

**Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities)**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

**Subject: Strengthening the Council's relationship with Parish and Town Councils – Tracking of Scrutiny recommendations**

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

**1.0 Purpose of this report**

1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review aimed at strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils.

**2.0 Background information**

- 2.1 In June 2012, the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services made a request for the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board to review the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils and explore how this can be strengthened.
- 2.2 In agreeing to undertake this review, the Board recognised the associated links with the Council's wider review in relation to area working relationships. In acknowledging that relationships between Area Committees and local councils are not consistent across the city, the Board agreed to focus its review around strengthening such relationships in the future.
- 2.3. The review concluded in March 2013 and a report setting out the Scrutiny Board's findings and recommendations was published in May 2013. In July 2013, the Scrutiny Board received a formal response to the recommendations arising from this review and tracked progress against these recommendations in February 2014. There are six recommendations still outstanding that the Scrutiny Board agreed to keep tracking.

### **3.0 Main issues**

- 3.1 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to consider the position status of its recommendations in terms of their on-going relevance and the progress made in implementing the recommendations based on a standard set of criteria. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.
- 3.2 This standard set of criteria is presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required. Details of progress against each recommendation are set out within the table at Appendix 2.

### **4.0 Recommendations**

- 4.1 Members are asked to:
- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
  - Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

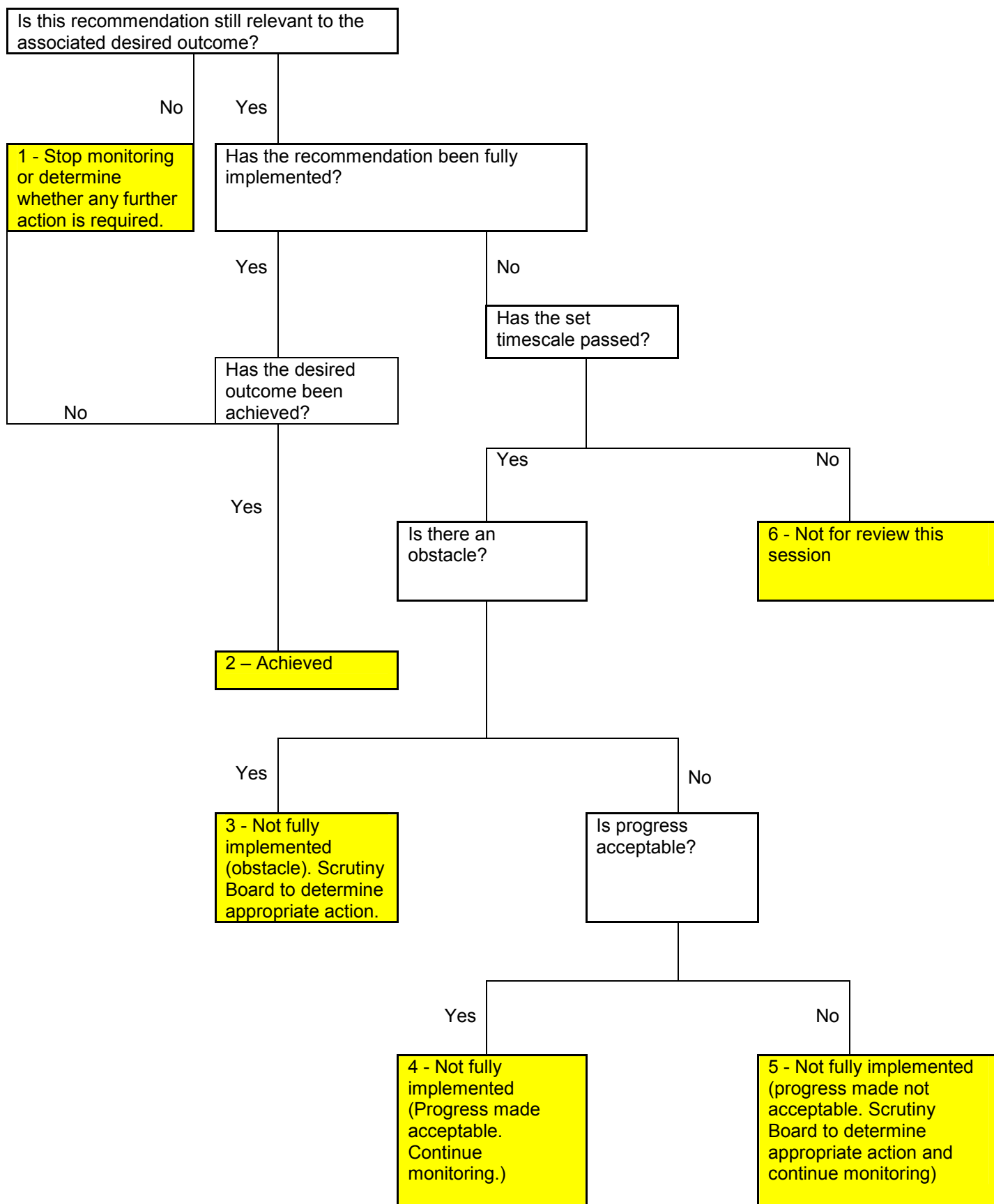
### **5.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 5.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

**Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:**  
**Questions to be considered by Scrutiny Boards**



Position Status Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring or determine whether any further action is required
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not fully implemented (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not fully implemented (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

**Desired Outcome** – That there is a quality standards benchmark scheme that is attractive and accessible to all local councils in Leeds.

**Recommendation 1** – That the Council's Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with the Chief Officer of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations to consider the outcome of the national Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme review and compare the merits of the updated national scheme against the potential benefits of a localised benchmark scheme.

**Formal response (July 2013):**

Chief Officer, Communities to meet with the Chief Officer of Yorkshire Local Councils Associations to review and compare the quality assurance schemes and make further recommendations by September 2013.

**Position reported in February 2014:**

The Chief Officer, Communities met with the Chief Officer of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association to discuss a range of issues relating to their working relationships with Leeds' Parish and Town Councils. On-going contact has been maintained on relevant issues. At the time, the expectation was that the national Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme would take place in October 2013. However there have been continued external delays and the latest information suggests that the re-launch is now due between now and the local elections in May 2015.

**Current position:**

Ongoing contact is maintained between the Chief Officer, Communities, and the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations on relevant issues. A Parish and Town Council Annual Seminar took place on 17<sup>th</sup> September chaired by the Deputy Leader. Discussions have taken place about the draft National Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme pending its final approval and launch delayed due to external factors.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That the capacity levels of local councils are continually developed to instil greater confidence within communities and amongst partners.

**Recommendation 2** – That the Council's Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with the Chief Officer of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations to develop a strategy aimed at promoting existing support services for local councils and also maximising resources to provide any additional support and advice that will enable local councils in Leeds to undertake their roles with confidence.

**Formal response (July 2013):**

Chief Officer, Communities to discuss with the Chief Officer of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations and the Area Chairs Forum/Area Committees the most effective way of engaging Town and Parish Councils in discussion initially to ascertain existing support arrangements and how additional support services could develop.

**Position reported in February 2014:**

At the meeting between the Chief Officer, Communities and the Yorkshire Local Councils Association held in August 2013, it was agreed that this recommendation be reviewed along with the work that will be needed to respond to the re-launch of the Quality Scheme. In addition, the Parish and Town Council Annual Seminar, Branch meeting, Forum and on-going liaison provide support, advice and guidance to local councils. Support is also provided by the Area Leadership Teams and Area Committees (referenced elsewhere in this report). LCC expressed an interest in becoming a corporate member of YLCA – to be discussed at the General Purposes Committee on 7 March 2014.

**Current Position:**

Ongoing support being provided as reported in February 2014. New Community Committees now established to promote local engagement including with Parish and Town Councils.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – There are clear pathways and protocols in place to enable open and meaningful dialogue between local councils and their respective Area Committee on matters that impact on their local communities.

**Recommendation 3** – That local councils and Area Committees give a commitment to work closely together to develop clear pathways and protocols that will enable open and meaningful dialogue on matters that have specific impact on their communities.

That Area Leaders take the lead on developing these clear pathways and protocols and report progress back to Scrutiny by December 2013.

**Formal response (July 2013):**

Area Leaders to collate what is in place and working in each area, discuss with their area committees and T&PCs and agree action plans where improvements are needed. Commitments are already set out in AC role and P&TC Charter. These commitments need reviewing as part of this process. Consult on the ideas of holding a workshop to be held in Autumn to develop pathways and protocols involving Area Chairs and Parish and Town Council chairs. Also see 5 below.

**Position reported in February 2014:**

This will be addressed alongside actions to implement the new Quality Scheme once launched and in line with the design principles set out within the Citizens@Leeds proposals. Area Leaders and Support Teams have agreed plans in place to deliver the Charter.

**Current Position:**

As reported in February 2014.

The Outer NE Community Committee continues to work closely with the Outer NE Parish and Town Council Forum. There are regular meetings between the Community Committee members and the Parish and Town Council discussing issues such as environmental improvements, local children's service arrangements through the cluster and ongoing conversations about neighbourhood planning.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – Area Committee meetings are utilised effectively to address matters of local relevance.

**Recommendation 4** – That the Council’s Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) promotes the following as good practice amongst Area Committees:

- The development of a forward work programme and identification of a major ‘theme’ or ‘topic’ for each area committee meeting
- That Area Committee reports include a separate section indicating any potential local impacts or challenges

**Formal response (July 2013):**

Links to the Area Review recommendations. Area Chairs Forum workshop session to be held on 28th June also involving Area Officers to develop new ways of working through Area Committees – this is likely to include themed meetings/forward work programmes and reviewing agendas.

**Position reported in February 2014:**

The Area Review implementation plan is being delivered including the establishment of Area Lead Members for Children’s Services; Health and Well-being and Adult Social Care; Environment and Community Safety; and Employment Skills and Welfare. The Area Lead members are responsible for reporting on their themed area to Area Committees and for raising particular issues and challenges for wider consideration. Building from the Area Review, a Citizens@Leeds report was agreed by Executive Board in December 2013 setting out the building blocks for a city-wide response to tackling poverty and deprivation. A further dimension to the approach has a broader focus on the need to “be responsive to the needs of local communities”. This proposition proposes to adopt a new approach to local democratic engagement and decision-making, subject to further consultation and discussion before new arrangements are implemented for the 1014/15 municipal year. The report set out design principles to underpin the establishment of new “Community Committees” to replace existing Area Committees and for a new community engagement model.

These developments are intended to re-focus decision-making and the council’s service design and delivery to better reflect local impacts and challenges

**Current Position:**

Community Committees now established in all ten areas. Engagement plans have been produced to reflect local priorities and themes. Community Champions continue to take responsibility for promoting priority themes.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That local councils and Area Committees work in partnership to maximise local intelligence and achieve more locally responsive and accountable services.

**Recommendation 5** – That Area Leaders ensure that input is sought from local councils as part of any future area based delegation scheme and particularly around the negotiation of Service Level Agreements.

**Formal response (July 2013):**

This will be considered as part of the actions set out in 3 above. In Outer NE a report will go to the September Area Committee following a review of the terms of reference for their Parish & Town Council Forum over the summer. Outer South and Outer East Area Committees have a report on the scrutiny recommendations in the June/July round and the recommendation is to establish a working group of AC and T&PC members to discuss and agree options for strengthening links. Outer NW Area Committee is initially having a sub-group discussion on the 28<sup>th</sup> June to agree way forward.

**Position reported in February 2014:**

**West North West**

The Outer North West Area Committee held its first Parish and Town Council Forum meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> November. The workshop reviewed the current working arrangements and explored how to work closer together. One of the outcomes from the session was to explore how Parish and Town Councils could work closer on environmental issues through Parish and Town Council representation. Other areas of common interest include young people's activities. The next Parish and Town Council Forum in March will focus on a discussion with the WNW Environmental Locality Manager to strengthen current working arrangements.

**East North East**

Outer North East – A report was presented to the September 2013 Area Committee meeting outlining the arrangements in place for engaging with Town and Parish Councils; this report included revised terms of reference for the Outer NE forum which were agreed at the forum meeting on 11 July 2013. Under the new terms of reference, the name of the forum was changed from the "Wetherby and Harewood Parish and Town Council Forum" to the "Outer North East Parish and Town Council Forum". This is to reflect Alwoodley Parish Council being part of the forum.

Parish and Town Councils are consulted on the Environmental SLA via the forum meetings. They have also been asked to each nominate a Children and Young People's champion to work with the Area Lead Member for Children and Young People (Cllr. Lamb).

**South East**

- Outer East –Town and Parish Councils membership is included in current partnerships and all relevant consultation exercises on integrated services affecting the local population are undertaken by partners with PTCs, including that of the environmental SLA. On-going work to localise the youth service has been discussed at community forums with representatives from the local parish councils. Area Improvement Manager is a member of the Micklefield regeneration board and youth service localisation has been discussed with the Board. Discussions with local councillors are underway to ensure that input to new or refreshed delegations in the new municipal year to area committees are secured.



- Outer South – A working group met on 11 October 2013 and agreed an action plan to deliver the Scrutiny Board recommendations in the area. The Area Leader is meeting with each Parish and Town Council in Spring 2014 on new or refreshed delegations. The Environmental Services Locality Manager has consulted with Parish and Town Councils on the Service Level Agreement. Operational dialogue through local groupings continues with the service on the delegated function and further discussions on the zonal deployment of environmental resources are planned.

**Current Position:**

**West North West**

- The Outer North West Community Committee held a Parish and Town Council Forum meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Following a request made at a previous meeting the main focus was on Environmental issues. The WNW Environmental Locality Manager gave a presentation which included information on local accountability, what resources the Locality Team manages and what the service does to keep neighbourhoods clean. Discussions ensued on how the Environmental Locality Team and the Parish and Town Councils can work closer together and a number of actions were agreed which included; the locality team sharing information about mechanical cleansing cycles with local councils and also providing advice on the most appropriate clothing for the Parish and Town Council's own cleansing operatives to wear. The next Parish and Town Council Forum in February 2015 will focus on a discussion on Highway and Transportation issues.

**East North East**

- The Outer NE Parish and Town Council Forum continues to meet and be well attended. The meeting is chaired by a member of the Community Committee and the meeting is open for all to attend. Recent discussions have focused on how the Environmental SLA has been working and exploring better working around community safety issues. The meeting during the summer focused on the work of children's services in the Outer NE and the opportunity for Parish and Town Councils to work closer with the local cluster. The Parish and Town Councils welcomed this conversation and explored ideas about how they could support the work of the clusters and targeted services for children and families and increase the aware of the services and activities available through the local cluster. The next meeting is due to take place in January 2015.

**South East**

- Outer East –Town and Parish Councils membership is included in current partnerships and all relevant consultation exercises on integrated services affecting the local population are undertaken by partners with PTCs, including that of the environmental SLA. On-going work to localise the youth service has been discussed at community forums with representatives from the local parish councils. Area Improvement Manager is a member of the Micklefield regeneration board and youth service localisation has been discussed with the Board. Discussions with local councillors are underway to ensure that input to the new community committees and any new delegations.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board***

**Desired Outcome** – That there are effective operational relationships with all local councils in relation to Planning Services and Highways and Transportation.

**Recommendation 6** – That, in accordance with the Leeds Parish and Town Council Charter and supplementary document, the Director of City Development leads on strengthening and ensuring there is a consistent approach to the operational relationships with all local councils in relation to Planning Services and Highways and Transportation.

**Formal response (July 2013):**

Fully supportive of the need to ensure we have effective operational relationships.

There are good and effective working relationships established in relation to development management, local and neighbourhood planning and enforcement. The Planning Charter, which has operated for several years, was revised and updated at the Annual meeting at the end of January and includes new sections – discussions have not yet been finalised to agree the updated Charter but will be progressed shortly – the outstanding issues relate to content about tree works information, the Community Infrastructure Levy and Neighbourhood Planning.

In terms of Neighbourhood Planning, 39 areas across Leeds are either working on Neighbourhood Plans or have shown an interest; of these areas, 25 are Town or Parish Councils, which equates to 75% of the Town and Parish Councils in Leeds. Recently, six other Town or Parish Council areas have shown an interest in Neighbourhood Planning and are being advised accordingly. Eight Parishes have shown no interest in Neighbourhood Planning to date (Allerton Bywater, Arthington, Drighlington, Gildersome, Great and Little Preston, Micklefield, Morley and Swillington). It is possible that this position will change as a result of the site allocations consultation being carried out in June/July.

The Neighbourhood Plans are at different stages and there are different capacities locally to prepare them; for this reason they are receiving different levels of support from minimal to intensive (the intensive support being given to the pilot areas of Boston Spa, Otley and Kippax). No Neighbourhood Plans have been adopted yet, as this cannot happen until the adoption of the Core Strategy, which is expected to be in mid to late 2014.

12 Town or Parish Council areas have completed Stage 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning process (designating a relevant neighbourhood area) and are now working to producing a draft Neighbourhood Plan document (Stage 2). There are seven pending neighbourhood area designations in Town or Parish Council areas.

Planning and Sustainable Development now have wedge-based nominated contact officers, to ensure a single point of contact for Parish Councils and to ensure greater continuity.

Through the Charter, local planning processes and Neighbourhood Planning, we ensure greater contact with Town and Parish Councils and a means for them to feed into the wider planning process.

A Highways and Transportation supplement that sets out the links and services provided in the local council areas has been provided and is updated on a regular basis. In addition officers within the service work closely with their local councils to provide services which

address local needs such as highway maintenance operations, street lighting and local traffic management.

Details of planned road works are provided to local councils and a new on-line system called 'roadworks.org' is currently being brought on stream which should in due course provide improved levels of communication and notification. Contact details for key officers in the local council areas are provided.

The supplement is currently updated on an annual basis to reflect both changes in the services and issues that may be raised by local councils and residents during the year. A further update for 2013 is planned and ways of improving the usability and level of information provided within the document are presently under review.

#### **Position reported in February 2014:**

The Parish and Town Council Charter was reviewed in September 2013 and includes updates Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), tree works and neighbourhood planning.

- 21 parished areas have been designated a neighbourhood area and will receive support from the Council to prepare a neighbourhood plan
- The Parish and Town Council Charter now outlines the keys stages in the neighbourhood planning process
- To complement the charter, a neighbourhood planning agreement will be prepared for each area and will set out statutory responsibilities, how the Council will support and parish and town council responsibilities
- Parish/Town councils were consulted on CIL charging schedule Oct/Dec 2013, the draft is due for submission February 2014 and adoption late 2014
- From 1 December 2013, Parish/Town Councils will be notified by email of new tree work applications
- Parish/Town Councils now have an opportunity to attend Plans Panel under new public speaking provisions at pre-application stage
- Officers will now request Parish/Town councils are consulted by applicants on sensitive pre-applications

#### **Current Position:**

In September 2014 two 2 workshops given on a Planning update at the Parish and Town Council Seminar; they were well attended.

In October and November Parish and Town Councillors attended two sessions of Plans Panel member training; it is likely that in 2015 more tailored training for Parish and Town Councillors will be given.

- 39 areas are working on or have shown an interest in neighbourhood planning. 22 (56%) of these are Town or Parish Councils.
- Alwoodley Parish was designated a neighbourhood area at end of February 2014, bringing the total to 22, although all may not proceed to examination.
- Collingham and Linton Parish Council formally advertised the Pre-Submission Draft Linton Neighbourhood Plan for six weeks on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The pre-submission draft is being revised in light of comments received. Walton Parish Council is expected to undertake consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Walton Neighbourhood Plan shortly.
- All parished areas are progressing well with the drafting of planning policies and their neighbourhood plans.

- Town and Parish Councils are awaiting further developments on the draft Site Allocations Plan. Consultation on the Publication Draft Site Allocations Plan is expected Summer 2015.
- The Core Strategy was adopted by Full Council on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014. This sets out the strategic policy framework which neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with.
- Parish and Town Councils will be invited to enter into Neighbourhood Planning Agreements with the City Council which will set out clearly roles and responsibilities for both the City Council and the parish/town council.

The annual review of the Highways and Transportation Supplement was undertaken during the Autumn 2013. The document was updated in respect of contacts and changes to the service.

A presentation was made on the “roadworks.org” website which provides up-to-date detail about road works planned and allows the local Councils and individuals to tailor alerts from the system for their local areas. Further work will continue to develop the functionality of this system and the depth and quality of information available to the public and local Councils. This system should also alleviate issues that have arisen in terms of changes to the timing of planned road works which have occurred under existing arrangements.

An update was also given on the reporting of the annual programme and progress and engagement with the part night switching programme for street lighting.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*