

**AN INFORMAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITIES,
REGENERATION & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**NOTES OF MEETING
Thursday, 4th February 2016**

PRESENT: Councillor Butterworth (in the Chair); Councillors Linden, Stott, and West.

OFFICERS: H. Bellis, A. Graham (Neighbourhoods Directorate) and P. Thompson (Resources Directorate).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Holly, Kelly, O'Neill, Wazir and Zaheer.

DISCRETIONARY CRISIS FUND

The Chair advised that this meeting had been convened further to minute of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held, held 10th December 2015 where it was decided that an 'informal private meeting of the Committee be convened to discuss the future operations of the Discretionary Crisis Fund'.

The meeting considered a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods that outlined the performance of the Discretionary Crisis Fund in the six month period up to 30th September 2015. The Discretionary Crisis Fund (DCF) was initially implemented in April 2013 as a result of funding and responsibility to provide a local welfare assistance scheme which was transferred from the Department of Work and Pensions scheme to the Council.

The DCF offered support to vulnerable residents who are resettling in the Borough from temporary/institutional care that may need help in acquiring essential household items. The scheme is also a final safety to provide immediate and targeted relief for members of the local community who are in the greatest need and do not have the means to resolve their own emergency situation.

The Members discussed various options for the future management of the DCF, especially in light of proposed welfare reforms that were due to come into effect in 2016/17.

All DCF applications were to be made to the providers of the Managed Service on behalf of Rochdale Borough Council. The providers will receive, assess and make appropriate awards, according to the Council's policy, too applications made either in writing, on-lone or by telephone. Therefore it was considered important that the Council continues to monitor the performance of the providers and other operational matters relating to the DCF on a regular basis and it was **agreed** that this be done on a six monthly basis.

The meeting discussed proposals relating to the Innovation Fund and it was suggested that this could be a useful tool for promoting the DCF. It was **agreed** that the Director of Neighbourhoods look into this and examine ways, if possible, in which the Council can increase its level of funding to the Innovation Fund.

A member referred to the Middleton Relief in Need Charitable Trust and it was **agreed** that the Clerk to the Committee examine ways in which the profile of this Trust can be raised.