

Report of Assistant Chief Executive Customer Access and Performance

Report to North East (Inner) Area Committee

Date: 11th March 2013

Subject: Development of Area Lead Role

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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 type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. A review of area working was completed in Dec 2012 with a number of recommendation agreed by Executive Board. One of the recommendations was to develop and strengthen the existing local "Champion role" and re-launch this as an Area Lead role. The main aims being to clarify the role itself, strengthen links to the Executive member and Council services, improve training and support and encourage both formal and informal links to relevant partners. This paper brings initial proposals to Area Committees for their input, shaping and feedback with a view to introducing the revised roles in the new municipal year.

Recommendations

2. Members are asked to give their views on these proposed arrangements for Area Committees to appoint a set of Area Leads across a number of themes from the next municipal year. In particular Members are asked to comment on the following:
 - Is the area lead role as described right – what changes / additions / amendments might be needed? What might need to go into the more detailed job description?
 - Is the list of core functional areas that each area committee should appoint to right?
 - Do the broad elements of training/support make sense or are there gaps – what role is there for peer support?
 - Any other comments / suggestions particular around the key issues highlighted?

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 A review of area working was completed in Dec 2012 with a number of recommendation agreed by Executive Board. One of the recommendations was to develop and strengthen the existing local “Champion role” and re-launch this as an Area Lead role. The main aims being to clarify the role itself, strengthen links to the Executive member and Council services, improve training and support and encourage both formal and informal links to relevant partners. This paper brings initial proposals to Area Committees for their input, shaping and feedback with a view to introducing the revised roles in the new municipal year.

2 Background information

- 2.1 One of the recommendations of the review of area working was to develop and strengthen the exiting member “champion role” and re-launch this enhanced role as an “Area Lead”. This paper sets out proposals for discussion which seeks to define the role itself, identify the training and support required and the linkages to both the Portfolio holder and key officers. The effectiveness of this approach will be monitored through Area Chairs and Area Leaders with updates provided within the Area Working Annual Report to Executive Board (first report due Autumn 2013).
- 2.2 Overall this role is seen as important in providing a local “lead” perspective on various issues and has great potential to do more in driving democratic accountability by providing area committee based leadership on key issues. The Area Lead role would also support Executive Members and Directors to better align city wide and local policy making, share best practice, provide support and challenge and help embed the locality working design principles.
- 2.3 It also links to the Commission for Local Government which identified the critical importance of local democratic leadership in driving the way in which local government responds to a changing and ever more challenging environment. Within the current financial context where budgets are shrinking and difficult decisions need to be made in terms of service delivery the importance of ensuring a strong local perspective and driving more local decision making is seen as an essential ingredient to making the right decisions.

3 Main issues

Defining the Area Lead Role

- 3.1 Building on the discussions so far, through the Review of Area Working consultation process and with the All Party Working Group which oversaw the review, it is proposed that the Area Lead role is defined as follows:
- Working closely with area committee chairs to identify and lead relevant debates at area committees supported by officers as required.
 - Representing the area committee at local project or partnership meetings, and in the commissioning process to ensure the needs and interest of the area are represented. As required, issues will need to be brought back to

the area committee for further consultation/discussion and for formal decision making.

- Developing informal opportunities and networks with council services and key partners to build understanding, drive closer partnership working, provide challenge and bring a local democratic perspective to a wider range of service delivery.
- Supporting the relevant executive portfolio holder and officer lead(s) to ensure a locality dimension to policy development, disseminating and building local understanding of the overall policy/strategy, highlight any service issues/failures, drive service improvement, to share best practice and capture and learn from innovative approaches developed through area committees.
- Working with officers to ensure progress is monitored through regular performance updates especially for any delegated functions.
- Using local forums and local community engagement mechanisms to develop a good understanding of the local needs and feeding these into policy development and service improvement processes.

3.2 The Area Review All Party Working Group felt it important that a standard or core set of area lead roles were nominated by every area committee. These should be focused on the delegated functions as this is where the role can have the greatest impact. But it was agreed that there were also some other important areas where a local lead was needed like health and wellbeing. Over and above this minimum others could be nominated by area committees to reflect key local issues. However, support and links to the centre via the portfolio holder and officer leads for these additional areas may not be as comprehensive. Consideration should also be given to the appointment of time limited “area leads” in response to a specific issue eg implementation of new legislation with a significant local impact eg welfare reform.

3.3 The list of core area leads needs to be developed and agreed with a view to having these in place from the new municipal year. A proposed list for further debate is as follows:

- Environment – including current street cleansing and environmental enforcement services delegation and in the future local parks and greenspace. Or could this be something broader around environment neighbourhoods – this depends a little upon the ALMO review and any impacts on the Area Panels.
- Children’s Services – including Youth Services. NB There may need to be more than one area lead for Children’s Services where there are two or more clusters as the area lead should also be the elected member representative on the cluster.
- Community Safety – to include CCTV delegation but with a potential for broadening this out depending upon further work in this area.
- Employment, skills and the local economy.

- Health and wellbeing/Reducing health inequalities – to include adult social care and fuel poverty.
- Neighbourhood Planning – including liaison links with Parish and Town Councils NB to be further explored depending upon the role for Area Committees in this area and the outcome of the Scrutiny inquiry.

3.4 Once the broad principles are agreed this needs to be further developed and defined into a more detailed job description which would set out in more detail the mechanisms for influencing or advocating eg meetings the Area Lead attends, liaison arrangements with the Portfolio holder(s), how the Area Lead interacts with other Area Leads from across the city etc. It is proposed to pilot this with the Health and Wellbeing and Community Safety Area Lead role.

Training and Support

3.5 Support, training and liaison arrangements will be important in making this work. Clearly these will need to be tailored to the particular functional areas but the following broad elements are proposed:

- Core Skills Training – provided through Member Development (linked to Inlogov research on what a good community leader looks like) to ensure area leads have key skills in areas like negotiation, partnership working, listening etc
- Area Lead Induction Training – facilitated by the Area Support Teams with service staff (eg Environmental Service Locality Managers, Health and Wellbeing Improvement Managers) and partners as appropriate. The aim to provide a broad understanding of the service provision in place, link members to the key partners, local partnerships and networks relevant to their functional area. For existing champions this might not be needed or could be more tailored.
- On-going Development/Support and Advice - briefings and informal meetings and updates to support Area Leads in fulfilling their role. This would also aim to build on-going links with service staff in the local area including meet the team and work shadowing. Briefings/updates on key policy issues – some of these would be on a city wide basis in conjunction with the portfolio holder and officers leads.
- Peer mentoring/support or action learning?

Other relevant issues

3.1 There are a number of key issues which will need to be considered, explored and debated:

- Some area committees have reported difficulties in appointing to the current champion roles. But on the flip side some backbench members have raised concerns about a lack of influence. Overall the Area Lead role provides an opportunity for backbench members to have more influence which might encourage individuals to come forward. Is there a need to

provide guidance/best practice on how area committees appoint to these roles?

- It will require members to take on a wider role across the geography of the area committee not just their ward; and for other area committee members to endorse/support the area lead in representing the area committees views. This may present some difficulties where Area Committees are politically split and Area Leads might be from another party.
- For the 2 ward area committee – Inner West – it needs to be considered whether co-optees to the Area Committee who are not elected members could fulfil an area lead role. Is this an option others might take up as well?
- Key to the success of the role will be the area lead keeping the area committee apprised of debates/actions from partnership bodies, bringing back key issues for debate and formal decision by the area committee as required. The area leads will also need to work closely with the area committee chairs in scheduling debates and to ensure appropriate time is set aside on agendas. Area Chairs will need to support Area Leads in this regard.
- Consideration should be given to appointing area leads for a minimum of term of two years to enable the development of local networks, relationships and expertise. However, this would still be subject to election outcomes.
- A key success factor for the area lead role is that we do actively consult, engage and liaise with them. In the past we have nominated champions but then not used them effectively or they haven't been fully aware of the requirements upon them. To be effective this requires portfolio holder to meet regularly (at least twice per year?) with area leads ideally with key officers as well. It will also require the relevant Directorates / Services / Partners to buy in to these arrangements particularly in terms of training and support.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 This recommendation falls directly out of the recent review of area working which was subject to significant consultation with a range of stakeholders including members and officers. A series of drop in sessions were held for elected members over the summer 2012 and their views were influential in shaping the recommendations including the change proposed in this paper. An all party working group also further debated and shaped the review findings. 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.

4.1.2 It was recognised that the development of some of the proposals within the area review would require further more specific consultation and engagement and this

report brings to Committee further information on the area lead role for consultation and input.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 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 and help members understand the specific needs of the community in their area. The development of the area lead role aims to support members in undertaking this role of championing local needs by providing clear links to both the Executive Member, council service staff and to partners agencies. In addition it provides the mechanism for, and encourages, the negotiation and development of local solutions that suit local circumstances which will in turn address any issues of inequality.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 These arrangements aim specifically to support in the delivery of improved outcomes in line with the City Priority Plan and Council Business Plans with many of the proposed roles lining directly to key priorities. The aim being to ensure that local needs are represented better in policy/strategy setting, decision making, service design and delivery and partnership working through this key role. The development of the area lead role provides an opportunity for members to further develop their community leadership role as set out within the Commission for Local Government and within the developing Council Business Plan.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 This is essentially replacing an existing role and can be seen as a sensible way to divide up work between members of the area committee with an expectation that each member would take on a lead role. However, there remain concerns about the capacity issues for Area Committees that might arise from implementing this and other elements of the area review. This will continue to be monitored.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications and the report is available to the public. In line with the Council's Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rules, the power to Call in decisions does not extend to those decisions taken by Area Committees.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The proposal in this report implements a recommendation made by Executive Board and as such there are no direct risks arising from the proposals. Improving the governance and accountability of local partnerships through challenge and support from area leads is seen as important in delivering improved outcomes and tailoring services to local needs. There are also clear links to a number of the budget and financial risks and the development and strengthening of our locality

working arrangements and local decision making will help to minimise key financial risks going forward.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 This report sets out initial proposals for the implementation of an area lead role following the review of area working in 2012. The role is seen as crucial in providing a local “lead” perspective on various issues and in driving democratic accountability by providing area committee based leadership on key issues. This paper begins to clarify the role and is brought to the Committee at this early stage for their input, shaping and feedback with a view to introducing the revised roles in the new municipal year.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are asked to give their views on these proposed arrangements for Area Committees to appoint a set of Area Leads across a number of themes from the next municipal year. In particular Members are asked to comment on the following:

- Is the area lead role as described right – what changes / additions / amendments might be needed? What might need to go into the more detailed job description?
- Is the list of core functional areas that each area committee should appoint to right?
- Do the broad elements of training/support make sense or are there gaps – what role is there for peer support?
- Any other comments / suggestions particular around the key issues highlighted?

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

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.