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Report of Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance)

Report to Executive Board

Date: 12ᵗʰ December 2012

Subject: Review of Area Working Findings and Recommendations

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	☐ Yes	☒ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

Summary of main issues

1. This report brings to Executive Board a summary of the findings of the recent review of area working arrangements. This review has examined the way in which we currently work through: area committees; area leadership and support; service based area working arrangements and local partnerships. The review compared current arrangements with the agreed aspirations set out in our locality working design principles as well as our emerging best city and best council ambitions. The review proposes a number of recommendations to strengthen, develop and embed locality working across the city as well as identifying further work that is required in a number of areas.

2. The review concluded that the overall structure of 10 area committees, 3 administrative areas and 25 children's services clusters are well established and provide the right building blocks for locality working. The majority of views expressed did not advocate major structural change. However, there is definitely a need to optimise and make the better use of what we already have through more clearly understanding the relative roles and responsibilities of both individuals, the area committees and other partnership bodies. It was recognised that the local elected members' role goes beyond the council - as local democratic leaders - which is exercised through, and within, partnership arrangements and formal and informal networks.

3. The review has identified a number of opportunities to enable members to better influence council services in their local area and has set out the priorities for change. However, it also recognised that formal delegations are only one way to achieve this

and more work is needed on a case-by-case basis to understand and agree the best form and arrangements for achieving local direction and influence for directly provided services and increasingly for locally commissioned services. The links between area committees and executive members also need strengthening to ensure that local needs and views are more clearly represented in policy development, to help identify best practice and to provide feedback on what works locally.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that Executive Board

(a) endorses and supports the commitment and ambition to drive forward a step change in locality working with the role of area committees being key to ensuring more locally responsive and accountable services.

(b) endorse and supports the development of more locally responsive and accountable services generally and agree priority action in the following areas with further reports being prepared on how these services can be more locally focused or delegated:

- Youth services
- Neighbourhood planning
- Employment and skills
- Local parks and green space
- Local highways maintenance

(c) supports the principle of area committee members taking an "area lead" approach on a specific area of council policy or business to provide area committee based leadership on key issues.

(d) further supports that the area lead works closely with the relevant executive portfolio holder and the relevant director on issues to better align city wide and local policy making, share best practice and help embed the locality working design principles.

(e) requests that a detailed proposal for the introduction of the area lead role be prepared for agreement and implementation in the new municipal year.

(f) partnership structures are mapped in each of the three administrative areas with roles, responsibilities and links documented, discussed and agreed with area committees and area leadership teams. Each area committee to agree who represents them on each partnership body.

(g) supports the proposal for area committees to forge links and develop good working relationship with the new clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to exploit opportunities for collaboration within the health and well-being agenda.

(h) requests that Member Management Committee reviews the mechanism for appointing elected members to children's services clusters.

(i)   notes the outcome of the review of locality-based funding arrangements and commits to the continued allocation of the well-being grant as per existing arrangements (a ratio of 50:50 in terms of population and deprivation) and give further thought to how new funding regimes can be locally provided/influenced as they come on-stream.

(j)   supports the proposal to look at delegating more funding to local decision making in support of the developing council's budget strategy 2013-2017.

(k)   notes that the review has concluded that no changes are necessary to the area committee boundaries at this time.

(l)   also notes the concerns expressed regarding the Inner West Area Committee and it consisting of only two wards and in order to help respond to the capacity issue requests that consideration be given to utilising the current option of co-optees to enhance the membership of the Area Committee.

(m)requests that the issue of how area committees operate relative to officers attending; for what purpose and their general administration be looked at further (e.g. agreeing agendas, papers and other similar issues) with new arrangements being developed and proposed in time for the new municipal year.

(n)   requests that a further report be prepared on options for improving locality based consultation and engagement activities.

1   Purpose of this report

1.1   A review of area working arrangements was commissioned to examine the way we currently work through; area committees; area leadership and support; service area working arrangements; and, local partnerships. The review compared these with the agreed aspirations set out in our locality working design principles as well as our emerging best city and best council ambitions.

1.2   The full review report is available as a background document and this cover paper pulls out the key issues, further work that has been identified along with a number of specific recommendations for decision by Executive Board in order to further strengthen, develop and embed locality working.

2   Background information

2.1   The council's existing area management and locality working arrangements have been in place since 1999 when community involvement teams were created across the city. Since then they have been developed over time as we have striven to be more local in our understanding, thinking, decision making and service delivery arrangements. In 2011 new locality working arrangements were introduced which brought about changes to area management teams, with the appointment of area leaders and area leadership Teams and the creation of new area-based support teams. This included the agreement of the locality working design principles.

2.2   Alongside our own locality working ambitions the Government is also driving a policy agenda around localism. This is being implemented through a number of government initiatives set out in the Localism Act 2011 and through the Open Public Services agenda. These cover a number of new approaches including neighbourhood planning, community right to challenge, community asset transfer, a scheme of delegation for neighbourhood councils (including parish and town councils), community budgets and neighbourhood commissioning.

2.3   Building on this, and as a response to the significant challenges facing local government, Leeds initiated and led a Commission on the Future of Local Government 2012 which sought to examine the role of local government in the 21st century. Central to the work of the commission was the concept of 'civic enterprise'. This is a new leadership style for local government where councils become more innovative and enterprising, business and other partners becomes more civic and communities become more engaged. The findings of the commission are being used to further develop and shape our best council ambition in line with becoming a more enterprising council, which although smaller in size will be bigger in influence by having:

- Strong democratic city-wide and local leadership
- Commissioned and directly provided public services achieving our city priorities
- Locally responsive, integrated front line services
- An enabling corporate centre

- Values based, enterprising culture

2.4   The review, and its recommendations, have sought to bring together these key drivers and set out some of the next steps which will not only deliver the next phase of locality working but will also move us forward towards our strategic objective of being the best council in the best city in the UK.

3   Main issues

3.1   The review was undertaken from June to November 2012 and has focused on gathering the views and feedback from across a range of stakeholders including members, area leaders and their teams, directorates and service managers. The consultation has been primarily concerned with the council's arrangement, however a number of partner views were forthcoming and these have been included as appropriate. The officer consultation sought both to gather general views as well as considering some of the specific issues identified by members. The review was been overseen by an All Party Working Group as well as an officer project team. The key findings, conclusions and recommendations have been discussed and agreed by both groups. The proposed actions and recommendations have been further debated and shaped by key officers and executive portfolio holders.

3.2   The majority of views expressed both by officers and members are not advocating major structural change in terms of area committees or partnership structures. But there is definitely a need to optimise and make better use of what we already have. Part of this is about more clearly understanding the relative roles and responsibilities of both individuals, the area committee and other partnership bodies and ensuring members are equipped to make the most of all the opportunities they have to influence within, and beyond, the council.

3.3   The review has identified a number of opportunities to enable members to better influence council services in their local area. But it also concluded that formal delegations are just one way of achieving influence and that consideration needs to be given to all suitable options depending upon circumstances. The review has identified a number of areas for improvement including:

(a)   Whilst clear within the constitution there is a lack of understanding across the council about the explicit role of area committees and their relationship with other parts of the democratic structure. The profile and importance of area committees needs to be raised so that they can provide the strong local leadership role as set out within the locality working design principles and best council ambition. The role was felt to be best described as influencing / shaping council service delivery at a local level including both a focus on functions formally delegated to them and influencing other service outcomes of significance to individual localities.

(b)   The links between area committees and executive members needs to be strengthened and it is proposed that this is achieved through development and strengthening the current area committee champion role. This role was felt to be important in providing a local "lead" perspective on various issues and had great potential to do more in driving democratic accountability. An

important role would be supporting the executive members in policy development and challenging services to be more locally focused. The "champion" title was not seen as helpful with "area lead" felt to better articulate the role eg Inner North West Area Lead for Health and Wellbeing.

(c) Building on the success of the environmental services delegation there are opportunities to strengthen the role of area committees through developing a number of areas where members want more locally responsive services whether they be true delegations or alternative forms of local influence or delivery. Areas members prioritised were youth services (this is already underway); neighbourhood planning (a role has already been agreed but need to be further developed); employment and skills, local parks and green space and local highways maintenance.

(d) As a range of providers are increasingly providing services in local areas – members role in influencing local commissioning will become increasingly important. This was felt to be another important role for area lead members. The council is currently undertaking a fundamental review of its commissioning and procurement processes through the transforming procurement programme. A significant part of this is the introduction of a category management approach to ensure that we adopt a flexible and proportionate approach to commissioning in line with our civic enterprise ambitions. It is proposed that this will include consideration in more detail of the ways in which local members can ensure local needs are included within specifications and feedback can form part of contract/service monitoring processes.

(e) Members of area committees felt that their meetings were not always as effective as they could be in terms of enabling debate on the local issues and challenges that are important to them. Area chairs and area leaders are developing ways to address this from identified best practice that is tailored to each committee.

(f) The review identified a wider range of community engagement arrangements across the city but members felt very strongly that a one size fits all approach was to be avoided. However, they raised some concerns that some of these mechanisms do not necessarily give them a representative view and that it was important that they are able to access the citizens panel and other local intelligence. Members also felt it was important to move beyond consultation to involving communities much more in designing and commissioning services. It was also agreed that there is an opportunity to consider community engagement approaches more jointly with partners with area committees having a potential role to lead and shape this. This area requires further detailed discussion and consideration and it is proposed to bring recommendations in a separate report at a later date.

(g) It was recognised that the local elected members' role goes beyond the council - as local democratic leaders - which is exercised through, and within, partnership arrangements and formal and informal networks. However, the review identified some confusion on behalf of officers and members about the relative role of the various partnership bodies. It was felt that further

clarification is needed in terms of roles and relationships which would help to maximise resources, improve joint working, improve outcomes and reduce duplication. Elected members identified particular concerns with area committees' links to children's services clusters and a range of improvement work is underway to address this. One specific issues raised was that member appointments to clusters were currently done through Member Management Committee with no role for area committees. An opportunity exists for these appointments to be made by the respective area committees which would serve to strengthen links.

(h) Another key aspect in effective partnership working is how well members are supported and equipped to make the most of all the opportunities they have to influence both within, and beyond, the council. Member development are already working on the training and support required by members to fulfil their local leadership role and this will communicated to members directly.

(i) The review concluded that our current geography of 10 area committees, 3 administrative areas/area leadership teams, and 25 children's services clusters should continue. Not least because these are well established and relationships have been built. But there is also an understanding and working relationships with other partners structures like the ALMOs and neighbourhood policing teams and it was identified as a priority to forge links and good working relationships with the 3 new clinical commissioning groups as these become established. A Scrutiny Inquiry is already underway to look more specifically at the relationship between area committees and parish/town councils.

(j) One issue that has been identified is that the one 2 ward area committee (Inner West) was difficult to make work in terms of identifying members for sub groups and champion roles, dealing with the work in general and being quorate at meetings. In order to respond to this one option being explored with Inner West area committee includes bringing additional capacity to the committee through co-optees both on the area committee but potentially also on sub-groups.

(k) The review considered the existing wellbeing budget allocation and the current formula for distributing funds to area committees (currently calculated on a 50% per capita and 50% on deprivation basis) and concluded that this was still appropriate. The All Party Working Group were clear that area committees should retain their autonomy in identifying appropriate projects for spending wellbeing funds but that they should aim to use well-being funding to lever in additional funding wherever possible through match funding or pooling budgets. They felt that this would be facilitated by the development/maintenance of a database of funding sources within area teams.

(l) An important role for area committees, particularly through their wellbeing fund, is in developing innovative, community approaches to solving entrenched problems. However, there are limited ways to mainstream these innovative grass-roots solutions. The council and partners need to be able to respond and reshape services where necessary moving away from direct

provision and towards commissioning the most suitable provider. One of the particular challenges for the council in doing this is how quickly we can re-direct mainstream resources which are too often tied up in buildings or staff. The development of the "area lead" role and through closer working with executive members these ideas can be more easily highlighted and solutions developed.

(m) Further consideration is also being given to ways in which existing budgets and new funding streams may be more locally determined as part of developing the new financial strategy.

(n) The development of strong local democratic leadership and locally responsive front-line services is embedded in our vision to be an enterprising council and ambition to be the best council and it is important that Executive Board both drives and monitors this. It is proposed that Executive Board keeps this high on their agenda by receiving an annual report that brings together progress in implementing our locality design principles. This report is jointly developed by area chairs and area leaders.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 A central part of the review was the gathering of views from a range of stakeholders. With the focus on the council's own internal arrangements of area committees and working arrangements within directorates and services the main consultees were elected members and council officers. A series of drop in sessions were held for elected members over the summer and their views are summarised within a background document. In addition, issues raised by members were used to shape and inform the consultation with officers so that any specific issues raised were further discussed with relevant officers.

4.1.2 Officer consultation was initiated through discussions with each directorate leadership team but were followed up with further specific discussions as required. The area support teams were a particularly important stakeholder as they are directly involved in the work of area committees and their views were gathered through team meetings and individual discussions. The officer views are again summarised within one of the background documents.

4.1.3 There was also a pre-planned event for parish and town councillors during the period of the review and the opportunity was taken to gather views from this group as well through a questionnaire. The results again are summarised in a background document and further consultation is planned through the Scrutiny Inquiry associated with this work.

4.1.4 The views and ideas of many of these stakeholders are included in the recommendations of the review and the proposals for further work. The development of some of the proposals within the report into specific actions/activities for implementation will require further more specific consultation and engagement which will be included in the reports for the specific decisions. The Area Committee Chairs Forum will continue to support the Executive Member

in providing member challenge in shaping and developing the implementation plan as well as monitoring progress.

4.2 **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 A screening has been undertaken to look at how equality, diversity, cohesion and integration was relevant to, and addressed within, the review process and is provided as a background document. Key findings from the screening process included:

(a) Policies and Procedures - equality is clearly represented within a number of the formally stated roles of an area committee. These include: to act as a focal point for community involvement, help members listen to and represent their communities, help members understand the specific needs of the community in their area. However the legal duty was not specifically referenced.

(b) Area committee decision report templates include a section on equality which requires authors to formally set out how due regard has been given or provide assurance that it is not relevant.

(c) The issue of resource allocation was raised and discussed as part of the review from two perspectives. First a review of the funding formula for the allocation of wellbeing money to area committees which was endorsed at 50% per capita and 50% deprivation as a simple but pragmatic way to reflect differing needs across the city. Secondly resource allocation in relation to delegated services with the issue of "fair share" in terms of resource allocation coming through very strongly, in the consultation. But it is important that we are able to balance members desire to get the best service for their ward with the ability to target resources to address and prioritise inequalities across the city. The review concluded that this issue is best considered on a case by case basis depending upon the service to be delegated/more locally determined with a suggested focus on outcomes. This would need to be supported by local data and evidence including the analysis of outcomes by equality characteristic and the views of local people.

(d) The review concluded that there was no rationale for major change to area committee boundaries at this time; and indeed that the disruption in making changes to boundaries would potentially detract focus from improving outcomes in the local area.

(e) The review proposed the development of the existing member champion roles into an area lead role in order to ensure that local needs are better represented in policy development and implementation.

4.2.2 In a number of areas the review makes proposals for further work and where there are potential equality impacts, eg consultation and engagement, this will need to ensure that due regard is given to equality.

4.3   Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1   The review seeks to identify the next steps in implementing the council's agreed locality design principles as well as the ambition set out in the Council Business Plan and the emerging best council blueprint. A number of the proposals are also seeking to support the delivery of the Council Business Plan and City Priority Plan both directly and indirectly.

4.4   Resources and value for money

4.4.1   The review does not propose fundamental change to the structures at area or locality level and as such does not have any specific resource implications. However, there are clear links to the current budget plus work to develop a medium term financial plan which has specifically included some consideration of how locality working can help to deliver the financial challenges. In particular, strengthening the role of area committees and enabling them more influence on local service delivery; will in turn result in more locally responsive service delivery. But also in the current climate of shrinking resources a number of difficult decisions will be required on where to focus spending in the future. By having strong local decision making it will also ensure local members are able to make the most efficient use of resources in line with what the public in their area needs and wants. However, where services are to be delegated to area committees with a reduction in funding this needs to be clearly communicated and transparent.

4.5   Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1   All proposals within this report are in line with existing legal requirements as set out in the current constitution. Further to this the Localism Act 2011 provided the council with a new general power of competence which supports and expands the existing powers to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. Through developing and strengthening the role of area committees both formally and informally, and clarifying the links to other partnership bodies, this will in turn support their role to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their area.

4.5.2   The area review report and appendices are available to the public and the decisions within this report are all subject to call-in.

4.6   Risk Management

4.6.1   The focus of this report is to identify the next steps in implementing our locality design principles, and as such there are no direct risks arising from the proposals within this report. However, there are clear links to a number of the budget and financial risks and the development and strengthening or our locality working arrangements is an important element for the management of the many of the more operational service delivery risks as well.

5   Conclusions

5.1   The review concluded that the overall structure of 10 area committees, 3 administrative areas and 25 children's services clusters are well established and

provide the right building blocks for locality working. The majority of views expressed were not advocating major structural change. But there is definitely a need to optimise and make the better use of what we already have. Part of this is about more clearly understanding the relative roles and responsibilities of both individuals, the area committees and other partnership bodies and ensuring members are equipped to make the most of all the opportunities they have to influence within, and beyond, the council.

5.2   The review has identified a number of opportunities to enable members to better influence council services in their local area. But in some cases more work is needed to understand and agree the best mechanisms to achieve this for the range of directly provided services. In particular, recognising that formal delegations/SLA are just one way to achieve this but that there might be different ways to achieve this goal. The review has identified a number of gaps and brings forward a number of the recommendations to address these gaps.

5.3   The recommendations below set out a range of improvements but we need to acknowledge that these build upon a huge range of actions/improvement work which is already underway. It is important that the review moves swiftly from the fact finding and investigation toward delivery so the recommendations below are a mixture of both short term/quick wins and longer term developments that will require further investigation and discussion in order to properly scope and shape.

6   Recommendations

6.1   It is recommended that Executive Board

(a) endorses and supports the commitment and ambition to drive forward a step change in locality working with the role of area committees being key to ensuring more locally responsive and accountable services.

(b) endorse and supports the development of more locally responsive and accountable services generally and agree priority action in the following areas with further reports being prepared on how these services can be more locally focused or delegated:

- Youth services

- Neighbourhood planning

- Employment and skills

- Local parks and green space

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(c) supports the principle of area committee members taking an "area lead" approach on a specific area of council policy or business to provide area committee based leadership on key issues.

(d) further supports that the area lead works closely with the relevant executive portfolio holder and the relevant director on issues to better align city wide and local policy making, share best practice and help embed the locality working design principles.

(e) requests that a detailed proposal for the introduction of the area lead role be prepared for agreement and implementation in the new municipal year.

(f) partnership structures are mapped in each of the three administrative areas with roles, responsibilities and links documented, discussed and agreed with area committees and area leadership teams. Each area committee to agree who represents them on each partnership body.

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(h) requests that Member Management Committee reviews the mechanism for appointing elected members to children's services clusters.

(i) notes the outcome of the review of locality-based funding arrangements and commits to the continued allocation of the well-being grant as per existing arrangements (a ratio of 50:50 in terms of population and deprivation) and give further thought to how new funding regimes can be locally provided/influenced as they come on-stream.

(j) supports the proposal to look at delegating more funding to local decision making in support of the developing council's budget strategy 2013-2017.

(k) notes that the review has concluded that no changes are necessary to the area committee boundaries at this time.

(l) also notes the concerns expressed regarding the Inner West Area Committee and it consisting of only two wards and in order to help respond to the capacity issue requests that consideration be given to utilising the current option of co-optees to enhance the membership of the Area Committee.

(m) requests that the issue of how area committees operate relative to officers attending; for what purpose and their general administration be looked at further (e.g. agreeing agendas, papers and other similar issues) with new arrangements being developed and proposed in time for the new municipal year.

(n) requests that a further report be prepared on options for improving locality based consultation and engagement activities.

7 Background documents[1]

7.1 Area review report with full set of appendices

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[1] The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.