

**Area Chairs Forum
Monday 5th September 2011
Committee Room 1, Civic Hall**

Attendance:

Councillors: P. Gruen (Chair), G. Hyde, G. Wilkinson, K. Parker, A. Gabriel, G. Latty, D. Blackburn

Officers: J. Rogers, R. Barke, S. Mahmood, J. Maxwell, H. Freeman, B. Logan

Minutes: S. Warbis

Officers attending for specific items: Jane Harwood, Debra Scott, Geoff Turnbull

| Item | Description | Action |
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| 1.0 | Apologies | |
| 1.1 | Cllr. G. Hussain | |
| 2.0 | Minutes and Matters Arising | |
| 2.1 | The minutes of the previous Area Chairs Forum meeting on 17 th June 2011 were agreed as an accurate record. | |
| 2.2 | <u>2.3 of previous minutes – Environmental Service Level Agreement pilot</u> Due to timescales it had been agreed to take the SLAs to Area Committees, with no need for a pilot exercise. | |
| 2.3 | <u>3.1 of previous minutes - Environmental Delegation Member Workshops</u> Reminders had been sent to members by Cllr Gruen and attendance averaged around 60 members at each workshop. It was noted that some elected members had failed to attend any of the workshops. | |
| 2.4 | <u>3.3 of previous minutes – Cycles of Mechanical Cleansing Services</u> Dealt with in agenda item 5. | |
| 2.5 | <u>3.5 of previous minutes – Land Ownership Issues and Responsibilities</u> Although progress has been made, particularly regarding co-operation with ALMOs, it was felt that this was still an issue locally and that remedies discussed between partners had not always been embedded with the front line workforce. Multi-agency work has progressed regarding priority ginnels, including tackling red tape around budget issues, and it was felt that this work would be built on, although it was still a work in progress. Further meetings are to take place with Parks and Countryside in September to explore further co-operative approaches between responsible agencies. It was agreed that this would be an item on the next Area Chairs Forum agenda in November, and that Area Leaders would provide a snapshot of issues in their areas, and detail progress being made between partners. | Area Leaders |
| 2.6 | <u>3.6 from previous minutes – Environmental Services Restructure</u> Dealt with in agenda item 5. | |
| 2.7 | <u>3.8 from previous minutes – Environmental Delegation</u> Dealt with in agenda item 5. | |
| 2.8 | <u>5.5 from previous minutes – Luncheon Clubs</u> The following written update was provided by Jason Lane: | |

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| | <p><i>In addition to a short questionnaire sent to LC grant recipients ASC have organised three discussions / meetings with sample of luncheon club committee members on 22nd August and 2nd September to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>get feedback on the previous years application process,</i> • <i>gather more information about how the LC's function,</i> • <i>identify and explore concerns raised by clubs,</i> • <i>identify networking possibilities and</i> • <i>enable PCT Health improvement workers to distribute nutrition and hydration information and discuss these topics directly with LC coordinators.</i> <p><i>ASC are also arranging dates September onwards to conduct informal interviews with service users of a sample of the luncheon clubs across Leeds to get an indication of the types of benefit individuals perceive they gain from the clubs. LC coordinator feedback will be used by ASC to improve the next annual process and application documents after which time a schedule for the 2012-13 application process can be confirmed and invitations to Area Management staff to observe 2012-13 grant application process can be made. Interviews with service users will not be complete for September Area Chairs Forum meeting. Budget information is being collated for inclusion with mapping information and issues raised by LC users and co-ordinators into a report to be brought back to Area Chairs Forum meeting for November.</i></p> <p>It was requested that Jason Lane be contacted to ensure that arrangements are made for the shadowing of the grant application process by the former Area Management staff.</p> | Sarn Warbis / Area Leaders |
| 3.0 | Update on the Localism Bill | |
| 3.1 | Jane Harwood, Corporate Policy and Performance Officer, attended to present a paper outlining ongoing work across the council in preparation for the Localism Bill. | |
| 3.2 | Work is ongoing across directorates to establish the implications of the bill and to prepare for the potential changes. Particular reference was made to the following areas: | |
| 3.3 | <p><u>Community Right to Challenge</u></p> <p>The potential right for various groups to express an interest in running services which the authority is responsible for. A paper is going to the Strategic Planning and Policy Board on 16th September and this area will be discussed at Corporate Commissioning Group on 19th September. Various pieces of work are underway to look at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ our relationship with the third sector ○ key account management ○ category management ○ commissioning processes ○ the Open Public Service white paper ○ innovation and new models of service delivery ○ community engagement ○ equality impact assessments ○ procurement. | |
| 3.4 | <p><u>Community Right to Buy</u></p> <p>The potential for communities to register land or property as assets of community value and to have a chance to bid to take over assets and facilities. A detailed report has been produced by Neil Charlesworth, Community Asset Officer, which has been agreed by Asset Management Board and will go to the executive board in December or January. This includes the proposed approach to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ assessing nominations ○ listing assets | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ publishing a list of assets of community value ○ publishing a list of unsuccessful community nominations <p>The Asset Transfer Framework is to be discussed at Asset Management Board on 15th September and will go to Executive Board in November.</p> | |
| 3.5 | <p><u>Local Referendums</u></p> <p>The Localism Bill will give people the power to initiate local referendums on local issues if support can be gained from 5% of the local electorate. Work is being undertaken to examine potential resource and cost implications, with assistance from Bradford MBC who are providing information regarding a recent parish poll carried out.</p> | |
| 3.6 | <p><u>Neighbourhood Planning</u></p> <p>This is a complex area with detail emerging as the bill progresses. A Neighbourhood plan would be subject to an independent examination and would need approval by 50% or more of voters who turn out for a referendum. A report is going to Corporate Leadership Team on 13th September and then to Leader Management Team to establish the LCC approach. Member briefings are taking place on 23rd September and 22nd November with a Parish and Town Council Seminar taking place on 19th October. Leeds is also hosting a Localism Roadshow for Councillors at the Town Hall on 1st November and there will also be a Localism Forum in Leeds run by the Local Government Group aimed at Heads of Service and Senior Officers from Local Authorities.</p> | |
| 3.7 | <p>Concerns were raised regarding the difficulties for areas that did not have Parish Councils in getting organised to take part in the various aspects of the Localism Bill. It was suggested that Area Committees and Locality Teams would need to be involved in supporting local areas to get organised. There were concerns that Neighbourhood Forums would need a lot of effort to achieve the appropriate mandate and representation from their communities, and that guidance was needed on what would represent an appropriate constitution for a forum. It was suggested that there needs to be communication between the Area Teams and Area Committees regarding where Neighbourhood Forums and other representative groups are functioning well and that learning should be shared.</p> | |
| 3.8 | <p>It was raised that the National Planning Framework was also changing dramatically and there needed to be clarity on the relationship between national and local planning policies.</p> | |
| 3.9 | <p>The Locality Bill is a work in progress and there are many amendments to guidance as the bill is progressing which can lead to confusion. Neighbourhood Planning may be seen by some as a means to stifle development although this is not the stated intention, and work will continue by officers across services to keep abreast of developments.</p> | |
| 4.0 | Community Centres Review Update | |
| 4.1 | <p>Debra Scott attended to present a report outlining the proposed review of community facilities.</p> | |
| 4.2 | <p>Although referred to as the Review of Community Centres it had already been agreed to rename this as the Review of Community Facilities to include other assets in the review options. It was stressed that the review was not tasked with reducing provision but was intended to maximise resources.</p> | |
| 4.3 | <p>The Project Initiation Document was included in the papers and this will be considered by the Asset Management Board on 15th September and will also be shared with Directors of other Directorates to explore opportunities for collaboration. It was stressed that consultation was key to the development of proposals and a workshop was suggested for Area Committee members to discuss and develop the consultation strategy.</p> | |

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| 4.4 | A project board is being established and there was an invitation for an Area Chair to join the programme board. It was also suggested that the programme board should include a representative for users of community facilities. | |
| 4.5 | It was suggested that clarity needed to be reached on what facilities were to be included in the scope of the review. Reference was made to community centres owned by external bodies but located on council land. Debra Scott stated that a mapping exercise was taking place and that issues such as these should be addressed through this exercise and through workshops with officers and members. | |
| 4.6 | Reference was made to a recent review of community facilities carried out in Chapelton which identified a vast array of facilities owned or run by local groups. This highlighted a duplication in provision, with competition threatening the viability of certain facilities and groups. It was suggested that the review needed to take account of the context in which facilities were located. | |
| 4.7 | Area Chairs were asked to note the content of the report and provide comments on the proposals. | |
| 4.8 | The Area Chairs Forum were asked to nominate an Area Chair to serve on the project board and Cllr Angela Gabriel volunteered and was nominated. | |
| 4.9 | It was agreed that a number of workshops would be arranged to enable Area Committee members to engage with and influence the review and consider wider consultation arrangements. | Debra Scott |
| 4.10 | It was agreed that Debra Scott would return to a future meeting to provide an update on the progress of the review. | Debra Scott |
| 5.0 | Delegation of Environmental Services to Area Committees | |
| 5.1 | Helen Freeman attended to provide an update on the progress of the Environmental Services delegation. | |
| 5.2 | The service level agreement is going to the first Area Committee meeting this afternoon for approval and will be going to all other Area Committees during September. | |
| 5.3 | Workshops for members carried out in January, March and July were successful and, along with sessions with environmental sub-groups, enabled the development of the service level agreement to proceed smoothly. | |
| 5.4 | The service restructure has progressed and appointments have been made to service manager and supervisor posts. The 8 day programme of sweeping and mechanical cleaning is going live today . | |
| 5.5 | Work is still ongoing in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o reviewing the fleet of vehicles o establishing a balance between mechanical and manual cleaning o coordination with Parks and Countryside o reviewing the use of depots and addressing downtime o developing and maintaining the committed and flexible culture within the service | |
| 5.6 | It was acknowledged that whereas some areas of the city were up to the benchmark other areas were below and these needed to be brought up. There will be ongoing reflection and reviewing of the delegation and this will involve Area Committee members. Also, Area Leadership teams will have input where they feel resources or performance is not appropriate. | |

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| 5.7 | There will be a full 6 month review of the environmental delegation, however intervention will take place as and when difficulties arise or problems are identified. | |
| 5.8 | Cllr Gruen stated that the service level agreements represented a minimum offer from day one, with a baseline grounded in reality, and that there was an expectation to perform. Cllr Gruen is looking for a real challenge from environmental sub-groups to ensure the service is effective and that the right balance is established locally for the environmental services that can be provided. | |
| 6.0 | Update on Restructuring and Locality Working | |
| 6.1 | Briefing seminars for elected members had taken place to explain the details of the restructure, with 40-50 councillors attending. | |
| 6.2 | The restructure proposals had been issued to the trade unions before the August bank holiday with a deadline set for comments of 16 th September. As part of the process meetings will take place between James Rogers and the trade unions. | |
| 6.3 | Introductory events have been set up towards the end of September for the Area Leadership Teams set up to oversee locality working in the three areas. | |
| 7.0 | Any Other Business | |
| 7.1 | <u>Equality and Decision Making Training</u> Geoff Turnbull, Senior Project Officer within the Equality Team, attended to give background information on the legal equality duties that apply to Area Committees due to their decision making responsibilities. | |
| 7.2 | There is a risk that decisions can be challenged if due consideration is not made to equality issues in the decision making process. | |
| 7.3 | It was proposed that training sessions should be set up for all elected members on this area, and it was agreed that an initial training session be set up for Area Chairs with a proposal that this takes place after the Area Chairs Forum meeting in November. | Geoff Turnbull |
| 7.4 | <u>West Yorkshire Fire Authority</u> Cllr Gruen referred to the proposed review of fire stations by the Fire Service and informed Area Chairs that he was ensuring that Area Committees would be consulted by the Fire Service on this matter. | |
| 8.0 | Date of Next Meeting | |
| 8.1 | 11 th November 2011, 9am, Committee Room 4, Civic Hall. | |