

**Area Chairs Forum
Monday 12th March 2012
Committee Room 4, Civic Hall**

Attendance:

Councillors: P. Gruen (Chair), G. Hyde, G. Hussain, G. Wilkinson, A. Gabriel, J Akhtar, T. Hanley, D. Blackburn

Officers: J. Rogers, K. Kudelnitzky, R. Barke, S. Mahmood, J. Maxwell, B. Logan

Minutes: S. Warbis

Officers attending for specific items: D. Feeney, C. Addison, M. Mills, M. Pexton, C. Wiggins

| Item | Description | Action |
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| 1.0 | Apologies | |
| 1.1 | Cllr Finnigan, Cllr Latty, Cllr Parker | |
| 2.0 | Minutes and Matters Arising | |
| 2.1 | The minutes of the previous Area Chairs Forum meeting on 13 th January 2012 were agreed as an accurate record. | |
| 2.2 | <u>3.17 of previous minutes – Localism Act Feedback from Area Committees</u> The power point presentation on the localism act had been circulated by Shaid Mahmood but it was agreed that this would be re-circulated to Area Chairs. | SM |
| 2.3 | <u>6.11 of previous minutes – Environmental Delegation Current Progress and Future Options</u> It was confirmed that the draft report to Executive Board on the Environmental Delegation had been circulated to Area Chairs for comment and amendments. | |
| 3.0 | LDF Core Strategy | |
| 3.1 | David Feeney, Head of Planning and Economic Policy, attended to discuss the LDF Core Strategy report due to go to Area Committee meetings and to give background to the Core Strategy and the consultation process. | |
| 3.2 | Cllr Gruen stated that he was keen to facilitate the inclusion of Area Committees in the consultation process and was hoping for some guidance for Area Chairs on what the consultation covered, to enable informed discussions at the Area Committee meetings. | |
| 3.3 | A report had gone to Executive board on 10 th February approving the publication of the Core Strategy documents for public consultation. The Executive Board had emphasised the importance of local community and local ward member input into the consultation process. The consultation period commenced on 28 th February and closes on 12 th April. | |
| 3.4 | It was emphasised that this stage of the consultation was specifically concerned with the soundness of the plan and whether the document is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Previous consultation had already taken place as the document was being developed. The plan would be submitted for external approval after the local consultation had been taken into account. | |
| 3.5 | A discussion took place over the differences between inner and outer areas in terms of ethnicity, housing stock and opportunities for development. There were some concerns raised over how settlement types had been determined, and how local needs could be reflected within the broader approaches that had | |

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| | been determined. | |
| 3.6 | The issue of windfall sites was raised and whether they could be taken into account. Current guidance says that windfall sites should not be taken into account, however it was viewed that these could not be ignored and should be included to achieve a stronger embedded local view of options. Further guidance is due, possibly in April, which will also need to be taken into account. | |
| 3.7 | Queries were made as to how accurate, realistic and reliable the housing targets were. It was explained that a longer term view had been taken regarding this area, and that there will be a need to take stock over time to take account of changes to the housing market. | |
| 3.8 | The view was expressed that while there might be an opinion in central government that local authorities may be being obstructive, there is actually a real problem with developers sitting on land which can be a block to making progress. | |
| 3.9 | It was stressed that there was a need to look at the interchange between planning panels and elected members. There was a need to speed up responsiveness and to strip out layers of bureaucracy which can cause delays and overcomplicate processes. | |
| 3.10 | There is also a need for Area Committees to make clear where they see their input and influence lying, and how localities can get the best out of this strategy. | |
| 3.11 | It was agreed that Area Leaders would ensure that feedback from the Area Committee meetings was provided to David Feeney to be taken account of in this phase of the consultation process. | ALs |
| 4.0 | Derelict Sites | |
| 4.1 | Christine Addison and Mark Mills attended to discuss a proposed project to tackle some of the most problematic derelict properties and eyesore sites and presented a report to the meeting. | |
| 4.2 | The project had arisen from discussions with Area Leaders over the frustrations of dealing with sites that had a real impact on the community and where progress seemed difficult to achieve. Some of these sites are already being tackled through initiatives such as Townscape Heritage but the intention is to bring together different lead organisations, break down barriers and to "just do it!" | |
| 4.3 | Initially over 40 properties have been identified which have been split into three phases based on the nature of the problem and the ease of effective action. A budget of £500k has been allocated from the capital programme to support the project over 3 years, commencing in April 2012. | |
| 4.4 | Christine Addison advised Area Chairs that she was looking for feedback from Area Committees on the approach that was being taken and also on whether the list of sites was accurate. Area chairs mentioned a number of sites in their areas that needed consideration. | |
| 4.5 | It was stated that the approach needed to be more daring and fast acting, notices needed to be served but also action taken rather than merely maintaining ongoing discussions. | |
| 4.6 | Mention was made of work that had previously been carried out to sort out a derelict petrol station but that had never been followed through and completed. It was suggested that for this initiative to work there needed to be concerted efforts to get the job done. | |

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| 4.7 | It was mentioned that this initiative had clear links to the core strategy and to the development of local areas. It was clear that there was a need to regenerate wasted land and that property developers and the local authority had their parts to play. | |
| 4.8 | It was raised that there might be difficulties in getting property owners to develop their properties in the current economic climate. It was also mentioned that pulling a list together and focussing resources on the worst problems was a good starting point. | |
| 4.9 | It was suggested that we needed to make sure that action was taken and that issues are not merely fobbed off. This would mean better cooperation within the council between directorates. It was suggested that there might be ways of supplementing the £500k by using existing departments budgets where appropriate. | |
| 4.10 | Christine Addison said that the project team were aware of the need for balance in the targeting of their initial work. They needed some quick wins but also needed to crack some of the most difficult long-term problems. | |
| 4.11 | Christine Addison pointed out that the document presented to the meeting was a working document and would need adapting for a public audience. It was suggested that the document could be taken to the Area Committee Environmental Sub-committees before wider public discussions take place. | |
| 4.12 | It was mentioned that as discussions went wider we needed to guard against directorates adding further sites to the list. Directorates still have their own responsibilities to carry out their work and to deal with problems that fall under their remit. | |
| 5.0 | Commission on the Future of Local Government | |
| 5.1 | Marianna Pexton attended to discuss the second call for evidence for the commission and to explain what feedback she was looking for from Area Committees to reflect the local view. Marianna also provided documents outlining the context for the second call for evidence. | |
| 5.2 | The commission is a national piece of work but has been useful in shaping thinking in Leeds. The concept is based on civic enterprise and using the best aspects from every sector: the efficiency of the private sector, the moral outlook of the public sector, the proximity of the third sector. It also hopes to build on the work of elected members in helping to make things better for local people. | |
| 5.3 | The commission is likely to be published in July and they are now in the second call for evidence stage. The first stage had a very good response. The second stage is looking at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Economic Potential of Local Government • The Role of Elected Members • Citizen engagement | |
| 5.4 | The commission is hoping for a good response from Leeds and are looking to feed in positive examples coming out of locality working. They are also looking for Area Chairs to provide a local view. | |
| 5.5 | Examples were given of potential case studies around the Environmental Delegation, Locality Management Teams and Community Leadership Teams working on the ground with communities. Also the experience of tasking arrangements in different areas. | |
| 5.6 | The Area Leaders were asked to give their view of what had changed since the | |

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| | Area Leaders came into post. Reference was made to the strategic work of elected members with senior council officials, more dialogue at early stages of project development, members working across ward boundaries, responses from officers improving across organisational boundaries, new partners being brought to the table, the locality working design principals, sustainable neighbourhoods building on their own strengths and not relying on parachute money. | |
| 5.7 | James Rogers mentioned that there had been positive progress but there was a need to maintain momentum and there was still a lot more to do. James had attended most Area Committees during the year and had been impressed by how seriously they were taken by members and was also struck by how different they all were. There is a need to transfer and share learning between the Area Committees and there is also a need to review how officers report in to Area Committees. Should Area Committees be pulling issues into their meetings rather than relying on officers for agendas? | |
| 5.8 | It was agreed that Area Leaders would provide feedback to Marianna Pexton to reflect the local view to the commission. | ALs |
| 6.0 | Apprenticeships | |
| 6.1 | Clare Wiggins attended to discuss a framework for Area Committee Sponsored Apprenticeships and provided a paper outlining the proposal. | |
| 6.2 | The report highlights the opportunities offered through apprenticeships and sets out a process for Area Committees to sponsor apprenticeships. It also suggests how partner organisations may assist in providing broader experiences to apprentices. | |
| 6.3 | Although there are financial pressures on Area Committees and the use of their wellbeing budgets, the issues of NEETS has been given a priority in many areas and sponsoring apprentices is one way of approaching this. | |
| 6.4 | Good work has already been done in Leeds such as the Leeds Apprenticeship Challenge, Build My Future – Build My Leeds, Leeds Apprenticeship Awards. Work is also going on in council departments such as Parks and Countryside in sponsoring apprentices. Area Committees also have an opportunity to be involved and could send a good message to encourage other partners to become involved. | |
| 6.5 | Two options were described within the report which both used Leeds College as the day release learning provider. Two partner organisations would be involved, as well as the Area Support Teams to provide the apprentice with a broad experience. The cost to the Area Committee would be £5,070 per year if paid at a minimum wage, or £6,240 if the pay model used by East North East homes was adopted. | |
| 6.6 | There was a query as to whether an apprentice would be best placed in the Area Team or whether local employers could be more involved. Some work is already going on in local areas to encourage businesses to consider apprenticeships. | |
| 6.7 | There was a suggestion that there needed to be consistency in the approach of Area Committees to this. Area Committees already have problems with the rollover of wellbeing funding due to ongoing initiatives and it was questioned whether wellbeing money was the best option for supporting apprentices. | |
| 6.8 | It was mentioned that East North East homes have currently got 25 apprentices and that this is a valued scheme that is working. | |
| 6.9 | The view was expressed that while the report should be welcomed it did not | |

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| | address the volume of the issue. Children that had recently attended council were concerned about employment and Leeds City Council could do more to help them. | |
| 6.10 | It was mentioned that this was an opportunity for Area Committees to look at how they can support young people. Leeds City Council needs to change it's staff dynamic and get younger and this is a good way to get people in. Also if Area Committees could provide the funding, it would provide credibility when the council is encouraging others to take on apprentices. | |
| 6.11 | Cllr Gruen mentioned that the Area Teams were now in a position to accept apprentices as they are functioning better than they did two years ago. Area Committees have been criticised in the past for underspending on their wellbeing budgets and this is an excellent way of directly supporting young people in their areas. | |
| 6.12 | It was agreed that the report would be taken to Area Committee meetings to make the request for apprenticeship funding. | ALs |
| 7.0 | Wellbeing Update | |
| 7.1 | There was a verbal update on the processes for managing and monitoring wellbeing budgets. | |
| 7.2 | A piece of work is being carried out to establish consistency of reporting on wellbeing budgets across all ten Area Committees. The process will be consulted on and it is hoped that a report will be brought to the next Area Chairs Forum. | |
| 7.3 | Current balances of wellbeing funds will be carried forward to next year, but it is hoped that next year all budgets should be spent or fully committed. | |
| 8.0 | Any Other Business | |
| 8.1 | Big Lottery Funding - £1m has been awarded to the community of Hawksworth Wood to be used for the good of their community. | |
| 9.0 | Date of Next Meeting | |
| 9.1 | To be arranged in the New Municipal Year | |