



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighborhoods

Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 28th June 2007

Subject: The University of Leeds Inner North West Community Strategy 2007-2012

Electoral Wards Affected:

ALL

Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council Function

Delegated Executive Function available for Call In

Delegated Executive Function not available for Call In Details set out in the report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The University of Leeds has produced a Community Strategy 2007-2012. The strategy details the University's ambition to make a valued contribution to local communities.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In 2000 the University of Leeds published its first Community Strategy, the first of its kind produced by a Higher Education institution.
- 1.2 The Strategy made three key recommendations in response to the growing number of students living in the vicinity of the university. These were:-
 - a) Appointing a Community Relations Officer
 - between 2000 and 2002 a post was jointly funded by the University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University. Since 2002 the role has been solely funded by the University of Leeds.
 - b) Establishing a Neighbourhood Helpline
 - introduced in 2000 as a joint initiative between Leeds City Council and both universities. Between 2002 and 2006 the helpline was funded solely by the University of Leeds. In 2007 the initiative has been re-launched with resumed funding and input from Leeds Metropolitan University.

c) Strengthening the Complaints Procedure

- There is no guidance on best practice for Higher Education institutions relating to this matter. In line with the Neighbourhood Helpline re-launch and the revision of the Community Strategy, the complaints procedure has been reviewed with a code of conduct produced to which all students are obliged, through registration at the University, to adhere to.

1.3 The University is currently involved in a wide range of community focused activity including volunteer schemes in local schools, student changeover and Freshers' Week multi-agency working groups, community safety initiatives, work on shared housing and representation at the North West District Partnership.

2.0 Inner North West Community Strategy 2007-2012

2.1 The Community Strategy sets out the University's commitment to work effectively and to the mutual benefit of neighbouring communities. It also sets out ambitions to make a sustained and valued contribution to local communities, steering the engagement for the next 5 years.

2.2 The Strategy was developed following consultation undertaken by the University with some local residents. The aim of this was to identify priority issues and aspirations of communities within the inner north west of Leeds. The consultation included a community questionnaire, eight consultation workshops and a photo competition to capture perceptions of the area.

2.3 The strategy is set out using three key themes:-

2.3.1 *Communication* - closing communication gaps, improving effectiveness and avoiding duplication.

One of the key actions under this theme is establishment of an annual Community and Housing Forum, which will be open to community groups, or individuals and will assist in the identification of new priorities and activities. Alongside this it is intended to set up a Community and Housing Steering Group, internally within the University, to ensure implementation of both the Community and Housing Strategies.

A quarterly e-magazine is also planned (first edition already prepared), as well as development of the University's community web pages to provide information regarding opportunities for staff and students to engage and integrate with local communities, as well as promoting events, resources and facilities available to the public.

2.3.2 *Cohesive Communities*

Developing programmes, policies and activities to support the integration of students as active citizens in the community.

The University will work in partnership with other organisations, including the police, PCT, District Partnership and Leeds City Council to tackle issues affecting both students and the wider communities of inner north west Leeds. This will be undertaken through a range of initiatives, some of which are noted in section 1.3.

2.3.3 Matching Resources to Needs

Opening up access to campuses and enabling local people to benefit from the University's resources.

In addition to having access to existing facilities, such as sports pitches and courts, music concerts and lecture theatres, the University intends to make two of its major new developments accessible to local community members. These are a state of the art theatre with 180 seat main auditorium and an 80 seat studio, and a new health and fitness complex including a swimming pool, due for completion in 2009. In order to maximise use of these facilities by members of local communities, the University intends to publish an availability guide, providing full details of what can be accessed and how.

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 The Area Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.