

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)

Report to: Council

Date: 11 September 2013

Subject: Area Committee Annual Report

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Summary of main issues

The Constitution sets out the role of Area Committees in the governance framework of the Council. A key function of Area Committees is to champion the concerns of their local communities and to work to improve outcomes for local people.

This paper brings the Area Committees' Annual Report to the attention of Council. It outlines the changes which have taken place in response to the area review recommendations and gives a flavour of some of the work members have taken forward within communities to improve lives for local people.

It introduces the potential for further change for Area Committees to strengthen local engagement and involvement and to become a vehicle for more robust understanding and targeting on local need within the city context.

At the time of agenda dispatch the annual report was not available and will therefore follow under separate cover prior to the council meeting

2. Recommendation

Members of Council are asked to;

- receive the annual report
- agree the work now being progressed to further improve the effectiveness, profile and community engagement role of Area Committees

- note the added value generated in projects and initiatives supported through well-being funding as outlined in paragraph 3.2

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Council the Area Committees' Annual Report for 2012/13 and to outline ongoing work to further improve the workings, profile and community engagement role of Area Committees and local councillors.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 The Council first introduced locality working arrangements in 1999 when community involvement teams were introduced across the city. In 2004 these developed into Area Committee arrangements and since that time we have seen further developments as we have striven to be more local in our understanding, thinking, decision making and service delivery arrangements. In 2011 new locality working arrangements were introduced which brought about changes to area management teams, with the appointment of area leaders and area leadership teams and the creation of new area-based support teams. This included the agreement of a set of locality working design principles.
- 2.2 Alongside our own locality working ambitions, there have also been national policy considerations and initiatives eg Localism Act, Open Public Services Reform and Our Place! which cover a number of new approaches including neighbourhood planning, community right to challenge, community asset transfer, a scheme of delegation for neighbourhood councils (including Parish and Town councils), community budgets and neighbourhood commissioning.
- 2.3 The Commission on the Future of Local Government 2012 (led by Leeds) sought to examine the role of local government in the 21st century. It indicates that one of the ten suggested characteristics of an enterprising council is *"there is clear evidence of direct empowerment of local ward members and citizens on specific policy issues or outcome areas, supported by strong local relationships."* The commission highlighted the critical importance of local democratic leadership in driving the way in which local government responds to a changing and ever more challenging environment.
- 2.4 There is a clear need both at a local and national level to fully engage with local communities and ensure that they are at the heart of everything we do.

3.0 Main issues

- 3.1 The annual report outlines the recommendations arising from the review of area working and progress made to date against these. It also celebrates Area Committees' achievements over the last year and reflects on areas for learning.
- 3.2 It recognises that Area Committees play a fundamental role to understand and address issues that are of concern to the people in their area. Many

initiatives and projects use the Wellbeing Fund. Monies from this fund are often matched and/or enable volunteering to take place thus significantly increasing the actual monetary value involved. It is believed that for every £1 of funding provided by the Area Committees this is at least doubled in terms of worth due to added value and contributions. Further work is taking place to more fully understand this additionality.

- 3.3 As part of the work to take the review recommendations forward a workshop was held with Area Chairs and this has resulted in a more focused push to improve the working of the Area Committee meetings as well as raise their profile locally and secure greater engagement with local people. Work is being undertaken in each locality to ensure that Area Committee meetings more fully meet the needs of members, officers and the public. Building on our existing arrangements, we need to look at what further improvements can be made.
- 3.4 A crucial part of the improvements required is the need to make a step change to the way area committees and local councillors engage with their communities. Consideration is currently being given to the manner in which this can be done and the most appropriate arrangements to improve engagement with local communities. In particular focus is being directed to improve the:
- involvement by members of the public through the currently available channels ie deputation and open forum;
 - publicity of area committee meetings and the outcomes from these;
 - recognition of work that is being done by area committees;
 - use made of different communication methods eg social media, local radio and the press; and
 - nature of the meetings to provide an element of business and common themed discussions.
- 3.5 These short term improvements will pave the way for more long-term change and the ambition to engage more widely. Partnerships will continue to be important at the most local and the three Area Leadership Team levels. Area committees will continue to play an important and key role in feeding into and from these partnerships; and in bringing together relevant partners to work to improve outcomes for local people.
- 3.6 We are looking at developing the concept of 'community councils' which operate with, but outside of the procedural trappings of area committee meetings, to enable true dialogue and discussion with local communities which could more fully inform decisions made by area committees. Options and proposals will be considered during the autumn for approval in early 2014 and implementation at the commencement of the 2014/15 municipal year.
- 3.7 Fundamentally the ambition of a 'community council' approach is to build local capacity and enable local people to have a stronger role and say in improving outcomes in their locality.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

- 4.1 **Consultation and Engagement** - The Area Committee annual report for 2012/13 was produced by the Chief Officer Communities in consultation with the Area Chairs and the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services. It is not appropriate for this to be subject to public consultation but the report will be available for members of the public to access.
- 4.2 **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration** - The annual report for 2012/13 provides a flavour of work which area committees have been involved in over the past year in different communities. An equality impact assessment screening has been completed and no further impact assessment is required.
- 4.3 **Council Policies and City Priorities** - The work of area committees is particularly relevant to the Best City for Communities priority, but work takes place to promote all the city priorities within the locality context.
- 4.4 **Resources and Value for Money** - This report has no specific resource implications.
- 4.5 **Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In** - This report has no specific legal implications.
- 4.6 **Risk Management** - There are no risk management implications relevant to this report.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 There has always been significant focus on local arrangements, and there has been continuing development of our approach and mechanisms which enable us to discharge our responsibilities in this context. The time is now right to consider the future and further developments to increase the involvement of local people with our democratic process

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 Council is asked to;
 - receive the annual report
 - agree the work now being progressed to further improve the effectiveness, profile and community engagement role of Area Committees
 - note the added value generated in projects and initiatives supported through well-being funding as outlined in paragraph 3.2

7.0 Background papers

Area Review
Equality impact screening