



Report of the South East Area Manager

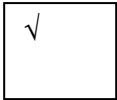
South (Inner) Area Committee

Date: 10th February 2010

Subject: Community Engagement

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 presents the findings from the Planning For Real community engagement events undertaken in October and November 2009 and outlines how these will assist with identifying key issues and priorities for the 2010-11 Area Delivery Plan (ADP).

The report asks the Area Committee to consider the outcomes, address the issues that have emerged and support proposals for the next round of community engagement in Spring 2010.

Purpose of this report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Planning for Real events held in each ward last year to enable the Area Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the events in helping to identify issues and priorities for the 2010/11 Area Delivery Plan which in turn will shape service delivery arrangements and influence decision making. In addition the report requests that the area committee endorse proposals for a community engagement event in Spring 2010.

Background

2. The area committee has made a commitment to empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and delivery of services and to build the role of the voluntary, community and faith sectors. This is an identified priority in the current Area Delivery Plan and is indeed integral to the objectives of establishing Area Committees.
3. At its meeting in November 2008 the area committee agreed a practical framework for community engagement that sets the foundation for consistency, good practice and that contributes to improving service delivery.

Autumn Planning for Real Events

4. Planning for Real events were held in all three wards during October and November 2009. The aim of the events was to seek views of local residents to shape priorities for the 2010/11 Area Delivery Plan (ADP). With the emphasis on innovative and interactive activity, including refreshments and a free prize draw, residents were invited to “have their say” on local issues. In addition, the area management team took advantage of local events and facilitated the Planning for Real process with 50 women at the Ash Neighbourhood Project on 3rd December and at the Middleton Opportunities Day on 9th December.
5. Details of the Beeston & Holbeck and City Hunslet events were outlined at the November meeting. The Middleton Park ward event took place on 11th November at Windmill Primary School. Despite wide advertising and promotion of this event, the total number of residents who attended was 20 and 88 issues were raised. Some difficulties accessing the venue caused by a last minute change of the room used for the event could be one reason for the low attendance.
6. Generally at all events there was good commitment from council departments and other agencies in terms of attendance and input to the events. This has strengthened relationships between them and the area management team which will help in delivering co-ordinated services in the inner area in the future and in addition will help support the development of a “team neighbourhood” approach to locality working in the priority neighbourhoods.
7. In addition we have shared the findings from the events with colleagues across the Council to help inform their service planning – for example, the priorities under health and wellbeing have been presented to the Health & Wellbeing partnership for use in their emerging plan.
8. In total 186 residents participated in the events and over 634 issues were collated from all events. The area management team has undertaken a full evaluation of the issues raised by residents. These are presented in appendix 1. Because of the nature of the events, a wide range of issues were raised, not all of which are within the remit of the

Area Committee or indeed the Council to resolve. Others are inspirational ideas that require further investigation regarding their feasibility, resourcing, and strategic fit before considering them for the Area Delivery Plan. Others are specific service problems relating to an area. These have been referred to the relevant department to deal with immediately.

9. Many of the ideas have been used together with statistical data and the Leeds Neighbourhood indices to give a sophisticated understanding of the problems and issues facing local communities. It is suggested that this provides a robust evidence base by which to plan service interventions and the area management team will be working with council and other partner agencies to develop proposals to be discussed in more detail at individual ward member meetings.

Next Steps and Engagement Activity in spring 2010

10. An evaluation of community engagement activity undertaken so far in the inner south indicates that events led engagement alone will only reach those able and willing to come along. Engagement takes place within certain boundaries and varies from issue to issue and neighbourhood to neighbourhood. So for example, residents living in Far Beeston or Belle Isle are not likely to attend a ward event held in Cottingley or Middleton. In addition, the capacity of the area management team to hold such events are limited, and so therefore are the opportunities for residents to have a say on issues affecting their neighbourhood.
11. Given the targeted nature of the Planning for Real events, held in specific ward locations, and the low attendance of residents attending the events, to assist with prioritising the issues raised by local residents at the Planning for Real events and to provide feedback, a questionnaire has been circulated not only to those who participated in the event but also more widely to community organisations, interest group and local businesses. The questionnaires have been developed on a ward basis according to the findings from the events and neighbourhood index data. An analysis of the questionnaires will be undertaken throughout February and the area management team will discuss with Members, through individual ward member meetings, how these findings can shape and influence the 2010/11 ADP.
12. In line with the community engagement framework agreed by the area committee in November 2008, it is proposed that an inner south ward wide event takes place in April 2010. This event can serve to “launch” the ADP for 2010/11, recognise the value of voluntary activity in the area and enhance the role of the area committee as a focal point for community involvement. It is proposed that this is a high profile event, to take place in the Civic Hall. A range of voluntary groups could be invited, particularly recipients of well-being funds, which in turn will demonstrate the priorities set out within the ADP.
13. The Area Committee is requested to endorse this as the focus for the Spring event so that the area management team can begin making arrangements. In addition the area management team will be working with Members looking at lessons learnt from the recent events. This will include looking at publicity and ways to encourage greater participation in the future.
14. In conclusion, resident feedback so far indicates that some of the foundations for effective community engagement have been put in place. A number of themes and priorities are emerging that will be incorporated into the 2010/11 Area Delivery Plan which will enable the area committee to demonstrate how they are empowering local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and delivery of services in the inner south area.

Recommendations

15. The Area Committee is requested to:
 - a) note the contents of this report
 - b) endorse the theme and focus for the Spring event.

Background Papers

- South (Inner) Area Committee, November 2008, Community Engagement
- South (Inner) Area Committee, June 2009, Area Delivery Plan 2009/10