

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)

Report to: North West (Outer) Area Committee

Date: 6th June 2014

Subject: Community Committee Topics 2014-15

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Adel & Wharfedale, Guiseley & Rawdon, Horsforth, Otley & Yeadon	<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. Identify which topics they would like to focus on during 2014/15. It is recommended that in the first year three topics are chosen.
2. Consider choosing 'improving community parks' as the Outer North West Community Committees first topic and request that a draft engagement plan be developed for consideration at the first meeting of the Community Committee in July.

3. Choose two further topics to support the Community Committee's focus of work over the coming year.

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 North 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
 - 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 local services are delivered. Such activities could take the form of 'community conversations', 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 A desk top review of the issues that have been considered at a range of forums during 2013/14 has been completed. This includes previous Area Committee meetings, community forums and sub group meetings involving 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. The issues have been grouped together under broader themes as outlined below:

Environment & Place

Green space issues are frequently raised at various forums. Local people show an interest in the 8 community parks in outer north west and frequently volunteer through 'In Bloom' groups. The Community Committee could work with Parks & Countryside and partners to improve the areas progress towards the Leeds Quality Park (LPQ) structure and generally improving parks.

Health & Well-being

An emerging issue to consider is the social isolation of older people. The outer north west has a high percentage of older people living in the area however not all of those who may need to, access the services offered by local Neighbourhood Networks and other providers. The Community Committee may wish to consider looking at how social isolation impacts upon an individual's health and wellbeing and how services could be better targeted to meet their needs.

Children & Young People

The children and young people issues raised have focused on improving education outcomes, especially at transition stages and ensuring young people have a range of out of school activities and facilities. These issues could be explored in partnership with clusters and young people and aligns well to the Youth Activity Fund work.

Highways and Transport

Transport issues are frequently raised and this could be explored with partners to better understand future transport link aspirations, the impact of new developments and the role of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) in support of the local transport infrastructure.

Community Safety

There are a number of issues in relation to community safety. Whilst outer north west does not suffer from high levels of burglary, there are areas of concern relating to burglary. In previous years the Area Committee has funded projects to address burglary and this has helped to keep the figures low. The Committee may want to explore how we work with partners in the context of additional funding opportunities becoming more challenging.

- 3.5 The Area Committee are asked to identify which topics they would like to focus on in 2014/15 or to identify any other local issues. It is recommended that in this first year there are three community committee topics chosen.
- 3.6 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 community engagement plan that will be published in advance.
- 3.7 A draft 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 North West Business Plan.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

The Area Support Team has 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 identify which topics to focus on during 2014/15. It is recommended that in the first year three topics are chosen.

Consider choosing 'improving community parks' as the Community Committees first topic and request that a draft engagement plan be developed for consideration at the first meeting of the Community Committee in July.

Choose two further topics to support the Community Committee's focus of work over the coming year.

7 Background documents¹

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.