

Report of Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance)

Report to Executive Board

Date: 14th December 2011

Subject: Community First

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Ardsley & Robin Hood; Armley; Beeston & Holbeck; Bramley & Stanningley; Burmantofts & Richmond Hill; Chapel Allerton; City & Hunslet; Farnley & Wortley; Gipton & Harehills; Hyde Park & Woodhouse; Killingbeck & Seacroft; Kirkstall; Middleton Park; Morley South and Pudsey.		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

- 1 Community First is a government initiative that was announced in late September. Over the next four years, this programme will provide modest levels of grants ranging from £33k-£203k per area across 15 wards aimed at helping communities improve their areas and build local confidence and capacity. Community First will run in parallel with the Government's Community Organisers Programme which will recruit and train 500 paid senior community organisers over the next three years to help mobilise local people to take action at a neighbourhood level.
- 2 Under Community First, local communities must demonstrate how they will match fund/contribute their own resources, in cash or volunteer time, to equal to the grant level requested.
- 3 Community First complements the Council's Integrated Locality Working agenda. Locality work focuses on the joining-up of corporate and local services, enabling local people to have a greater influence on citywide policy and practice and maximising the involvement of communities in setting local priorities. It is hoped that the consultation and community engagement models that have been established across the three administrative areas of the city will be fully utilised to support the implementation of this programme.

- 4 Community First will also support a wider civic pride agenda that is being actively promoted across Leeds helping to provide a structure within which other national and regional initiatives can be successfully implemented across the city e.g. neighbourhood planning, community budgets, etc.

Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- § support the Council's active engagement and cooperation in establishing the Community First Programme in Leeds;
- § endorse the alignment of this programme with other relevant initiatives, and;
- § be aware of the Community Organisers' Programme and potential relationship with other related programmes.

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks to raise awareness of Community First and Community Organiser programmes. It seeks Executive Board endorsement to support the Council's active engagement and cooperation in establishing the Community First programme in Leeds and endorsement that other programmes are, where appropriate, aligned with Community First.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 As set out in the Vision for Leeds, the city has made a commitment that Leeds: will be a place where everyone can feel confident about doing things for themselves and others; local people have the power to make decisions that affect them, people are active and involved in their local communities; and, there is a culture of responsibility and respect among residents for each other and the environment.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The Community First Programme aims to match-fund community projects in some of the most deprived areas in the country and will be administered through a national body, the Community Development Foundation. Appendix A shows the targeted wards and amount of funding available. The Programme will provide small amounts of funding to small groups who would not normally apply for grants (between £250 and £2,500 cash can be awarded to groups in any one year). The funds will be accessed through a registered Community First Panel designated for that ward. There is an expectation that the Panels will be representative of the local area, will help to raise awareness of the programme and work with the community to establish priorities and plan how they will match and spend the grants available.
- 3.2 Work is currently taking place to establish and register Community First Panels in designated wards. The development of Community First Panels includes the establishment of a Panel Partner whose role is to ensure the Panel is accountable and transparent in carrying out its responsibilities. Once registered, the Panels can begin to understand local priorities, how the funding will be matched, engage with the Community Development Foundation and establish an action plan for the area. It is recognised that Community First Panels may be registered by anyone within the area and there is no requirement to involve the Council in this. The Area Teams are currently working with local groups to ensure that appropriate Panels are registered in all areas.
- 3.3 In order to ensure a strategic view of Community First and appreciate the added value that this and other aligned programmes will bring to locality working, it is proposed that the Localities Partnership Board is regularly updated on work in this area.
- 3.4 Alongside the Community First initiative, the Government is establishing a Community Organisers Programme. This programme is being delivered by a national organisation called 'Locality' resulting from the merger between the British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres and the Development Trusts Association. Under this programme Community Organisers are employed by Locality for 1 year and hosted by local organisations on a secondment basis. Appendix A shows where Community Organisers are likely to be located in Leeds.

Locality will recruit and train 500 senior community organisers and a further 4,500 voluntary organisers nationally over 3 years.

- 3.5 The role of a Community Organiser is to help residents, groups, associations and businesses in their area to develop their power to act together for the common good and take action to tackle local issues which are important to them. The intention is that Community Organisers will listen to residents in their homes, on the street and where they gather.
- 3.6 The Community Organisers programme has been specifically developed to promote the concept of local power for local people, without a direct input into its development or roll out from local authorities. However, it has been developed in parallel with Community First where there is a clear recommendation for local authorities to be involved.
- 3.7 Additionally, the Community Development Foundation (who are delivering Community First) have indicated that Community First will 'aim to link' to the Community Organisers programme wherever possible to further support social action in communities. The view is that Community Organisers provides an opportunity to more fully explore and understand local issues and improve the sustainability of local activities

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Projects which are taken forward via Community First funding will follow engagement routes established by the relevant Panel. Where the Community First Panel has significant Council involvement, it is anticipated that use will be made of the already established engagement channels set up within that particular neighbourhood/ward e.g. via Neighbourhood Improvement Boards. Work is on-going through the Area Teams to engage with local communities to refresh/produce Neighbourhood Improvement Plans. It would be appropriate for these Plans to also reflect local priorities funded through the Community First programme.
- 4.1.2 The relationship between the work of the Community Organisers, and how specifically it will contribute towards Community First is currently being considered.
- 4.1.3 The Community First initiative is a Government led programme which the local authority was not consulted upon prior to its announcement. Whilst the authority has some reservations about some aspects of the initiative and the way it is being introduced, it is providing new monies to the city which would not otherwise be available and officers are, therefore, seeking to maximise the benefits of the programme to support delivery of local priorities.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The premise on which Community First is founded is that there is a need to empower communities and improve the 15 identified eligible wards in Leeds. These wards have been targeted by the government based on the fact that they contain clusters of high levels of deprivation and have experienced significant (10%) increases in benefit claimants.

4.2.2 As part of the implementation of Community First, careful consideration will need to be given to cohesion and integration issues. It is not applicable to produce either a screening or equality impact assessment at this stage. Where the council is involved in the Community First Panels, encouragement will be given to giving due consideration to equality when assessing potential projects.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Through the Vision for Leeds and the City Priority Plan, the Council and its partners have set out a clear commitment to its residents that Leeds; will be a place where people can feel confident about doing things for themselves and others; local people have the power to make decisions that affect them, are active and involved in their local communities, and; where there is a culture of responsibility and respect for each other and the wider environment. This is particularly reflected in our 'Best City for Communities' and 'Best City to Live' priorities.

4.3.2 The Community First Programme will complement the new locality arrangements by enabling local people, through the Community First Panels to have a greater influence on citywide policy and practice and the impact this has on their local neighbourhoods, and by helping local people to develop the capacity needed to become more actively involved.

4.3.3 Community First will form part of a citywide programme of civic activities being developed in Leeds, that will help pave the way for a range of regional and national initiatives emerging as part of the Localism Act, many of which will have significant impact on Council policies and City priorities e.g. neighbourhood planning.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 Community First money is new money which can be accessed by the community to fund small locally agreed projects. It must also be match funded, and this cannot be through local government funding. It is anticipated that Community First projects undertaken in an area will support the developing integrated service neighbourhood improvement plans where applicable.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no legal or access to information issues arising from this report. The report is subject to call-in.

5 Conclusions

5.1 It is intended that the Community First Programme will be aligned with related programmes to form part of a wider civic agenda aimed at putting local people firmly in the driving seat to bring about positive changes in their local neighbourhoods, and sharing responsibility for making Leeds the best City in the UK.

5.2 Community First focuses on maximising the involvement of local communities in setting local priorities for their area. The consultation and community engagement models that have been established across the three administrative areas of the city will be fully utilised to support its implementation.

- 5.3 The importance of engaging with the Third Sector and specifically the contributions that local groups and organisations can make to support the viability and sustainability of these programmes, has been, and will continue to be, recognised. It has informed the identification and registration of Community First Panels and the Third Sector will play a significant role in its implementation. In addition the emerging Community Organisers programme will be hosted by the Third Sector

6 Recommendations

6.1 Executive Board is asked to:

- support the Council's active engagement and cooperation in establishing the Community First Programme in Leeds;
- endorse the alignment of this programme with other relevant initiative, and;
- be aware of the Community Organisers' Programme and potential relationship with other related programmes.

7 Background Documents

- 7.1 Guidance on setting up a Community First Panel
<http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/neighbourhood-matched-fund>
- 7.2 Community First Narrative – rationale for ward selection
<http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/neighbourhood-matched-fund>
- 7.3 Community Organisers
<http://locality.org.uk/projects/community-organisers/>

Position of Community First and Community Organisers at November 2011

Community First Target Wards	Funds	Identified Panel	Community Organisers Planned	Community Organiser Host
Ardsley and Robin Hood	£50,865	Health for All	-	-
Armley	£152,595	TBC	-	-
Beeston and Holbeck	£152,595	Renew	1	Health for All
Bramley and Stanningley	£84,775	TBC	2	Barca
Burmantofts and Richmond Hill	£203,460	Council	-	-
Chapel Allerton	£67,820	Council	1	Chapelton Development Trust
City and Hunslet	£237,370	Renew	-	-
Farnley and Wortley	£84,775	TBC	-	-
Gipton and Harehills	£135,640	ENEHL	2	Gipsil and Touchstone
Hyde Park and Woodhouse	£33,910	Oblong	1	Burley Lodge Centre*
Killingbeck and Seacroft	£101,730	ENEHL	1	LS14 Development Trust
Kirkstall	£67,820	Council	-	
Middleton Park	£118,685	Renew	1	Health for All
Morley South	£33,910	Health for All	1	Groundwork Leeds
Pudsey	£67,820	TBC	-	-

*Burley Lodge Centre likely to work within Kirkstall too

