

**Area Chairs Forum
Friday 28th June 2013
Committee Room 4, Civic Hall**

Attendance:

Councillors: P. Gruen (Chair), A. Khan, S. Hamilton, A. McKenna, A. Gabriel, J. Akhtar, P. Wadsworth, C. Gruen.

Officers: J. Rogers, K. Kudelnitzky, R. Barke, S. Mahmood, J. Maxwell

Minutes: S. Warbis

Attending for specific items: K. Morton, M. Long

Item	Description	Action
1.0	Apologies	
1.1	Cllr Josephine Jarosz, Cllr Gerald Wilkinson	
2.0	Minutes and Matters Arising	
2.1	The minutes of the previous Area Chairs Forum meeting on 3 rd May 2013 were agreed as an accurate record.	
2.2	<u>2.6 of previous minutes – Health</u> It was requested that Cllr Mulherin be invited to the next meeting to look at links into the Areas and approaches to tackle health inequalities.	Sarn Warbis
2.3	<u>5.11 of previous minutes</u> Cllr J. Akhtar reiterated that he would like to be involved in discussions on Youth Services engagement when they commenced, particularly relating to Muslim communities.	Ken Morton
2.4	<u>8.7 – Area Leaders Round Up</u> It was stressed that work needed to be carried out to publicise the work carried out by Area Committees. Credit was not being given for projects funded by Area Committees and it was suggested that a protocol needed to be developed to include publicity in funding agreements. It was also mentioned that the role of Area Committees needed to be made clear to other organisations. Area Leaders need to make sure that local councillors are given credit for the work they are progressing. It was suggested that the name "Area Committee" did not reflect the work that was done and thoughts should be given to renaming / rebranding. It was agreed that officers would develop ideas and bring back to the next meeting.	Kathy Kudelnitzky
3.0	Targeted Youth Work – Area Formula	
3.1	Ken Morton, Head of Service Young People and Skills, attended with 2 papers discussing the timeline for developing the Area Committees leadership of the youth work service and recommendations on the area formula for distributing funding for targeted youth work budgets.	
3.2	A report will be going to the Executive Board meeting on 17th July to discuss recommendations for the distribution of the targeted youth work resource. This will follow reports to the next round of Area Committee meetings. The recommended formula is based on 50% allocated through population data, and 50% allocated based on indices of multiple deprivation. There is a proposal for a 2 year review period to account for any demographic changes.	

- 3.3 A baseline of resources will be provided for each Area Committee covering both targeted and universal provision. Discussions need to take place over how to get the best value from the resources available.
- 3.4 The question was raised as to how the provision would be monitored. It was explained that a quality assurance team would be in place to work with the Area Committees. There would be a similar client / contractor relationship to the one established through the environmental delegation, and key performance indicators would be established.
- 3.5 The movement of indicators in the Children's Plan would show performance at a macro level while there would also be monitoring at a micro level, project by project.
- 3.6 Discussions will need to take place with Area Chairs and appointed Area Lead Members to identify and explain outcomes. A team is being pulled together in Children's Services to support this role. Resourcing, reporting and finance will be arranged at the Area Committee level and structures and processes need to be put in place to allow this.
- 3.7 Processes for restructuring the service have been put in place and negotiations are ongoing with union representatives. It was stressed by Area Chairs that staff with local connections needed to be in place in local areas. It was also stressed that the important thing was to have good quality staff working in this field. This could be a combination of LCC and external staff.
- 3.8 It was also stressed that the review needed to be underpinned by transparency over available budgets and an emphasis on locally made decisions. The aim should be about value for money and meeting local needs.
- 3.9 It was mentioned that city wide assets such as Herd Farm also needed to be connected into localities, and that there should be an awareness of the city wide resource being put into these assets, and how these are being equitably accessed by different areas.
- 3.10 It was pointed out that areas with hotspots of ASB / Crime should be taken account of when resources are being allocated.

4.0 Review of ALMOs and Housing Management Arrangements

- 4.1 Martyn Long, Policy Manager – Corporate Support, attended to discuss the Review of ALMOs and Housing Management Arrangements and to begin discussions around links between Area Committees and local housing management / governance arrangements.
- 4.2 Following extensive consultation the decision had been taken last week at executive board to bring the housing management provision back to Leeds City Council in a city wide arrangement.
- 4.3 Two work streams are being developed to look at governance and tenant involvement / influence. It is being established who needs to be involved in discussions to take this forward. There is a need to make sure that there isn't a dilution of the tenant role and it needs to be established how Area Committees feel that they should be linked in.
- 4.4 It was pointed out that currently there were 10 Area Panels that included elected members, but that these were not currently directly linked to Area Committees. There is also member representation on ALMO boards but these have no formal links to Area Committees.
- 4.5 It was suggested that housing management should be a regular item for Area Committee business. It was also pointed out that Area Committee capacity

needed to be considered, particularly in light of the changes to Area Committee roles being established through the review of area working. There needs to be a channel of influence but a not formal role in managing housing stock.

4.6 It was raised that there was some disquiet amongst current ALMO directors and ALMO staff and that new structures and arrangements need to be put in place quickly.

4.7 It was raised that currently the ALMOs have differing practices and that it needed to be ensured that the merger led to levelling up and not down of standards of provision.

4.8 It was also stressed that there needed to be work to join up area priorities for Area Panels and Area Committees, and that opportunities should be taken for joint commissioning of services and activities to meet the needs of different communities.

4.9 Discussions are taking place between Area Leaders and Environment and Neighbourhoods officers to ensure that approaches to communities and housing are joined up.

5.0 Scrutiny Report – Strengthening the Council’s Relationship with Parish and Town Councils

5.1 Kathy Kudelnitzky tabled the draft response from the Customer Access and Performance directorate to the scrutiny report on Parish and Town Councils for discussion.

5.2 It was pointed out that this only had relevance to those Area Committees that had Parish Councils in their areas.

5.3 There are clear links with some of the recommendations in the report to work streams that had already been established through the review of area working.

5.4 Area Chairs were happy with the draft response that will be taken back to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board.

6.0 Workshop on Area Committee Meetings

6.1 A workshop took place, attended by Area Officers from the Area Support Teams, to discuss the current functioning of Area Committee meetings and to investigate what improvements could be made.

6.2 This followed recommendations within the review of area working which were drawn from discussions with the All Party Members Working Group, Area Chairs, Area Committees and officers.

6.3 Notes from the discussions can be found at appendix 1.

6.4 Feedback and recommendations will be brought back to a future meeting.

7.0 Any Other Business

7.1 Community Centres

7.2 Cllr Gruen informed the meeting that the management of community centres will be moving from the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate to Customer Access and Performance.

7.3 This may also involve associated functions moving from other directorates with a view to streamlining the management process for these facilities.

7.4 Area Chairs raised concerns over the progress of the current review of

community centres, particularly relating to the lettings process, and there was a call for transparency over lettings payments and subsidies that were currently in place.

7.5 It was also mentioned that there was a need for a central team that could manage this work rather than the current confused position with responsibility spread over several directorates.

7.6 West Yorkshire Police

7.7 Cllr Gruen Raised the news that the organisation of policing in Leeds would be moving from 3 divisions to 1 division.

7.8 James Rogers and the Area Leaders were involved in ongoing discussions with senior police officers regarding this, and would be taking opportunities to discuss colocation opportunities and the future of neighbourhood policing teams.

7.9 Initial discussions indicated that the police were committed to making new arrangements continue to work at a community level.

7.10 Community Radio

7.11 Cllr Akhtar highlighted a Ramadan radio station based in Harehills that covers a 7 mile radius, and encouraged Area Chairs to consider small grant contributions to the project. Cllr Gruen suggested that if the scheme made contact with him he would circulate the request to Area Committees for them to consider through their established grant approval process.

8.0 Date of Next Meeting

8.1 Friday 6th September 2013, 14:00 – 16:00, Committee Room 4 - Civic Hall

Area Chairs Forum – 28th June 2013

Workshop notes

Agenda Setting Process

- Scale down the agenda to give more time for discussion
- Members need greater involvement in agenda setting directly
- Better partnership between Area Officers and Chairs in setting agendas
- Restrict city-wide reports. Reject from agendas if not locally focused
- Forward agenda for the ACs good idea, members could input to this. However, departments pay no attention to this and often insist their reports go to ACs – more often than not to meet their needs not the needs of the locality
- Forward plan to avoid congested / light meeting agendas
- Would be good to link the agenda to the AC business plan and monitor progress – quarterly monitoring
- Late items from departments upset the themes of meetings
- Officers to be open about late reports and not protect services
- Work to be done across service areas of the council to help them fully understand the role of ACs in the democratic process – the opportunities this provides to improve services
- Departments should work to the ACs forward plan
- Improve coordination across the city e.g. P&C reporting together with Environmental services
- Give partners their own slots on agendas
- Area Improvement Managers could be linked to each major service area to facilitate relationship

Reports

- Currently reports are too lengthy – more summary of issues and highlighting of local impact. Less paper
- Need clear rules about the length of reports and what should be in summary. No jargon and glossary of terms where necessary. Shorter, sharper, key ideas and options.
- Report template should be much more flexible and less archaic (daft numbering system). Too much on background before getting to nub of issues.
- Plain English, keep the public in mind, more accessible. Meaningful recommendations required that are localised
- Short, to the point and with local impact
- Need to communicate to the rest of LCC the value of ACs and what they can bring if utilised in meaningful way
- Better use of presentations for reports
- Key messages and newsletters about work of ACs is good
- Area Committees sponsoring and annual event/conference?
- Fed up with reports for noting
- Ask services to consider what it is they want from reporting to ACs and from local councillors
- Quality Assurance process required and accountability of chief officers for the quality of reports and meeting deadlines and forward plans , etc.

Operation of Meetings

- Promote meetings to communities / local groups
- Try to get beyond attendance of the “usual suspects”
- Advertise agendas and invite attendance
- Hold meetings in community settings and at appropriate times to promote attendance
- Encourage open sessions
- Rebrand / revamp meetings. Include “community” in the title
- In some outer areas forums are more appropriate for public attendance
- Ensure that feedback from forums is taken to Area Committees
- Public attendance peaks if there is a specific local issue being discussed
- Improve / develop mailing lists to promote meetings and actions taken
- Include celebration of local activities / events / achievements at meetings
- Extraordinary area committee meetings are a good way of analysing a particularly knotty issue and provides for more in depth discussion time.
- Give more time to open forums to encourage local people’s contributions if required but recognise the time limitations of the agenda.
- Area Lead Members to speak on their subjects – with officer support

Shaping decisions

- Need to see the actions taken from the comments made at ACs – what happens?
- The report needs to help discussion e.g. options for members to consider
- Ask what do the officers want from members
- Structure the debate better – how we come to a decision
- Succinctness is really important
- Split out the background information and put in the public arena in some other way
- All comes back to officers across the council needing to better understand the role and purpose of the ACs in the democratic process and the added value local members can bring
- The pace of response and progress of actions within the council is often slow and appears to reflect silo working.
- Area Committee wellbeing funding can become tied up in local issues and we need a route to mainstream these local difficulties through core funds in services.
- Bespoke innovations such as an older people’s week or the ‘Civic Conversation’ approach can bring relevancy to area committees and help local people understand the part that local councillors can play more broadly.
- Ward meetings and neighbourhood forum meetings where they are held tend to pick up and address a lot of local issues and we need to recognise the complimentary roles of ward and area committee meetings and avoid duplication of effort.
- We need to improve promotion of area committees on a range of media including radio and social media.