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## Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

### Outer North West Area Committee

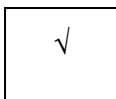
**Date:** 3rd November 2008

**Subject:** Proposals for Community Engagement

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#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Adel & Wharfedale  
Guiseley & Rawdon  
Horsforth  
Otley & Yeadon



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

☐

Community Cohesion

☐

Narrowing the Gap

☐

Council  
Function

☐

Delegated Executive  
Function available  
for Call In

x

Delegated Executive  
Function not available for  
Call In Details set out in the  
report

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## Executive Summary

In November 2007, the Executive Board approved proposals to extend and enhance the roles of the Area Committees during 2008/09. Community Engagement was included as a specific function with a requirement for the agreement of a local community engagement plan for each area.

This report outlines proposals for community engagement in Outer North West Leeds and describes how the Area Committee could engage and involve local residents, enabling them to help shape future Area Committee priorities.

## **Purpose of this report**

1. The Area Delivery Plan (ADP) for the Area Committee for 2008-11 uses the Local Area Agreement (LAA) to drive its own local priorities and improvement strategies for the area. The LAA provides the opportunity to take community involvement and engagement forward to make sure that it forms an essential part of all plans and strategies. This report outlines proposals for community engagement. Members are asked to consider and comment on these proposals

## **Background**

2. The need for community engagement is being driven nationally and locally through statutory obligations on local authorities, public agencies and local strategic partnerships. Area Committees are the means by which Leeds City Council devolves decision making to local communities, taking the lead on community engagement activity and enhancing the role of the local councillor as community champion.
3. Within the ADP there is a commitment to empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services, and to build the role of the voluntary, community and faith sectors. This priority is integral to the objectives of the Area Committee to:
  - enhance both the representative role of local elected councillors and the connections with their communities;
  - improve the quality of democracy and find new ways to facilitate citizen participation in local government.

## **Community engagement**

4. Since Area Committees were established in 2004 the Area Committee has engaged with local people through regular forum meetings in Guiseley & Rawdon and more recently in Yeadon. This report now proposes a framework for engagement for the Area Committee which will ensure that communities are engaged in a way that is coordinated, consistent and coherent.

## **National context**

5. The Government has placed statutory obligations on local authorities, public agencies and local strategic partnerships to engage with communities about issues that affect them. Funding streams all emphasise the need for social inclusion, community involvement and partnership. The challenge is how to do this in an informed way that is both effective and credible, and does not result in duplication or over consultation.
6. A set of indicators on citizen satisfaction with Council services has been drawn up. Under the existing Local Area Agreement in Leeds there is a mandatory target that measures residents' perception of public sector service improvements and their ability to influence service changes. The Audit Commission assessment of the Council will place a greater emphasis in its inspections on satisfaction indicators and whether residents think services are improving.

7. The Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill (Sept 2008) will create greater opportunities for community and individual empowerment. Local and regional governance arrangements will be reformed to empower communities and individuals by involving them in the design and delivery of local public services. Other measures will be designed to promote local democracy and encourage greater numbers of active citizens, for example by giving individuals a right of response from their local authority to local petitions.

### **Leeds context: the Leeds Strategic Plan**

8. The Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 to 2011, incorporating the Local Area Agreement, includes the following improvement priorities and targets linked to engagement and empowerment:
  - An increased number of local people engaged in activities to meet community needs and improve the quality of life for local residents;
  - An increase in the number of local people that are empowered to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public service delivery;
  - Enable a robust and vibrant voluntary, community and faith sector to facilitate community activity and directly deliver services;
  - An increased sense of belonging and pride in local neighbourhoods that help to build cohesive communities.
9. Indicators related to these priorities will be drawn from the national indicator set and measured by the Place Survey. The first survey to provide a baseline from which progress will be measured will take place in the autumn 2008.

### **Leeds City Council corporate context**

10. In 2007, the Council launched a corporate approach to consultation and engagement, including publication of a Community Engagement Policy and the development of a consultation portal. However, the size of the council, the diverse focus of its activities and relationships means that promoting high quality, effective and coordinated community engagement is a significant challenge.
11. As part of the commitment to develop and embed a more robust approach, a Corporate Consultation Manager was appointed in April 2008, to:
  - support public and stakeholder consultation across council and partners;
  - deliver corporate projects such as the statutory Place Survey, the Residents' Survey and the Citizens' Panel.
12. The Corporate Consultation Manager recognises the important role of neighbourhood and area based engagement to the Council and partners and has committed to support and work closely with colleagues leading on this.

### **Outer North West Leeds – existing arrangements**

13. The existing arrangements for community engagement include:

- **Forums:** two community forums operate under the remit of the Area Committee. Guiseley & Rawdon and Yeadon meet quarterly and move location in order to reach different parts of each ward. Attendance can vary but it is usually high (about 90 people) in Guiseley & Rawdon and about 20-30 people for Yeadon.
- **One off community events:** for example the Weston Estate Community Day. Over 100 people attended this event and took part in a 'Planning For Real' exercise. This was followed up with a further day to progress the actions highlighted at the event. Also consultation on the Horsforth Neighbourhood Design Statement took place through a stall at the Horsforth Gala. The Design Statement steering group were able to consult with a large number of people attending the gala who completed questionnaires on the day as well as being able to discuss local issues with the steering group.

## Outer North West Leeds – proposed arrangements

14. As part of the review of area management, Area Committees now have a more specific role in relation to community engagement in the future. The Area Function Schedule for community engagement sets out the role of the Area Committees. This involves the production of an area plan for community engagement which will include:
  - **A Community Profile** of local data and intelligence, with information about the local communities, identified key contacts and routes to reach local neighbourhood and interest communities;
  - **A Calendar of Planned Communication and Engagement activity**, including information in "About Leeds" at least once each year;
  - **Community Engagement Activities** within particular neighbourhoods and communities, linked to ADP priorities.
15. It is proposed that the Area Management Team will maintain the **community profile**, combining local intelligence with statistical information. The **calendar of events** will be developed under the direction of the Area Committee. Proposals for **neighbourhood and community based engagement activities** will build on the already established networks and introduce new ideas for reaching a wider sector of the community.
16. Specifically, it is **proposed** that the Community Engagement Plan for Outer North West Leeds includes the following planned engagement activities:
  - Public forums with local residents will continue to be held in Guiseley & Rawdon and Yeadon, meeting on an approximately quarterly basis and chaired by elected ward members. The promotion and format of the meetings will hopefully encourage maximum accessibility and value to all sectors of the community. The agendas will be developed to allow greater involvement and information sharing on locally relevant issues.
  - One Area Community Forum will be held per ward each year and will be linked to priority setting within the themes already identified in the current ADP. These

marketplace-style events will be held at times and venues so as to enable as many people as possible to attend on a drop-in basis. By using service information 'stalls', informal themed discussion tables or 'planning for real' style maps to record issues or areas of concern, the services delegated to the Area Committee will have the opportunity to engage with members of the public. New techniques will be introduced to encourage the public to record their comments at the events.

The events will enable local residents to identify local priorities and help shape revisions to the Area Delivery Plan, as well as helping to engage more people if the consultation is focussed on recognised local priorities, such as mobile youth provision, community greenspace, community safety, community centres or public transport provision.

- Participatory Budgeting. Members views are sought on the introduction of a Participatory Budgeting scheme in one Outer North West neighbourhood. Participatory Budgeting has been piloted successfully in other parts of Leeds and is a process by which residents allocate part of the local wellbeing budget (plus other funding sources where available) through an open and democratic process. The aim is to allow citizens to present their ideas for local improvements and then to have a direct say in which projects are actually funded.

The pilot schemes had funding of between £15,000 – £20,000 available to them and most of the successfully funded projects cost between £2,000 and £5,000. Members are asked to consider setting aside up to £20,000 from the Area Committee budget to carry out a Participatory Budgeting project in spring 2009.

17. The calendar of events will therefore include:

Activity	Frequency
2 Community Forums	Approx 4 times a year each
Area Community Forum	Approx 4 times a year (1 per ward)
Participatory Budgeting	One neighbourhood a year

## Implications for Council policy and governance

### Member consultation

18. Members will continue to lead and be involved in themed discussions which are based on the Strategic Plan and ADP themes, through the Area Committee sub-groups.

### Equality and diversity considerations

19. The Council has a long standing commitment to promoting equality, diversity and cohesion, aside from its legal duties. The Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme

2008 – 2011 outlines its commitments and responsibilities as an employer, a service provider, a commissioner of services and as a leader.

20. The Stronger Communities section of the Scheme states that Leeds is a city that values the contributions of all the people of Leeds and actively engages with all our diverse communities. Leeds has set the goal of achieving Level 4 of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) Equality Standard by December 2008. A recent Interim Assessment of Regeneration Service against this Standard identified a number of areas for action, including the need to make sure that all equality groups are reached through consultation and participation activities. These will be monitored and activities put in place to address any gaps identified.
21. Equality Impact Assessment is a key element of the new CAA framework. The inspection will consider how well public services are knowing and meeting the needs of the diverse groups within communities; and focus on whether groups and individuals who can be subject to discrimination and prejudice receive equitable outcomes.
22. Equality monitoring, designed to ensure that we are reaching all sectors of the community and that barriers to participation in engagement activities are addressed, will include:
  - ensuring that effective promotion of community engagement activities targets all equality groups, plus other socially excluded communities, e.g. people reliant on state benefits or excluded because of education or skills levels;
  - assessing what barriers people may face in, for example, accessing services or getting their opinions heard;
  - annual monitoring of regular forums and networks through a standard monitoring form for completion by attendees;
  - annual postal surveys of all households in the Outer West area;
  - use of a standard voluntary feedback and equality monitoring form at public events.

## **Legal and resource implications**

23. There are no legal implications arising from this report.
24. The Area Management Team will be responsible for organizing and co-ordinating community engagement activities and equality monitoring under the direction of the Area Committee.

## **Conclusion**

25. The Area Committee has supported successful community engagement events in the past and it is now proposed to review and develop these arrangements to help inform the priorities and work programmes for future years.

## **Recommendations**

26. The Area Committee is requested to comment on and approve the community engagement approach for 2009/10.

### Background Papers

Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill (Sept 2008)

Executive Board report, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008 'Area Committee roles for 2008/09'

Leeds Equality and Diversity Scheme, Lighter Touch Impact Assessment

Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 to 2011