



Report of the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods Directorate

Inner South Area Committee

Date: 11th November 2008

Subject: Community engagement plan

Electoral Wards Affected:

Beeston & Holbeck
City & Hunslet
Middleton Park

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

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

Executive Summary

This report outlines a community engagement plan for the Area Committee and describes how this will increase the number of people involved in, and who feel they have an influence over local decision making. It presents a timetable of events for members consideration and includes information on different styles that could be used to organise the events.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a community engagement plan for the Area Committee which will enable the Committee to increase the number of local people involved in, and who feel they have influence over local decision making.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 In November 2007 the Executive Board agreed an increase in the responsibilities of area committees. This included community engagement.
- 2.2 At the same time, the Executive Board agreed to end the district partnership structure, which had previously provided a framework for multi-agency partnership working in the city under Leeds Initiative.
- 2.3 The area committees now have more of a role in overseeing partnership work in their area. The Area Delivery Plans have been changed to reflect this, as they are now linked to the Leeds Strategic Plan and its priorities. The Leeds Strategic Plan

replaces the Vision for Leeds, the Leeds Regeneration Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan.

2.4 Two of the key improvement priorities in the Area Delivery Plan under the Stronger Communities theme are:

'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'.

'an increase in the number of local people engaged in activities to meet community needs and improve the quality of life for local residents'.

3.0 Previous arrangements

3.1 Several community forums have existed in the area for a number of years, supported by Community Planning staff and then the Area Regeneration Team. Community forums can enhance the representative role of local councillors and are a contact point for citizens to express their views and concerns about issues that affect them. They are also a useful link between partner agencies and local people. Many of the forums continue to meet, run by the community themselves.

3.2 However, current thinking suggests that forums are not particularly effective in terms of encouraging wider participation, and therefore provide only a limited and unrepresentative perspective. Attendees are likely to be very small numbers and are therefore unable to represent the views of the whole community. Equally, the meeting set up for forums is not likely to attract many people and it is likely there will be greater interest and participation by devising innovative and even entertaining means of engaging.

4.0 Proposed arrangements

4.1 For residents to feel they are involved in local decision making and promote Members as community champions, the Area Committee needs to take a central role in the community engagement process.

4.2 Area Committees can influence and change service delivery on behalf of residents through their Area Delivery Plan (ADP). The ADP identifies local priorities and issues and develops actions or changes mainstream service delivery to respond to them. Council service departments now have a duty to consult with Area Committees when developing their annual service plans – and the issues identified in the ADP can be used as the main tool for informing service planning.

4.3 The Area Committee has agreed to hold two community engagement events per ward per year. It is proposed these form the central focus of the Area Committee's community engagement plan.

4.4 It is proposed the events should focus on innovative ways to involve local people in identifying the priorities for next year's ADP. The style of event in each ward can be agreed locally through ward member meetings. Appendix 1 gives a comprehensive description of various different ways of engaging with residents.

- 4.5 An indicative timetable is suggested below. Final dates will be locally determined in consultation with local ward members;
- **Autumn.** Engagement activities should be an integral part of the service planning process so that results can be fed directly into decisions about service provision. This event will provide an opportunity for local residents to identify local priorities and help shape the Area Delivery Plan. By defining issues and solving problems together, the public and local services can target resources where they are most needed. This helps the Area Committee to provide services that are more responsive to the needs of local communities.
 - **Summer.** This event can be an opportunity for a summer festival style event. It will provide an opportunity for the Area Committee to feedback to residents what it has done with the information they provided at the first event, and celebrate what progress has been made over the year around achieving the ADP.
- 4.6 It is also proposed to hold one celebration event, hosted by the Area Committee as a way of celebrating the positive contribution voluntary organisations make to inner south Leeds. Both in terms of the support and networks they offer to residents, and also the service delivery contribution they make in the area.
- 4.7 **Because we are already half way through the year, it is proposed to hold the service planning events in spring 2009. This will still enable resident's views to influence the ADP for 2009/10, but may mean we don't have as much progress to report back at the summer event as we would do in future years.**
- 4.8 Appendix 1 provides detailed information on the different types of engagement event that members might wish to use for their ward events. Officers will talk members through these choices at ward member meetings to aid members in deciding what format would best suit their particular ward, and in some wards these discussions have already begun to take place.
- 4.9 Publicity for the events will be key. A comprehensive publicity plan will be prepared for each event and ward members will be consulted as part of this process. Effective publicity can be costly. The Area Committee is requested to approve a top up to the community engagement and consultation fund to enable us to effectively publicise these future events and for running them. The specific funding request is referred to in the Well-Being Fund report being presented to this meeting.

4.10 Ward Based Activities

Following discussions with Ward Members, the format of some of the community engagement events have already been agreed and others are in the proposal stage. The section below outlines various ideas on community engagement activities in each ward:-

- **Beeston & Holbeck** – it has been agreed that the format of community engagement activities will be Planning for Real style events, where members of community can come and highlight key issues such as anti-social behaviour, environmental problems, etc. and suggest solutions. The information gathered at this event will be used to inform the development of the Area Delivery Plan. Proposed dates and locations for these activities are:-

Wednesday 25th March, Cottingley Primary School. Two sessions 3pm – 4.30pm and 5.30pm – 7.30pm

Saturday 16th May, Beeston St Mary's. One session 11am – 3pm

- **City & Hunslet** – A proposal for community engagement in this area is to target people living in the city centre, as we haven't engaged with these residents before. The aim of this activity would be to let people know what is happening in the other Inner South communities around the city centre and provide information on key issues that could affect city centre residents – for example, flooding, for those people who live by the River Aire and Leeds / Liverpool Canal. It is suggested that the event should take place in April at the Royal Armouries.
- **Middleton Park** – A celebration event is to be organised to recognise the work of Middleton Community Group and say thank you to all the group members for their work in the Central Middleton estate. It is suggested that this event will also provide the opportunity to consult with community members around the issues in their locality to inform the development of the Area Delivery Plan. It is proposed that this event will take place in February, possibly on the 14th.

All sessions will also have a market place type set up to them as well, with various agencies attending to provide information and advice to people attending the sessions.

5.0 Other aspects of community engagement

- 5.1 We recognise ward wide events are unlikely to engage everyone across an area. People have different lifestyles and different preferences for how they want to interact with the Council.
- 5.2 The Area Committee recently agreed to support the South Leeds Free Press through Well-Being funding. South Leeds Health For All produce this newspaper which is professionally prepared, written by journalists and with a distribution of 25,000 copies per run. This presents an opportunity for the Area Committee to publicise the community engagement events, and also use the paper as an engagement tool itself.
- 5.3 The Council has recently launched 'Talking Point' which is an online consultation portal. It contains details of all consultation Council departments are undertaking. It will in the future have the ability to be used as a consultation website, so that residents can leave comments online. At the moment it provides details of what is being consulted on, and how to take part. It also has a section where residents can find out the results of consultation and hopefully see how we have improved services as a result. The Area Committee could take advantage of this technology as a further way of consulting with residents of inner south Leeds who may not be able to attend an event, but want to leave their views.
- 5.4 As part of the Neighbourhood Improvement Plan (NIP) process, all households in the NIP area are sent a 'Big Issues, Big Ideas' questionnaire with freepost to return their comments to the Area Management Team. The responses are used to develop the NIP action plan – which in turn is an action in the Area Delivery Plan and so can be seen as another effective method of involving local people in how services are delivered in their area.

6.0 Other departments / agencies consultation activities

- 6.1 Council departments and other agencies will be required to consult with residents in the locality, and it is important that this is recognised and linked in with the Area Committee's community engagement plan. The report already refers to the 'Talking Point' website which will list all Council consultation.
- 6.2 As part of the community engagement plan we will keep a list of area based consultation activities other agencies are carrying out, and where possible and appropriate, try and link these in with any community engagement events being organised by Area Management. This list will also be useful for informing members and community groups in the area as a source of publicity for the departments.

7.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

- 7.1 There are no direct implications associated with Council Policy and Governance as a result of this report.

8.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

9.0 Recommendations

- 9.1 The Area Committee is requested to:
 - a) Note the contents of this report
 - b) approve the community engagement plan for 2008/09

Background papers

None