

**Joint Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and the City Solicitor**

**Report to General Purposes Committee**

**Date: 28<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

**Subject: Constitutional Provision for Community Committees**

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 type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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. Executive Board received a report in December 2012 following a review of the council's area working arrangements which led to further work and a subsequent report to the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2013 Executive Board meeting. At this meeting Members endorsed the "Responsive to the needs of local communities" proposition, including the proposed development of a new approach to build on the work of Area Committees, to improve local democratic leadership of local areas, as well as providing a more meaningful way of involving local people in decisions that affect their local neighbourhoods.
2. Work has since been undertaken to develop the proposal to promote an inclusive, citizen based approach to locality decision making, in which formal Community Committees are underpinned by enhanced community engagement. These proposals have been the subject of extensive consultation with Members, partners, Town and Parish Councils, third sector organisations and officers.
3. This report sets out the changes to the Constitution necessary to effect the change from the current Area Committee arrangements to the proposed Community Committee model, allowing greater freedom within the Committee setting to engage in the locality in the manner most suited to the neighbourhoods, citizens and communities represented.

## **Recommendations**

4. General Purposes Committee are requested to recommend to full Council amendments to the Constitution detailed in the body of this report, and shown in appendix A to C attached as listed at paragraph 6 to this report. In making these recommendations General Purposes Committee is asked to note the principles set out in Annexes 1 and 2.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The report requests that General Purposes Committee recommend to Full Council the changes to the Constitution necessary to effect the change from the current Area Committee arrangements to the proposed Community Committee model, allowing greater freedom within the Committee setting to engage in the locality in the manner most suited to the neighbourhoods, citizens and communities represented.
- 1.2 In doing this the report sets out the outcome of consultation in relation to the new community committee arrangements, which followed the resolutions of Executive Board made on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 This report builds on the recommendations approved at the December 2012 Executive Board, which outlined the findings of the area working review and recommended further work on developing new locality based arrangements. There followed a report to the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2013 meeting of Executive Board outlining the Citizens@Leeds approach that has been developed to ensure a focus on inclusive, locally provided citizen-based services based on the needs and priorities of local communities. In presenting the report, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, referred to the work done by the Area Chairs forum to consider how the Council could be more responsive to local communities and identified the intention to create a new locality working approach; built on the development of Community Committees to replace the current Area Committee structure and the introduction of a new community engagement model to support the Community Committees in their decision making responsibilities.
- 2.2 Executive Board endorsed the “Responsive to the Needs of Local Communities” proposition and agreed a set of principles to underpin the new Community Committees and the new engagement approach, and gave approval to the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) to consult on these prior to consideration of constitutional changes by Members of Full Council at the Annual Council Meeting. Details in relation to that consultation can be found at Paragraph 4.1 of this report.
- 2.3 This new approach is intended to strengthen local democracy and increase community engagement and involvement in local issues and local decision-making. The changes include new ways of working that are aimed at getting all services and partners to think more locally; for more decision making and budgets to be locally provided; and for the work and decisions of local members through the Community Committees to have improved recognition so that local people are more aware of actions, decisions and funding provided for local communities by local members.
- 2.4 Ultimately, these changes are about changing the relationship between the citizen and the state, rebuilding trust in public services and ensuring the delivery of

locally integrated and responsive services for local people. These changes support delivery of the propositions detailed in the report published by the Commission on the Future of Local Government. We know that society faces big challenges that cannot be solved by the state alone, but require the state to orchestrate action. The introduction of community committees and a new approach to community engagement will provide a sound basis for improved local democratic engagement and accountability and help the city council and its partners deliver its best city ambitions.

2.5 The work undertaken by the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) is intended to support a step change in the Council's locality working arrangements so that they fully underpin and support the ambitions and aspirations of the council and the city. This will encompass an even greater emphasis on getting more people involved in their local communities, in local decision-making, and in designing and delivering services that better meet the current and future needs of both local communities and the city as a whole.

2.6 Previous consultation with Members has identified opportunities in relation to:-

- increased devolution of budgets, services and influence on local service provision;
- enhanced community and partner engagement at the local level through the existing committee arrangements; and
- greater profile and identity of local members and local decision making and recognition of the good work done at an area level.

### **3 Main issues**

#### A New Approach to Developing Community Committees

3.1 In the period from the Executive Board resolution in December 2013 to date there has been an extensive programme of consultation as detailed in paragraph 4.1 of this report.

3.1.1 The approach to more local decision making and more engagement with local communities was received positively, and the principles which underpin the community committees and the community engagement approach have been well received. However, it was clear from the consultation that there were a number of points within the design principles which needed to reflect the discussions and concerns expressed. The main changes made are:-

- **Naming.**  
During the consultation process we asked for views from Members on ideas for alternative names for individual community committees in an attempt to get names that were more meaningful for local people. Generally suggestions were based on either: a placed name approach to identify the wards/areas covered (e.g. Armley and Bramley Community Committee, or Burmantofts and Richmond Hill, Gipton and Harehills, Killingbeck and Seacroft Community Committee); or, recognising that this was particularly difficult for some community committee areas, retaining the existing

geographic name basis (e.g. Outer North East). In considering these two approaches officers took the view that the best way forward would be to retain the existing naming arrangements (e.g. Outer North East) but to also detail the ward names covered by the committee in all design and communication activity. This way we can continue to use names which many people are familiar with, but at the same time being much clearer on the wards and areas covered. This approach is the recommended way forward.

- **Number of formal business meetings.**

Each community committee will decide how many formal business meetings they need each year, the only stipulation being a minimum of four, as well as deciding how much time will be devoted to other types of engagement activity. More agile delegations will be developed to enable decisions to be taken between meetings, and allow more member and staff resource to focus on greater community involvement activity. Such delegations will include the parameters for progressing an officer delegated decision i.e. relevant members have been consulted and are in agreement with the decision.

### Next Steps

- 3.2 Considerable work has been taking place in each locality to prepare them for the anticipated changes ahead. Much of this is building on the current strengths and recognising the good practice and local structures already in place. Work is taking place to further address and develop each aspect identified during the consultation and an outline of this is shown below.
- 3.3 Local decision making - Integral to the success of community committees is their ability to influence service delivery through direct budget/service responsibility, SLAs and/or other appropriate mechanisms. Work is continuing to develop the approach to budget and service devolution, with this beginning to take effect in 2014/15. This will bring an increased focus on locality influence and decision-making. Not all services or budgets are within scope for consideration, but the intention is to challenge and move decision-making closer to communities wherever possible.
- 3.4 These new arrangements for community committees and community engagement are the first stage in the cultural shift to a more bottom-up approach. We are progressing actions to ensure the step changes needed take place and these include work to establish the most appropriate approach to locality funding and locality service delivery, links to the community hubs and evaluation of the new community committees. These next steps will also specifically address those concerns which were raised as part of the consultation process with a view to providing a firm platform for further development.
- 3.5 Locally focused community committees – simplified processes are being established in relation to the effective delivery of community committees. Their work will be based on local intelligence provided via services, and community engagement events and understanding. An engagement plan will be developed by each community committee which will enable focus on a small number (2 or 3)

areas of specific concern to the locality which the community committee wants to address. Each community committee will operate in the way best suited to them and their locality, whilst abiding by the underpinning principles.

- 3.6 Cultural change - It is recognised that for community committees to be successful they need to be accompanied by a significant cultural shift. To achieve this, consideration is being given to the appropriate support arrangements which need to be in place within the locality teams' services, members and partners to effectively support the new way of working. Therefore, any change agreed will need to be supported by an appropriate organisational development and change process to ensure culture and behaviours also change to reflect the new way of working.

#### Amendments to the Constitution

- 3.7 In order to implement the proposed Community Committee structure, and to provide freedom within that structure for each Committee to conduct its business in the manner most appropriate to the needs of the locality, neighbourhoods and communities it serves, amendments are necessary to the Council's constitution.

#### Article 10

- 3.8 Amendments are proposed to Article 10 reflecting the change from Area Committees to Community Committees. The new name for each committee is listed at Article 10.1, and the power of Community Committees to appoint and remove Co-opted Members is now included at Article 10.3. The proposed amended Article 10 is set out in Appendix A to this report.

#### Community Committee Terms of Reference

- 3.9 Similarly, amendments are proposed to reflect the change from "Area" to "Community" Committees in the newly titled Community Committee Terms of Reference. The terms of reference now also include the function of adopting and reviewing a Community Plan. Each Committee will adopt their own Community Plan, to include such Community Engagement Plans as are necessary to reflect the themes, neighbourhoods and communities in the area, and use the document to inform their work throughout the year. The proposed Terms of Reference for Community Committees are attached at Appendix B to this report.

- 3.10 Community Committee Procedure Rules

- 3.11 The Community Committee Procedure Rules are intended to promote a flexible approach to the formal business to be conducted by Community Committees, so that each may engage with the communities in their area using the means most appropriate to those Members and those communities. The rules also provide for flexibility in determining the number of meetings each committee holds each year, stipulating only that the minimum should be four. The proposed Community Committee Procedure Rules are attached at Appendix C to this report.

- 3.12 Paragraph 4.5 of this report sets out details of documents which will be amended by the Leader of the Council, and by the Monitoring Officer (such changes being contingent upon Full Council approving the amendments set out above).

- 3.13 Rules in relation to quorum and substitution will be included for clarification in the Council Procedure Rules alongside the relevant provisions for the Council's other committees. Similarly, rules in relation to the referral of Executive functions to Executive Board will be included in the Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rules.
- 3.14 Within the consultation process the design principles were amended to reflect a need for more agile delegations to enable decisions to be taken between meetings, and allow more Member and staff resource to focus on greater community involvement activity. Amendments to the Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive Functions) for the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) will enable officers to take decisions in relation to Community Committee wellbeing powers, in accordance with such stipulations (for example in relation to consultation and agreement) as each committee may make. This will reflect the non-wellbeing delegations which are held by both the Community Committees and the relevant Director for each service, as detailed in the Community Committee Executive Delegation Scheme.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 Informal consultation with the members of the Area Chairs' Forum and area committees has been regular and incremental as part of the work following on from the area review recommendations agreed in December 2013 by the council's Executive Board. This supported the substantive and formal part of the consultation with elected members, services, partners, the third sector and town and parish councils which took place between February and April 2014. Consultation has included:

- four member workshops (attended by 40 members);
- presentations to all five political groups (attended by 83 members);
- three area leadership team discussions involving partners (attended by 55 partners) ;
- clusters
- presentations to and discussions with all directorate management teams;
- presentation to and discussion with the third sector leadership forum (attended by 15 third sector representatives); and
- presentation to and discussion with town & parish councils at their Annual General Meeting (attended by 15 councillors).

4.1.2 All members were keen to see improved communications, though some are cautious about the use of social media. There was broad agreement that community committees will only be valued when real decision-making power and funding is allocated to them. There was general consensus that themed meetings would be helpful to reflect local issues and be responsive to local residents. It was suggested that well-being fund recipients should be requested to return to the community committee to share progress and improve links between the committee and its local community. Views on the need for closer working relationships with Town and Parish Councils differed depending on geographical location.

4.1.3 The proposed constitutional amendments reflect the outcome of the consultation, in so far as those outcomes can be captured within the Council's Constitution.

4.1.4 Members are in agreement with the need to develop a new brand and identity for community committees and examples of the proposed branding have been shared during the consultation process. Views on branding and identity are very subjective but of the four options considered, the most simple map-pin design was preferred by the majority of Members consulted and it is proposed that this now be adopted as the brand for community committees. Examples of the branding material to be used will be available at the meeting for Members consideration.

4.1.5 Annex 1 and Annex 2 show the updated design principles amended following consultation and General Purposes Committee are invited to note these in considering making recommendations on the constitutional amendments for formal approval by Full Council.

4.1.6 Work has taken place to address the wider concerns expressed during consultation including:



- Creating and developing a new brand and identity for community committees to assist in communication and marketing activity to help raise the profile of community committees and their work;
- Emphasising the need for more services and decision making responsibilities to be delegated to community committees and to actively progress proposals for implementation in 2014 and beyond;
- More locally focussed meetings supported by local intelligence and issues local members want to consider rather than prescribed city wide or corporate based reporting;
- Providing more freedom and flexibility to community committees in terms of the way they operate e.g. less prescription on how meetings should be run and who can attend and speak at community committees;
- Addressing issues of capacity, organisational development and cultural change to drive forward the community committee agenda; and
- Developing a new approach to community engagement as part of the community committee arrangements to ensure a bottom up more localised approach to our engagement activity.

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

- 4.2.1 The Citizens@Leeds propositions which include the move to community committees have undergone an equality screening exercise. This was included in the December 2013 Executive Board papers. No further screening is required at this stage.
- 4.2.2 Specific equality impact assessments will be undertaken on community engagement plans, specific initiatives and decisions as required.

## **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 Changes in the nature and focus of community engagement, as enabled by the proposed Constitutional changes, are supportive of the Council's values of working as a team for Leeds, being open, honest and trusted, treating people fairly, spending money wisely and primarily working with communities.
- 4.3.2 The Best Council Plan 2013-17 includes the key outcome to make it easier for people to do business with us, and the move to community committees will make a significant contribution to the delivery of this.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 There are no specific budgetary implications arising from the proposals in this report at this time. However, one of the proposed design principles for Community Committees is the need to delegate and devolve more decision making and resources to local areas. Increased delegations could bring resource implications and these will be considered as part of the council's normal budget arrangements as decisions are taken to delegate service responsibility and/or funding.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 In addition to the amendments set out in this report, the Leader will reflect the change to Community Committees in the Executive Arrangements which will be presented to the Annual Council Meeting. In particular amendments are likely to the following documents:-

- Executive Committee Terms of Reference; and
- Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive Functions): Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)

4.5.2 Further amendments necessary as a consequence of the changes, and for the purposes of clarification, will be implemented by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with Article 15.2 of the Constitution. In particular amendments are likely to the following documents:-

- Council Procedure Rules; and
- Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rules

4.5.3 There are no further legal, access to information or call-in implications arising from this report at this point in time.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 There are no risk management issues of any significance arising from this report.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The development of community committees provides the next iteration of working more locally and more closely with communities. It is recognised that the full impact of community committees will develop over time and is an iterative process that will continue to strengthen this role in localities.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 General Purposes Committee are requested to recommend to full Council amendments to the Constitution detailed in the body of this report, and shown in appendix A to C attached as listed below. In making these recommendations General Purposes Committee is asked to note the principles set out in Annexes 1 and 2:-

- Appendix A – Article 10
- Appendix B – Community Committee Terms of Reference
- Appendix C – Community Committee Procedure Rules

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 None

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

### **Community Committees Principles**

- a) The ten Area Committees will be renamed Community Committees and whilst retaining the existing naming structure (e.g. Outer North East) all marketing and communications material and activity will detail the names of the wards covered to aide understanding of the area covered.
- b) The role and functions of Community Committees will essentially remain as described under the current procedural rules, and be the vehicle through which the council delegates its locality decision-making process, and with a strengthened focus on engagement.
- c) Community Committee meetings will be business focussed and remain open to the public in line with other formal meetings of council. They will still be a place for aspects of community engagement (e.g. local deputations and the open forum), however, their primary role will be a decision making one and more significant community engagement will be undertaken through other means.
- d) Work and decisions of the Community Committees will be supported by better intelligence, gathered at the local level (bottom up) rather than (top down) corporate reports being made to 'fit' the locality. There will be active communication to promote all activities and decisions of the Community Committees.
- e) Community Committees acting as local 'improvement committees' will be encouraged to proactively make recommendations and provide challenge back to the council's Executive Board, to officers, or other service providers where it considers city-wide policy or actions need to be taken or changed to support delivery of local priorities.
- f) Community Committee meetings will be held where possible in the communities and neighbourhoods they are representing; in accessible places and buildings; with accessible information provided in the form of shorter, punchier and jargon free reports (verbal and written).
- g) Community Committees will be encouraged to include other non-voting representatives<sup>2</sup> in their discussions, drawn from their locality, to contribute to local decision making.
- h) Community Committees will each agree the number of formal decision making meetings each year, with a minimum of four taking place during the municipal year.
- i) Arrangements will be put into place to delegate certain decision making responsibilities to Area Leaders in order to ensure decision making can continue in between business meetings. Such arrangements to include the parameters for taking an officer decision i.e. that relevant members have been consulted and are in agreement with the decision.

---

<sup>2</sup> Co-opted Members will be non-voting in accordance with section 13 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

- j) Community Committees will aim to strengthen relationships with Parish and Town Councils in line with recommendations set out within the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Report. They will acknowledge their role providing strong local leadership as reflected and recognised in the Leeds Parish and Town Council Charter.
- k) Community Committees will have a close and effective relationship with the local policing team which are currently in the process of being re-organised around the existing 10 area committee boundaries, plus a team to cover the city centre. Consideration will be given to the needs of the city centre to ensure the new arrangements are effective.
- l) As part of the 2014/15 and 2015/16 budgetary considerations proactive action will be taken to progress a 'community deal' approach to local resourcing with more responsibility being delegated to Community Committees, to assist in the delivery of wider city council efficiencies whilst supporting the need for more spend to be directed locally. This will include looking to implement a localised budget setting approach for the 2015/16 budget.

**Community Engagement Model Principles**

- a) The new identity and brand around Citizens@Leeds demonstrates the council's commitment to greater public involvement. It is further emphasised by the focus on local areas to support communication, engagement and understanding of engagement events by, for example, use of the branding Citizens@Rothwell, Citizens@Kippax, Citizens@Calverley etc.), more than one ward (Citizens@Headingley&Burley) or parts of two wards (Citizens@Morley).
- b) Community engagement plans will be developed at the beginning of each municipal year which will articulate the approach taken to understand local needs and priorities. Each Community Committee will agree the number of plans to be developed to ensure they are appropriately localised and recognise the differing needs of their area.
- c) Meaningful engagement - the new model of locality working will give local residents opportunities to 'have their say' as well as a greater influence on decisions about the design and delivery of public services. A variety of methods (e.g. case conferencing, 'community conversations', expert witnesses, and open public meetings) will be employed to feed into relevant work on local issues.
- d) Some of the above meetings could involve participatory budgeting or other tools that give local residents the opportunity to understand the decisions taken and their consequences. They will also take place where it is most appropriate e.g. as part of already arranged events and/or specifically organised for the purpose
- e) Open and accessible, enabling local voices to be heard - a wide range of styles will be used for local engagement events and meetings to encourage participation, understanding and involvement. Public meetings, activities and events will need to be designed and publicised so that local people genuinely want to attend and make their voices heard (e.g. the use of alternative seating arrangements, as well as time and venue, need to be taken into consideration).
- f) Develop stronger links with existing neighbourhood forums, residents' associations, school clusters etc., and work with these and through these to engage with local residents. Where necessary and appropriate new local forums will be developed.
- g) We will ensure that all of the different communities affected by the council's decision-making are reached.