someone out there cares'.
- Children and young people need 'joined up' services that work seamlessly together to protect, support and encourage them.
- It's the Law - The Children Act, 1989, and the agenda set out by 'Every Child Matters' (2003) recognise that Local Authorities should work closely with their partners in other agencies so that the needs of Looked After children and young people are clearly identified and met at every level. Particular emphasis is placed on the duty of the Local Authority to promote the educational attainment for all its Looked After Children and Young People
- Care leavers- the Local Authority has a duty to offer guidance and support to care leavers up to the age of 21 and in some circumstances, aged 25. RMBC commissions National Children's Home to provide comprehensive service to our care leavers.

## How Can You Help?

Being a corporate parent means that you have to look out for these children and young people as if they were your own, for example you would want to know:

- They were well looked after, making progress at school, getting good health care and being given the chance to pursue hobbies and interests.
- That they were encouraged to become independent, with support if needed, that they were linked well into the community and that opportunities for further education, training and jobs were open to them

# What is Corporate Parenting?

You don't need to be a Social Care expert to help Looked After children and young people. However, some of the ways that you help include:

- Make it your business to find out who and where these children are and to make sure your Council is doing its very best to help them.
- Find out about the children and young people in Rotherham:
  - How many are Looked After?
  - How many are on the Child Protection Register?
  - How many Care Leavers are there?
  - How many of these are from an ethnic minority background or are disabled?
  - What type of help do they need?
  - How well does your Council look after these children?
  - Are they well supported by Council and other services?
  - What support is there when they leave care?
  - Is your Council putting in enough resources? Enough staff, qualifications, etc.
  - Do Care Leavers have adequate accommodation?
- Your Council work may not normally bring you into contact with children in care, how can you improve this?
- You can undertake appropriate training that will help you understand your role as a Corporate Parent and the needs of the Looked After children and young people.

This is part of Member's induction and regular courses are run each year for key Members. Details of these can be found in the Member Development Programme.

- You can make a commitment to listen to the views of Looked After children and young people.

For more information contact Gillian Ackerley 823444 and Morri McDermott 823681

# Social Services Visits

Monthly visits are made to services which are provided by or on behalf of Adult Social Services. Led by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care they provide an important link between elected members and scrutiny co-optees (from the Health Select Commission) and customers who access a wide range of services.

The visits take in a range of services including residential care homes, day services, social work teams and other services across the borough. Members are accompanied by a senior manager from Neighbourhoods and Adult Services.

There are briefings organised before the visits and transport is arranged from Town Hall. Visits will last on average two hours and 2-3 establishments or teams will be visited each month. Invitees will be given the list of establishments in advance

## **Purpose of Visit**

The visits are one of the ways in which Elected Members can keep in touch with emerging, new and developing services. They also enable members to gain an understanding of both customers' and staff's experience. From time to time a service will be selected to give a presentation to members. Mostly the visits consist of a walk through of the service giving members a chance to speak informally to customers and staff.

The main purposes can be summarised as:

- gain an understanding of the breadth of services delivered across the borough
- gain an insight into the delivery of new or innovative services
- engage with customers and staff on an informal basis in order to gain views of the service experience

The visits are **not**:

- visits of inspection
- formal visits
- part of the Council's contractual process
- intended to give members an in-depth understanding of the service

## **Carrying out the visit**

Prior to visiting each establishment, the officer should acquire an overview of the service, acquired from CQC reports, Home from Home reports or similar, and identify any concerns that have been raised about the home. During the visit, members will be accompanied by staff from the service. They should feel free to chat to residents or staff and ask questions about the service. Any concerns about the service should be raised with the accompanying officers once the visit has concluded.

Members should not:

- enter bedrooms or private areas of the home/services without permission from accompanying staff or residents
- make any commitment regarding the service if asked questions or responding to issues raised
- raise any concerns that they have been made aware of directly with the service management during the visit. Any concerns raised should be communicated to the accompanying officer who will deal with the concerns raised.

## Contact Details/Useful Links

### Day to Day Contacts:

#### Scrutiny & Member Support

Deborah Fellowes 822769  
Caroline Webb 822765  
Kate Green 822789  
Sharon Crook 822776

#### Member Development

Caroline Webb 822765

#### Monitoring Officer

Jacqueline Collins  
(Director of Legal Services) 255768  
- Kirsty Athersych (secretary) 255268

#### Secretariat

Sue Ainscough 822722  
Hayley Unwin 822771

#### Mayors Secretary

Jill Shirt 822720

#### Democratic Services

Debbie Bacon 822054

#### IT Training

Jean Tracey 254695

### Strategic Leader Team:

#### Chief Executive

Martin Kimber 822770  
- Lesley Hatton (secretary) 822771

#### Neighbourhoods & Adult Services

Tom Cray, Strategic Director 823400  
- Christine Pike (PA) 823401

#### Finance

Andrew Bedford, Strategic Director 822002  
- Angela Kemp (secretary) 822004

#### Children & Young People's Services

Joyce Thacker, Strategic Director 822677  
- Janet Cotterill (secretary) 822506

#### Environment & Development Services

Karl Battersby, Strategic Director 823815  
- Liz Kemp (Secretary) 823801

#### Voluntary Action Rotherham

(01709 8829821)

#### Rotherham Ethnic Minorities Alliance (REMA)

(01709 720744)

#### Rotherham Chamber of Commerce

(01709 386200)

## Useful Links

### **Rotherham website**

<http://www.rotherham.gov.uk>

### **Scrutiny Website**

<http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/info/1031/scrutiny/245/scrutiny/1>

### **The Council Constitution**

[http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/205/the\\_constitution](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/205/the_constitution)

### **Agendas, reports and minutes**

<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

### **Maps and Directions to Council Buildings**

[http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/200151/council\\_buildings](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/200151/council_buildings)

There are a number of helpful online resources. These include:

**MORE** <http://www.more.lgyh.gov.uk/member-development/>, the Member Online Resource Environment, for all events, news, information and development opportunities as well as a space to network and share ideas and good practice with other members in the Yorkshire and Humber Region.

### **LG Improvement and Development (part of the Local Government Association)**

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=6515356> has its own online community and welcomes all elected members to join. This one-stop shop is designed to help you keep abreast of the latest guidance, news and opinion. Share ideas in our councillors' discussion forum and sign-up for our weekly email for the very latest from the world of local government.

**The Centre for Public Scrutiny** <http://www.cfps.org.uk/> promotes the value of scrutiny and accountability in modern and effective government. Their series of Policy Briefings, are designed principally to assist those sitting on local government overview and scrutiny committees to better understand major national policy developments and how their own work fits in

**Local Government Information Unit:** <http://www.lgiu.org.uk>

**Association for Public Excellence:** <http://www.apse.org.uk>

**The Audit Commission:** <http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk/localgovernment>

**Info for Local Authorities:** <http://www.info4local.gov.uk/>

**South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat:** <http://www.southyorks.org.uk/>

**The Electoral Commission:** <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>

**Rotherham Advertiser** <http://www.rotherhamadvertiser.co.uk>

**Yorkshire Post** <http://www.ypn.co.uk/>

**Guardian Society** <http://guardian.co.uk/society>