

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)

Report to: Outer West Area Committee

Date: 4th June 2014

Subject: Community Committee Topics 2014-15

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Calverley & Farsley, Farnley & Wortley, Pudsey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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

Summary of main issues

This report outlines proposals for the introduction of a new approach to area working arrangements to be implemented at the beginning of the 2014/15 municipal year.

The new approach seeks to strengthen local democratic engagement and increase community engagement and involvement in local decision-making. The development of Community Committees replaces the existing Area Committee arrangements. The new Community Committees will:

- enable services to think more locally;
- enhance local decision making and the opportunity for more local budget setting, and
- raise community awareness of how local decisions and actions are taken.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Choose a number of topics to support the Community Committee's focus of work over the coming year.
2. Request that a draft engagement plan be developed for each of these topics, for consideration at the first meeting of the Community Committee in July.
3. Request that a draft communications strategy is developed to ensure a framework for communication between all key stakeholders

1 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to put forward a number of themed topics for Members to consider. These topics will form the basis for the Outer West Community Committee engagement activity in 2014/15.

2 Background information

- 2.1 We have been working on a locality based agenda for over ten years since the introduction of Community Involvement Team and through a number of iterations, our current locality leadership model has developed. In the current economic and financial climate, we need to build on these developments and create an even greater emphasis on getting more people involved in their local communities, in local decision-making, and in designing and delivering services that better meet current and future needs.
- 2.2 The area working review report agreed by Executive Board in December 2012 proposed a number of changes. The new approach seeks to strengthen local democratic engagement and increase community engagement and involvement in local decision-making. The development of Community Committees replaces the existing Area Committee arrangements. The new Community Committees will:
- enable services to think more locally;
 - enhance local decision making and the opportunity for more local budget setting, and
 - raise community awareness of how local decisions and actions are taken.
- 2.3 This move aims to ensure a focus on local issues by local people, and a move away from the bureaucratic nature of many Area Committee meetings where there is little or no public attendance.

3 Main Issues

- 3.1 The new approach will see the separation of the formal, decision-making aspect of the Community Committee meeting from the broader engagement. Community Committee meetings will be business focussed and remain open to the public (rather than public meetings), with a greater emphasis on advertising the meetings to the public and encouraging local residents to make use of the open forum. Formal Community Committee meetings will have business agendas that will include such items as wellbeing and youth activity fund reports, service performance and delegation reports.
- 3.2 In addition to the formal meetings, the Community Committees can develop a range of local activities to give residents opportunities to 'have their say' and work with Elected Members. This will improve residents' influence on how decisions about local services are delivered. Such activities could take the form of case conferencing, 'community conversations', expert witnesses, open public meetings, stronger links with existing community groups and the development of new local forums where necessary. It 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. New branding will be adopted and engagement opportunities will be open and accessible to encourage participation, understanding and involvement and ensure that all the different communities affected by the council's decision-making are reached.

- 3.3 The Area Support Team have completed a desk top review of the issues that have been considered at various forums during 2013/14. This includes previous Area Committee meetings, community forums and sub group meetings with key stakeholders.
- 3.4 A number of common issues have been identified which could become the focus of future Community Committee meetings and community engagement. These are outlined in Appendix 1.
- 3.5 Some early discussions with members have highlighted some key areas of focus for consideration. These include;

Environment & Place

- Local people show a keen interest in the 10 community parks in Outer West and frequently volunteer through the local 'In Bloom' groups. The Community Committee could work with Parks & Countryside to improve the areas progress towards the Leeds Quality Park (LQP) standard and in general improving the parks.

Health & Wellbeing

- Profiling work carried out by the Area Support Team showed that cancer mortality for 'under 75 year olds' was relatively high in the Pudsey area. Members may wish to investigate this further.
- An increase in teenage pregnancy has previously been raised by members and could be an alternative option to be explored and investigated.

Community Safety

- As a result of increasing burglary crime in the Outer West, the Committee may want to explore how they could work with partners on initiatives to reduce burglary, theft and antisocial behaviour.

Business, Enterprise and Economy

- Members may want to explore opportunities to engage with local employers and businesses to provide opportunities for jobs and volunteering.

- 3.6 The Area Committee are asked to identify which topics they would like to focus on in 2014/15. It is recommended that in this first year there are three community committee topics chosen.
- 3.7 Each topic will form the basis for a broader conversation with the Area Leads, the local community and stakeholders outside of the formal Community Committee meeting. The outcome of this community and stakeholder engagement will be reported back at Community Committee business meetings. To support this, each topic will have a draft community engagement plan that will be published in advance.
- 3.7 A community engagement plan will be developed and brought to the July meeting for comments and consideration. The community engagement plan will support the development and review of the Outer West Business Plan.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

The Area Support Team have completed a desk top review of the issues that have been considered at various forums during 2013/14. This includes previous Area Committee meetings, community forums and sub group meetings involving key stakeholders. Once topics are chosen by Elected Members, a community engagement plan will be developed for each theme.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration are key issues for the Area Committee and the community engagement plan will take this into account with a number of actions identified to help address these. Equality impact assessments will be undertaken on specific initiatives and decisions as required.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

The Best Council Plan 2013-17 identifies three key outcomes that need to be achieved if we are to achieve our best council ambition. These cover the need to improve the quality of life for our residents, particularly those who are vulnerable or in poverty; the need to make it easier for people to do business with us, and the need to achieve savings and efficiencies required, to continue to deliver frontline services. The proposals in this paper are intended to make a significant contribution to the delivery of our best council outcomes and will help achieve a number of the stated objectives.

4.4 Resources and value for money

There are no specific budgetary implications arising from the proposals in this report at this time. However, the report does identify as one of the key principles for Community Committees the need to delegate and devolve more decision making and resources to local areas. Therefore there could be resource implications and these will be considered as part of the council's normal budget arrangements as decisions are taken to delegate service responsibility and/or funding.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

There are no specific legal, access to information or call-in implications arising from this report at this point in time. In developing the Community Committee proposals, further consideration will need to be given to required changes to the Council's Constitution. In considering the potential of community representatives being more formally involved in Community Committee meetings, consideration will need to be given to the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972, section(102)(3) to ensure it is done in the most appropriate manner.

4.6 Risk Management

There are no risk management issues relating to this report.

5 Conclusions

5.1 A new approach is needed if we are to respond fully to the outcomes of the area working review. The new approach outlined in this report seeks to strengthen local democratic engagement and increase community engagement and involvement in local decision making. The approval of a set of topics to support themed Community Committee meetings and local community engagement will shape the introduction of the new locality approach.

6 Recommendations

- Members are asked to choose a number of topics to support the Community Committee's focus of work over the coming year.
- Request that a draft engagement plan will be developed for each of these topics, for consideration at the first meeting of the Community Committee in July.
- Request that a draft communications strategy is developed to ensure a framework for communication between all key stakeholders

7 Background documents¹

Executive Board report: A new approach to locality working (December 2013)

Best Council Plan 2013-17

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.