

Report of Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board

Date: 28th July 2014

Subject: Community Committees Update

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

Summary of main issues

1. In February 2014, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board was invited to consider and provide comment on the proposed design principles for Community Committees and Community Engagement as part of a wider consultation process held between February and April 2014.
2. This report updates the Scrutiny Board on the development of the new Community Committees following this consultation process, including details of their terms of reference and procedure rules, as agreed by Council in June 2014. The Board will also receive a verbal update during the meeting of the ongoing development work with Community Committees across the city.

Recommendations

3. Members are invited to note the progress made regarding the development of the new Community Committees.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Scrutiny Board in relation to the new Community Committees.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Executive Board received a report in December 2012 following a review of the council's area working arrangements which led to further work and a subsequent report to the 18th December 2013 Executive Board meeting. At this meeting Members endorsed the "Responsive to the needs of local communities" proposition, including the proposed development of a new approach to build on the work of Area Committees, to improve 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.
- 2.2 Work has since been undertaken to develop the proposal to promote an inclusive, citizen based approach to locality decision making, in which formal Community Committees are underpinned by enhanced community engagement. Linked to this, an extensive consultation was undertaken with Members, partners, Town and Parish Councils, third sector organisations and officers. In February 2014, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board also considered and provided comment on the proposed design principles for Community Committees and Community Engagement.
- 2.3 A number of changes to the design principles were made to reflect the discussions and concerns expressed during the consultation process. In particular, these related to the naming of Community Committees and the number of formal business meetings held. In naming Community Committees, it was considered that the best way forward would be to retain the existing naming arrangements (e.g. Outer North East) but to also detail the ward names covered by the committee in all design and communication activity. This approach continues to use names which many people are familiar with, but at the same time being much clearer on the wards and areas covered.
- 2.4 Each Community Committee will decide how many formal business meetings they need each year, the only stipulation being a minimum of four, as well as deciding how much time will be devoted to other types of engagement activity. More agile delegations will be developed to enable decisions to be taken between meetings, and allow more member and staff resource to focus on greater community involvement activity. Such delegations will include the parameters for progressing an officer delegated decision i.e. relevant members have been consulted and are in agreement with the decision.

3 Main issues

Agreed Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules for Community Committees

- 3.1 The Terms of Reference for Committee Committees were agreed by full Council on 9th June 2014 and are attached at Appendix 1 for Members' information. The Community Committee Procedure Rules were also agreed by full Council on 9th June 2014. These are intended to promote a flexible approach to the formal business to be conducted by Community Committees, so that each may engage with the communities in their area using the means most appropriate to those Members and those communities. The rules also provide for flexibility in determining the number of meetings each committee holds each year, stipulating only that the minimum should be four. The Community Committee Procedure Rules are also attached at Appendix 2 to this report.

Continued areas of development

- 3.2 The Board will receive a verbal update during today's meeting of the ongoing development work with Community Committees across the city. Particular areas of development include the following:
- 3.3 Locally focused Community Committees – simplified processes are being established in relation to the effective delivery of Community Committees. Their work will be based on local intelligence provided via services, and community engagement events and understanding. An engagement plan will be developed by each Community Committee which will enable focus on a small number (2 or 3) areas of specific concern to the locality which the Community Committee wants to address. Each Community Committee will operate in the way best suited to them and their locality, whilst abiding by the underpinning principles.
- 3.4 Cultural change - It is recognised that for Community Committees to be successful they need to be accompanied by a significant cultural shift. To achieve this, consideration is being given to the appropriate support arrangements which need to be in place within the locality teams' services, members and partners to effectively support the new way of working. Therefore, any change agreed will need to be supported by an appropriate organisational development and change process to ensure culture and behaviours also change to reflect the new way of working.
- 3.5 Local decision making - Integral to the success of Community Committees is their ability to influence service delivery through direct budget/service responsibility, SLAs and/or other appropriate mechanisms. Work is continuing to develop the approach to budget and service devolution, with this beginning to take effect in 2014/15. This will bring an increased focus on locality influence and decision making. Not all services or budgets are within scope for consideration, but the intention is to challenge and move decision-making closer to communities wherever possible. Linked to this, the Scrutiny Board has already agreed to undertake a piece of work this year to look at options for area based delegations.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Informal consultation with the members of the Area Chairs' Forum and area committees has been regular and incremental as part of the work following on from the area review recommendations agreed in December 2013 by the council's Executive Board. This supported the substantive and formal part of the consultation with elected members, services, partners, the third sector and town and parish councils which took place between February and April 2014. In February 2014, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board also considered and provided comment on the proposed design principles for Community Committees and Community Engagement.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The Citizens@Leeds propositions which include the move to Community Committees have undergone an equality screening exercise. This was included in the December 2013 Executive Board papers. No further screening is required at this stage.

4.2.2 Specific equality impact assessments will be undertaken on community engagement plans, specific initiatives and decisions as required.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Changes in the nature and focus of community engagement are supportive of the Council's values of working as a team for Leeds, being open, honest and trusted, treating people fairly, spending money wisely and primarily working with communities.

4.3.2 The Best Council Plan 2013-17 includes the key outcome to make it easier for people to do business with us, and the move to community committees will make a significant contribution to the delivery of this.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 There are no specific budgetary implications arising from this report.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no legal, access to information, or call-in implications arising from this report.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 There are no risk management issues of any significance arising from this report.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 This report updates the Scrutiny Board on the development of the new Community Committees following the extensive consultation undertaken between February and April 2014, to which the Scrutiny Board had also contributed. Attached to this report for Members' information are the Community Committee Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules, as agreed by Council in June 2014. During today's meeting, the Board will also receive a verbal update of the ongoing development work with Community Committees across the city.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are invited to note the progress made regarding the development of the new Community Committees.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

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.