

Report of Assistant Chief Executive Citizens & Communities

Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board

Date: 10th February 2014

Subject: Briefing and Consultation on design principles for Community Committees and Community Engagement

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> No

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consult the scrutiny board on the design principles for Community Committees and Community Engagement.
- 1.2 This report will give members of the scrutiny board an opportunity to contribute views to the consultation.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Executive board approved the report "Citizens@Leeds: Responsive to the Needs of Local Communities" in December 2013 The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) was asked to consult on the community committee and community engagement proposals, prior to final arrangements being brought back to Executive Board in May 2014 for approval. The design principles are attached at appendix 1.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The proposal is to develop a new approach to build on the work of Area Committees, improving local democratic leadership of local areas, as well as providing a more meaningful way of involving local people in decisions that affect their local neighbourhoods. The key outcomes to be delivered are:
 - better engagement and closer involvement with local residents and communities with area-based work and decision-making;

- greater democratic involvement, engagement and decision making relating to local services and local expenditure;
- more efficient and effective area based committee arrangements which better meet the needs of members and local communities, and;
- improved working with the council's key partners.

3.2 Discussions to date have indicated a need to change the presentation and identity of Area Committees, as well as their working arrangements. Initial designs for the local Citizen@Leeds engagement brand and the brand for the Community Committees will be demonstrated at the meeting, and members will be invited to give views.

3.3 Our new locality working approach is, therefore, proposed to be built on the development of Community Committees to replace the current Area Committee structure and the introduction of a new community engagement model.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Members are invited to comment on the contents of this report, in particular, the design principles outlined at Annex 1.

5 Background documents¹

5.1 Executive Board Report - Citizens@Leeds: Responsive to the Needs of Local Communities (18 December 2013)

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Annex 1

Community Committee Design Principles

- a) The ten Area Committees will be renamed Community Committees and will continue to be the vehicle through which the council delegates its locality decision-making process.
- b) We will work with members to seek to develop new names and/or a new identity for Community Committees that more accurately relate to place and which help citizens understand the area covered by each Community Committee.
- c) Community Committee meetings will be business focussed and remain open to the public in line with other formal meetings of council. They will still be a place for aspects of community engagement (e.g. local deputations and the open forum), however, their primary role will be a decision making one and more significant community engagement will be undertaken through other means.
- d) The role and functions of Community Committees will essentially remain as described under the current procedural rules but with a greater emphasis on advertising the meetings to the public so people are aware of their existence and their role in the local area, as well as encouraging local residents to make use of the open forum.
- e) Community Committee meetings will meet in the communities and neighbourhoods they are representing in accessible places and buildings.
- f) Community Committees will be encouraged to include other non-voting representatives in their discussions, drawn from their locality, to contribute to, but not be part of, local decision making.
- g) Reduce the number of formal decision-making Community Committees to four a year, freeing up members and staff resource to focus on greater community involvement activity with more agile delegations to enable decisions to be taken between meetings.
- h) Arrangements will be put into place to delegate certain decision making responsibilities to Area Leaders in order to speed up decision making. Such arrangements to include the parameters for progressing an officer decision i.e. relevant members have been consulted and are in agreement with the decision.
- i) Community Committees will strengthen relationships with Parish and Town Councils in line with recommendations set out within the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Report. They will acknowledge their role providing strong local leadership as reflected and recognised in the Leeds Parish and Town Council Charter.
- j) Community Committees will develop their 'Quality Assurance' role of holding locally delivered services to account.

- k) Work and decisions of the Community Committees will be supported by better intelligence, gathered at the local level (bottom up) rather than (top down) corporate reports being made to 'fit' the locality.
- l) Shorter, punchier and jargon-free reporting at community committee meetings
- m) Dedicated communication expertise and capacity to be available to the Community Committees to promote their activities and decisions.
- n) Community Committees acting as local 'improvement committees' will be encouraged to proactively make recommendations back to the council's Executive Board, to officers, or other service providers where it considers city-wide policy or actions need to be taken or changed to support delivery of local priorities.
- o) As part of the 2014/15 and 2015/16 budgetary considerations proactive action will be taken to progress a 'community deal' approach to local resourcing with more responsibility being delegated to Community Committees, to assist in the delivery of wider city council efficiencies whilst supporting the need for more spend to be directed locally.
- p) Community Committees will have a close and effective relationship with the local policing team which are currently in the process of being re-organised around the existing 10 area committee boundaries, plus a team to cover the city centre.
- q) Consideration needs to be given to the city centre as part of the new arrangements to determine whether a different approach is required. This will also need to link into the ongoing review of Policing structures.

Community Engagement Design Principles

- a) A new identity and branding based around Citizens@Leeds will demonstrate the council's commitment to greater public involvement. Well publicised and branded engagement opportunities will improve engagement in all locality based' meetings, activities and events to local residents, communities and businesses.
- b) It is proposed to develop an identity and brand around Citizens@Leeds but on a local basis to support communication, engagement and understanding of engagement events. For example, use of the branding Citizens@Rothwell, Citizens@Kippax, Citizens@Calverley etc.), more than one ward (Citizens@Headingley&Burley) or parts of two wards (Citizens@Morley).
- c) Community conversations will be developed in line with the new approach being proposed for a city conversation as part of our corporate engagement proposals.
- d) A variety of methods (e.g. case conferencing, 'community conversations', expert witnesses, open public meetings) will be employed to feed into relevant work on local issues.
- e) The development of an annual locality working engagement plan, which will include a number of community engagement events in the area. These could be theme based (e.g. housing, older people, schools etc.) or bolted onto an existing community event (e.g. consultation at the local gala). These engagement events will be issue-based rather than agenda-led.
- f) Develop stronger links with existing neighbourhood forums, residents' associations, school clusters etc., and aim for the whole of the city to be covered by neighbourhood forums or their equivalent, and developing new local forums where necessary.
- g) Meaningful engagement - the new model of locality working will give local residents opportunities to 'have their say' as well as a greater influence on decisions about the design and delivery of public services. Some of the above meetings could involve participatory budgeting or other tools that give local residents the opportunity to understand the decisions taken and their consequences.
- h) Open and accessible, enabling local voices to be heard - a wide range of styles will be used for local engagement events and meetings to encourage participation, understanding and involvement. Changing the way meetings are arranged to make them more 'user-friendly' will improve engagement. Public meetings, activities and events will need to be designed and publicised so that local people genuinely want to attend and make their voices heard (e.g. the use of alternative seating arrangements, as well as time and venue, need to be taken into consideration).
- i) We will ensure that all of the different communities affected by the council's decision-making are reached.