

**Area Chairs Forum
Friday 2nd November 2012
East Room, Civic Hall**

Attendance:

Councillors: P. Gruen (Chair), G. Hyde, G. Hussain, G. Wilkinson, A. Gabriel, J. Akhtar, J. McKenna, J. Jarosz
Officers: K. Kudelnitzky, R. Barke, J. Maxwell

Minutes: S. Warbis

Attending for specific items: K. Morton, I. Mackay

Item	Description	Action
1.0	Apologies	
1.1	Cllr A McKenna, Cllr K. Bruce, Cllr P. Wadsworth, James Rogers, Shaid Mahmood	
2.0	Minutes and Matters Arising	
2.1	The minutes of the previous Area Chairs Forum meeting on 11 th September 2012 were agreed as an accurate record.	
2.2	<u>3.4 of previous minutes – Youth Service Review</u> Concerns were raised that Cllr Wilkinson was the only Conservative member interviewed by the external consultant. It was pointed out that the consultant spoke to all of the Area Committee Chairs, and that also the cross party working group and scrutiny sub group were involved in the discussions.	
2.3	<u>7.5 of previous minutes – Area Working Review</u> It was suggested that concerns over the links between clusters and Area Committees could have been stressed more in the minutes of the meeting. A suggestion was made that Area Committee members could attend cluster meetings, and vice versa.	
3.0	Review of Youth Services / Update on Clusters	
3.1	Ken Morton attended to provide a verbal update on the Review of Youth Services, to give feedback from the Schools Forum and to discuss Area Chairs involvement as the review progresses.	
3.2	The Schools Forum met on 25 th October and agreed to continue the current funding of clusters for a further three years. It was agreed that governance arrangements needed to be reviewed and that a task group would be facilitated by Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer Partnership Development and Business Support in Children’s Services. This would need to link into Area Committees and with the Review of Area Working.	
3.3	There would also be a review of the current formula for funding clusters particularly in light of the changes to school funding around special needs criteria.	
3.4	A diagram was circulated showing a proposed Elected Member and Governors structure for the Leeds Education Challenge Board. There is a proposal to have an Elected Member and Governors Board for each of the three areas of East North East, South, and West North West. It was suggested that each board would have one Member from each of the clusters in that area.	
3.5	As an interim position it was suggested that current representation by Members on clusters would continue, but it was requested that Ken Morton advise the	Ken Morton

Chief Officer Partnership Development and Business Support (Sue Rumbold) that Area Committee Chairs would like to see proposals progressed that enabled future appointments of Members on Cluster Boards to be made by Area Committees.

- 3.6 Also a wider Governor network meeting has been proposed in each of the three areas to make wider collaboration possible. This suggestion was supported by Area Chairs. It was also suggested that within Area Committees some elected members have had more experience of school clusters than others, and that they should help support and inform those members who have previously had less involvement.
- 3.7 It was mentioned that at the moment there was a degree of suspicion on both sides between Area Committees and clusters. Cluster chairs have expressed an interest in gaining more information about Area Committees and Area Support Teams and this is matched by Area Chairs interest in clusters. There was a desire for School Headteachers to have more involvement in community issues locally and it was felt that by establishing better links between clusters and Area Committees this could be enabled.
- 3.8 The report on the Review of Youth Services is no longer being taken to the Executive Board in November. Although the Cross Party working Group and Scrutiny Sub-group have had meetings recently, more member input is required. It is clear that Elected Members will want to see the financial position before a report is taken to Executive Board but, as with the overall council budget, this picture is not clear yet. There is a need to stabilise this position before any delegations are made to Area Committees as these issues should be resolved before any control of the service is passed over.
- 3.9 The aim is to secure the cash resource for "breeze" type activities to be delegated to Area Committees. Other areas of the service need to see a conversion from a mainly staffing resource into a more flexible model.
- 3.10 A new specification for youth Services needs to be devised with potentially commissioning being carried out at the three area levels. Simple procurement is not the only model any more, and voluntary sector ambitions and capacity also needs to be considered. It is no longer assumed that in house services will have the major roll in this area. Input from Area Chairs will be required as this specification is being developed.
- 3.11 There will be a significant restructuring of the service by September 2013 with the intention of having fewer managers, more apprentices and more experienced practitioners in the structure.
- 3.12 Area Chairs, and Area Committees, will be seen as the key clients and will need to agree the specification for the commissioning of more targeted Youth Services work. There will need to be significant input from elected members at an area level in agreeing specifications.
- 3.13 The question of assets was raised and whether these would transfer across with any delegations. There is not a clear view on this at the moment and this is likely to need a separate piece of work. It was clear however that there would need to be distinctions made between assets purely used locally and others, such as Herd Farm, which provide a resource to the whole city.
- 3.14 It was viewed by the Area Chairs Forum that the direction of travel was right. It was suggested that Children's Services would need to lay out the Key Performance Indicators and standards required to meet the needs of any external inspection requirements, but that Area Committees should be given the responsibility of meeting these locally.

3.15 It was stressed that the transition of the service needed to begin in April 2013 and this should include the cash resource for the "things to do, places to go" activities. Advice should be available from Children's Services on commissioning, but this should not be decided prior to delegation and Area Committees should be in control of this.

3.16 It was suggested that discussions with Area chairs should be taking place between now and the end of December on the design of a commissioning framework.

Ken Morton

3.17 There were comments from Area Chairs over the lack of clear timescales and their inability at this time to explain to constituents what the changes to Youth Services would entail. It was also mentioned that there needed to be more integration with clusters, schools, jobs and skills around commissioned work and that more imaginative events could be commissioned city wide to tackle issues such as NEETs and citizenship.

3.18 It was felt that there needed to be more consultation with members regarding the review. It was felt that drop in sessions were not the best way to consult and that a way forward would be to organise presentations to Party Group meetings.

3.19 Ken Morton agreed to confirm with Cllr Blake and Nigel Richardson that presentations on the Review of Youth Services should be offered to Party Group meetings.

Ken Morton

3.20 It was pointed out that there had not been an announcement, or clear statement of intent, to the Executive Board over the proposal to transfer the service. It was agreed that there is a requirement to take a report to executive board showing this intention, and this could then be followed by a phased implementation.

Ken Morton

3.21 There was a discussion over the current distribution of resources and how in some cases this did not seem to match the needs of particular areas. It was agreed that the current distribution model was flawed and needed Area Chair input. Ultimately any changes would need political approval.

4.0 Neighbourhood Planning

4.1 Ian Mackay, Planning and Sustainable Development, attended to provide an update on Neighbourhood Planning in Leeds and provided a briefing note.

4.2 Ian provided a brief background on the elements of Neighbourhood Planning included in the Localism Act including Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to build Orders. Neighbourhood Plans must be in conformity with the Council's Core Strategy, the National Planning Policy framework and human rights and equality legislation, and can also include non-planning interests as decided by local communities.

4.3 The Local Planning Authority is responsible for determining applications for Neighbourhood Plan areas and designating Neighbourhood Forums. The Council has a duty to support local communities however this support can be defined by the local authority. The Council will also pay for and organise the examination and referendum of the plan, although all issues relating to referendums are not clear as yet.

4.4 It was agreed at Executive Board in June 2012 that Area Committees will have a consultative role to play including advising, signposting, empowering and providing mediation where necessary.

4.5 Area Committees are providing an increasingly valuable role in partnership and

delivery as the four pilots, and interest in other areas, is developing.

- 4.6 In our region Bradford has only one designated area so far, Kirklees is showing no interest and Calderdale have had three expressions of interest but have no designated areas. Leeds has 10 designated areas with the possibility of 15 further designations. Holbeck is seen by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as an exemplar for neighbourhood planning in the inner city.
- 4.7 A table was provided within the briefing note listing potential roles associated with neighbourhood planning that Area Committees may wish to consider.
- 4.8 The issue of the promotion of neighbourhood planning in inner city / deprived areas was discussed. It was agreed that Area Committees would have differing views on this, depending on the dynamics of particular areas, but that choices to promote or disregard neighbourhood planning should be made on an informed and considered basis.
- 4.9 Differing approaches are already being seen in different areas. North East Outer Area Committee have provided funding for an officer to deal with neighbourhood planning and are therefore seeing more activity in their area. South East are looking at joint Area Committee funding for a post to cover a wider area. It may be appropriate for these approaches to be considered and debated in other areas as well. It was recognised however that certain Area Committees may have greater priorities in their areas.
- 4.10 There was some debate over what the value of neighbourhood planning in inner areas could be and how interested local people would be in taking this approach. There was feedback from the Holbeck pilot that local people were keen to influence the quality of development in their area and saw neighbourhood planning as a way of influencing this.
- 4.11 It was agreed that learning should be taken from Holbeck and shared with other areas. Some areas already have design statements which could be built on. It was also pointed out that some areas already have good existing community governance arrangements and that there should be care taken that any new neighbourhood forums didn't run counter to what was already in place.
- 4.12 It was mentioned that in the West the Neighbourhood Improvement Board could be a potential forum for opening local discussions regarding neighbourhood planning.
- 4.13 In response to a question about funding availability for community groups, Ian Mackay pointed out that DCLG will provide £25,000 to the Local Planning Authority for every neighbourhood plan that successfully passes the examination. The funding letter from DCLG states that this money is intended to cover the costs of the examination and referendum. Ian Mackay pointed out that he has secured support from Planning Aid for any deprived area in Leeds that wishes to prepare a neighbourhood plan.
- 4.14 It was pointed out that the non-planning opportunities that could be incorporated into neighbourhood plans could be particularly valuable to inner areas. Issues such as social responsibility can be built in and can influence planning and development locally.
- 4.15 There was some scepticism over the resilience of neighbourhood plans and whether they could be overruled centrally if disputes were made by developers. It was pointed out that approved neighbourhood plans would be statutory documents and would provide more certainty for an area. If plans are robust there shouldn't be any wriggle room although across the country they have yet to be tested in disputes.

4.16 It was mentioned that there has been interest expressed in New Wortley regarding neighbourhood plans. Despite some contrary views, residents in inner areas do have an interest in environmental and quality of life issues and do have an interest in influencing decisions.

4.17 There was some doubt raised over the increased bureaucracy of having Area Committees and Neighbourhood Forums involved in planning. There are already plans panels in place and there is a risk of neighbourhood forums not being fully representative of their areas. There was also some doubt that equality and human rights issues would be fully covered within neighbourhood plans. It was also suggested that the non-planning issues may be better dealt with through other mechanisms.

4.18 It was agreed that there needed to be close links between Area Committees and parish councils and also neighbourhood forums, to ensure that developing neighbourhood plans were representative of the local area. It was reiterated that where no parishes are in place, little would progress without the support of Area Committees, and there needed to be a considered decision whether neighbourhood plans would be appropriate or not in each area.

4.19 There was only time to discuss the first of the eight potential roles for Area Committees within the briefing note. It was therefore agreed that a group would be set up consisting of Ian Mackay, Kathy Kudelnitzky, Cllr James McKenna, Cllr Ghulam Hussain and Cllr Angela Gabriel to discuss the potential roles, and for their views to be circulated to Area Chairs Forum members in advance of the next meeting on 10th January 2013.

**Ian Mackay
/ Kathy
Kudelnitzky**

4.20 Ian Mackay mentioned that Balsall Heath in Birmingham was another inner city area that was making good progress with neighbourhood planning, and it was suggested that there would be merit in visiting this area. Ian Mackay agreed to provide Sarn Warbis with website details to be circulated to Area chairs Forum members.

**Ian Mackay
/ Sarn
Warbis**

5.0 Review of Area Working Update

5.1 Kathy Kudelnitzky, Chief Officer Localities and Partnerships, provided a progress update on the review of Area Working and a summary of proposed recommendations for executive board.

5.2 Following consultation with Elected Members, Area Leaders, Directorates, Service Managers and other stakeholders the review has sought to provide feedback, views and recommendations across six objectives:

- Powers and responsibilities delegated to Area Committees and other locality-based arrangements;
- Joint-working between the council's Executive Board and Area Committees;
- Effectiveness of community and partner engagement through Area Committees;
- Effectiveness of partnership working at a local level;
- Geography of our current locality-based working arrangements; and
- Locality-based funding issues

5.3 Draft documents are to be considered by the All Party Working Group immediately after this meeting, and will then be taken to Corporate Leadership

Team on 6th November, a meeting of Cabinet on 12th November and then through the clearance process to Executive Board on 12th December.

- 5.4 The Executive Board will be invited to agree both short and longer term recommendations, with a project plan being developed over the next three months for implementation. Elected member involvement, and particularly that of Area Chairs, will be key to implementing recommendations within the review.

6.0 Any Other Business

6.1 Full Council Meeting

Cllr Gruen mentioned that at the next full council meeting Area Committees would be on the order paper and that Area Chairs would be required to contribute to discussions / questions if their particular areas were being discussed. This is an opportunity to raise the profile of Area Committees and should be taken advantage of.

- 6.1.1 It was suggested that Area Support Teams also had a role in promoting the work of Area Committees. Local people and organisations are not always made aware of the members' role in decision making, approval of funding, and support for successful initiatives and activities funded through the Area Committees.

6.2 Wellbeing Update

Jane Maxwell, Area Leader West North West, tabled a paper providing a snapshot of well Being Fund approvals and commitments for the current financial year.

- 6.2.1 The figures show that some of the funding approved by Area Committees is still working it's way through the system, and Area support Teams are working with Finance, as well as funded projects, to ensure that approved funding is processed and updated on the council's Financial Management System.
- 6.2.2 There are still concerns about the level of funding which is uncommitted spend where currently no projects have been identified. Area Teams will work with Area Chairs and Area Committees to review how much funding is available and how elected members can support the development of local projects to apply for the available Well Being resources.
- 6.2.3 More detailed spreadsheets are available to Area Chairs profiling individual projects and their associated issues in clearing funds.
- 6.2.4 Solutions are being sought with finance to address the issue of allocated funds remaining on Area Committee accounts where commitments have clearly been made and but there are legitimate reasons for delays in the drawing down of funds.
- 6.2.5 It was suggested that Executive Board needed to exert it's influence over particular Area Committees or wards where there was significant under use of well being funds.
- 6.2.6 It was stressed that although there was a clear need to maximise this years well being budgets, it was essential that funds were used for valid projects meeting the priorities of each Area Committee. Maximising this years well being budgets is a current priority for Area Leaders and Area Support Teams.

7.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 7.1 Wednesday 9th January 2013, 09:00 – 11:00, Committee Room 4 - Civic Hall