

<b>ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>17<sup>h</sup> June 2009</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Response to Scrutiny Review – Working with Parish Councils: Part II</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Chief Executive's</b>

**5. Summary**

This report provides a commentary on the recommendations arising out of the Scrutiny Review of Working with Parish Councils and seeks endorsement of the response by Cabinet.

**6. Recommendations**

**Cabinet is asked to approve to the response to the Scrutiny Review of Working with Parish Councils Part II as set out in the attached Proforma.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

### **7.1 Scrutiny Review - Background**

At the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel on 24th July 2008 it was agreed to examine how the relationship between the Council and Parish Councils had developed during the four years since the review, and what improvements might still be made.

The review was commissioned by PSOC in October 2007 and the final report was presented to Cabinet in June 2008. The review examined in detail the following areas:

- The recommendations of the first review, Cabinet and Corporate Management Team responses. Have all actions been met?
- The effectiveness of the Parish Network and Joint Working Group?
- The views of Parish Councils to see if anything has changed?
- Interview/questionnaire to directorates to find out if relationship has changed?
- Consultation with those Councils with Quality Status to gauge their desire to see a changed relationship.
- Examination of good practice from other areas.

### **7.2 Findings**

The Scrutiny Review - Working with Parish Councils: Part II was completed in October 2008 and the main findings were:

- Parish/Town Councils mostly feel that working relationships with RMBC have improved but that there is still work to be done.
- The increased use of email in communicating with Parish/Town Councils was widely welcomed.
- A significant percentage of RMBC officers (36%) felt that there is overlap between the Parish/Town Councils and Area Assemblies.
- There is still a need for better understanding in some Parish/Town Councils about how Council processes and services work.
- The Joint Charter, Joint Working Group and Parish Network were all identified as areas of good practice in Rotherham.
- It is felt that the Joint Working Group and Parish Network have been led by Officers rather than by Parish/Town Councils.
- Three Parish/Town Councils in Rotherham have achieved the Quality Parish Status.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

The key strategic recommendations arising from the review are detailed below.

<b>1</b>	<b>Communications</b>
1.1	A checklist is compiled of the services available to Parish/Town Councils from each RMBC directorate. This should be circulated to all Clerks and made available on the Rotherham Parish & Town Councils website.
1.2	An induction pack containing information on RMBC services and contacts is prepared for all parish clerks in the Borough.
1.3	A calendar of meetings of all parish councils is prepared annually and distributed across the council in order that RMBC officers consulting with Parish Councils do so in a timely fashion.
1.4	The Rotherham Parish & Town Councils website develops a member only section and includes: a list of Frequently Asked Questions; a clerk/member chat room; RMBC key officer contact details; the Joint Working Group Annual Work plan.
1.5	Contact is made with Parish/Town Councils to establish which ones are waiting for support to set up a website and to give them a timescale of when this can happen.
1.6	In order to further improve relations and identify specific issues, a meeting is held with each Parish/Town Council to discuss what RMBC is doing to promote engagement with Parish/Town Councils and to encourage a closer working relationship.
<b>2</b>	<b>Training</b>
2.1	A Parish/Town Councils representative is elected to sit on the Member Learning and Development Panel.
2.2	RMBC officer Training is made available for Parish/Town Council clerks where appropriate, and advertised to Parish/Town Councils with plenty of notice given.
2.3	That Induction for RMBC officers should include a section on the role of Parish/Town Councils and their relationship with RMBC – where appropriate.
<b>3</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>
3.1	Further development work is undertaken with Parish Councils so as to allow for the Parish Network and, where appropriate, Area Assembly Parish network meetings to become more Parish/Town Council led.
3.2	Investigations are made to gauge the level of interest amongst Parish/Town Council clerks to develop a South Yorkshire wide network. Appropriate support is provided if required, for example

by hosting an initial meeting.
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The Scrutiny Review recommendations have been considered by Directorates and these form the basis of the response set out in the attached standard proforma. All the Scrutiny Review recommendations have been supported and CMT is asked to authorise these for submission to Cabinet for approval.

**8. Finance**

The cost of undertaking the review was met from existing Scrutiny and Democratic Services Budgets.

**9. Risks and Uncertainties**

As detailed in the attached proforma.

**10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The Proud theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy states “Active citizenship and democracy will underpin how Rotherham works. [...] It will be made up of strong, sustainable and cohesive communities, both of place and interest and there will be many opportunities for people to be involved in civic life and local decision making.” Developing a good relationship between the borough council and parish/town councils will help to sustain this ambition. This will also support the council and its partners deliver against the following national indicators: NI 4 – the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality, NI 2 the percent of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood, and NI 3 Civic Participation in the local area.

**11. Background Papers and Consultation**

Working with Parish Councils Scrutiny Review Part 1 (2004) and Part 2 (Oct. 2008).

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**Corporate Management Team's Commentary on Scrutiny Review of Working with Parish Councils: Part II**

Scrutiny recommendation	Proposed action/ comment	Target date	Link to Themes/ Strategies	Impact Analysis		CMT recommendation to Cabinet
				Benefit/ Risk	Cost implication <i>Impact on revenue/capital budget, MTFS</i>	
7.1.1 - A checklist is compiled of the services available to Parish/Town Councils from each RMBC directorate. This should be circulated to all Clerks and made available on the Rotherham Parish & Town Councils website.	<p>Checklist of all Directorates and function and a link officer for all Parish Councils is already available.</p> <p>This will be revised and updated as part of the Parish Charter Refresh</p>	Oct 2009	Proud	<p>Improved Communication and joint working</p> <p>Risk is the officer time needed to ensure that the websites are updated regularly and are quality controlled</p>	None	Approve
7.1.2 - An induction pack containing information on RMBC services and contacts is prepared for all parish clerks in the Borough.	Induction pack will contain information on Parish Charter/ Joint working through the Parish Network and Joint working Group Area Assemblies	Oct 2009	Proud	Improved Communication and joint working	None	Approve

Scrutiny recommendation	Proposed action/ comment	Target date	Link to Themes/ Strategies	Impact Analysis		CMT recommendation to Cabinet
				Benefit/ Risk	Cost implication <i>Impact on revenue/capital budget, MTFS</i>	
7.1.3 – A calendar of meetings of all parish councils is prepared annually and distributed across the council in order that RMBC officers consulting with Parish Councils do so in a timely fashion.	<p>Need to write out to all Parish Councils to obtain relevant information.</p> <p>Will be dependent on timeliness of responses from Parish Councils</p> <p>Information will also be available on Area Assembly websites and a Parish Council Page is to be incorporated into the Area Plan booklet</p>	March 2010	Proud	<p>Improved Communication and joint working</p> <p>Improved awareness of the role of Parish Councils</p>	None	Approve
7.1.4 – The Rotherham Parish & Town Councils website develops a member only section and includes: a list of Frequently Asked Questions; a clerk/member chat room; RMBC key officer contact details;	<p>Implications in setting this up</p> <p>In terms of monitoring/ maintaining the website - discussion with RBT to take place</p>	March 2010	Proud	Difficult to maintain/quality control	None	Approve

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the Joint Working Group Annual Work plan.						
7.1.5 - Contact is made with Parish/Town Councils to establish which ones are waiting for support to set up a website and to give them a timescale of when this can happen.	Individual contact will be made and support offered.	Sept 2009	Proud	Improved communication, meets one of the QS criteria  Not all parish councils want a website and some already have a site	Approx £175 per parish council for design, registration of domain name and RBT labour	Approve
7.1.6 - In order to further improve relations and identify specific issues, a meeting is held with each Parish/Town	Agenda item for the Parish network and local networks  Parish Councils who do not attend will be contacted individually	March 2010	Proud	Specific issues or problems can be addressed and a closer working relationship established.	None	Approve

Scrutiny recommendation	Proposed action/ comment	Target date	Link to Themes/ Strategies	Impact Analysis		CMT recommendation to Cabinet
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Council to discuss what RMBC is doing to promote engagement with Parish/Town Councils and to encourage a closer working relationship.				Not all parish councils may wish to engage.		
7.2.1 - A Parish/Town Councils representative is elected to sit on the Member Learning and Development Panel.	Cllr Carol Cockayne, Woodsetts Parish Council, has been elected to sit on the Member Learning and Development Panel.	Complete	Proud	Improved access to learning and development for Parish/Town Councils.	None	Approve
7.2.2 - RMBC officer Training is made available for Parish/Town Council clerks where appropriate, and advertised to Parish/Town Councils	Provide link to/replicate Directions page to parish council clerks.  Self-booking via Yourself, if possible for external partner. Otherwise, booking via Chief Executives learning	Oct 2009	Achieving Learning	Greater understanding of corporate issues and impact locally. Greater cross-working with council.	Where there is charge to Directorates for training, there would be charge to Parish/Town council.	Approve

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with plenty of notice given.	coordinator.			Risk re. opening access to intranet to external partner.	Example cost per place for full day course £95.00. Potential cost of providing link to an intranet page/alternative method.	
7.2.3 - That Induction for RMBC officers should include a section on the role of Parish/Town Councils and their relationship with RMBC – where appropriate.	Provide section within e-induction programme re role of parish/town councils.	August 2009	Proud	Greater understanding of role of parish councils amongst council workforce	Approximate cost of £1,000 for additional page.	Approve
7.3.1 - Further development work is undertaken with Parish Councils so as to allow	To be raised as an agenda item at a future Parish Council Network meeting.	March 2010	Proud Learning	If the agenda is set by parish councils it will ensure that issues most	None	Approve

Scrutiny recommendation	Proposed action/ comment	Target date	Link to Themes/ Strategies	Impact Analysis		CMT recommendation to Cabinet
				Benefit/ Risk	Cost implication <i>Impact on revenue/capital budget, MTFS</i>	
for the Parish Network and, where appropriate, Area Assembly Parish network meetings, to become more Parish/Town Council led.				relevant to them are addressed through the network meetings.  The Network meetings play a crucial role in developing a closer working relationship if they don't remain relevant current levels of joint working and support may decline		
7.3.2 - Investigations are made to gauge the level of interest amongst Parish/Town Council clerks to develop a South Yorkshire wide network. Appropriate support is provided if required, for example by	To be raised as an agenda item at a future Parish Council Network meeting.	March 2010	Proud Learning	Improved support to clerks and may encourage some to take Cilca (Cert in Local Council Administration) as part of QS criteria.  Level of interest unknown	None	Approve

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hosting an initial meeting.						