



Report of the North East Area Manager

North East (Inner) Area Committee

Date: 3rd December 2007

Subject: Community Engagement

Electoral Wards Affected:

Chapel Allerton
Moortown
Roundhay

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

This report presents the findings from the Planning For Real community engagement events undertaken in August and September. The report also seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the engagement events and asks the Area Committee to consider the outcomes of the events, address the issues that have emerged and support proposals for the next events in Spring 2008.

Purpose of this report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Planning for Real events held in each ward this Autumn to enable the Area Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the events in helping to identify issues and priorities for the 2008/09 Area Delivery Plan which in turn will shape service delivery arrangements and influencing decision making.
2. The report seeks to inform Members about:
 - The extent to which the objectives of the event were met. Evaluating the effectiveness of the events can help the Area Committee to know whether the engagement methods used are genuinely helping them to respond to the public.
 - The extent to which the day met with participants expectations. A measure of success of the community engagement activity is whether local residents feel that we listen, inform and involve them.
 - General feedback on venues, publicity and promotion and how resources have been spent.
 - Proposals to improve future engagement events.

Background

3. The Area Committee has made a commitment to empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and delivery of services and to build the role of the voluntary, community and faith sectors. This is an identified priority in the current Area Delivery Plan and is indeed integral to the objectives of establishing Area Committees.
4. At its meeting in June 2007 the Area Committee agreed a practical framework for community engagement that sets the foundation for consistency, good practice and that contributes to improving service delivery. This framework has been used to develop and implement the Planning For Real events that took place this Autumn.
5. Members will recall at the last Area Committee meeting the presentation on the Leeds Strategic Plan (LSP). This is the Council's new corporate planning framework and will set out the key Council priorities and delivery actions for the period 2008-2011. The LSP will bring together the themes in the existing Vision for Leeds, Local Area Agreement and Regeneration Plan to provide an integrated framework geared to tackling neighbourhood needs across Leeds.
6. It is suggested that the Area Delivery Plans from next year are also developed for the period 2008 -2011 and that these plans are informed and linked both thematically and in terms of strategic outcome measures to the LSP. This will enable Area Committees to focus and contribute to the service improvement priorities in the LSP of most relevance to individual committee areas with greater levels of cohesion and reference to strategic service prioritisation. How this linkage is made is the subject of discussion and is not clear at this stage. It is worth the Area Committee bearing this in mind in the context of this report.

Autumn Planning Ahead Events

7. The Area Committee agreed in June 2007 to hold three community engagement events per ward per year. Members were consulted on the dates, times and venues for the first set of events that took place in September and October. All wards chose to hold 'planning ahead' style events. These consisted of tables with large scale ward maps set around the room. Each table had a different theme – for example, young people. Residents were asked to use flags to highlight where issues were located in the ward. Some of the flags had ideas on them already for residents to use – for example, anti-social behaviour. Others were blank for residents to complete themselves. There were officers in attendance from different Council departments, statutory and voluntary sector partners. They helped facilitate residents to identify their issues and to provide general advice and information.
8. Over 500 issues were collated from the three events. These will help inform the priorities for 2008/09 Area Delivery Plan, and are evaluated in more detail later in the report. On the whole it appears that the events have been successful with relatively high levels of interest and attendance. A full, detailed report of each ward event has been provided to members through individual ward meetings. In addition, letters have gone out to all the residents and groups who attended each event giving examples of how we are dealing with the issues they raised. Further evaluation will be fed back to the participants and the wider community at the March events. The dates of the events and attendance at each venue was as follows;

Ward	Venue, date	Attendance
Moortown	11 th September 3 pm - 7pm Carr Manor School	49
Roundhay	13 th September 3.30 - 7.30 pm Roundhay High School	76
Chapel Allerton	22 nd October 3 pm – 7 pm Space@Hillcrest	53

For a breakdown of the respondents by age, ethnicity and gender please refer to Appendix 1.

Moortown

9. The total number of residents that attended was 49 with males outnumbering females by one third. The Extended Services Coordinator and school staff helped promote the event throughout the school and made arrangements for a number of students to be involved in the Planning for Real exercise at the beginning of the event. A substantial number of attendees were under the ages of 17 and over 45, with few residents between the ages of 17 – 44 years. The event captured a strong mix of ethnic minority groups largely from the under 17 age group reflecting the students who attended. The event took place in the school hall. Compared to the other events, attendees did not stay at the event once they had carried out the flagging exercise. The hall is quite large and this may have discouraged residents from staying long because of the lack of atmosphere.

Roundhay

10. The total number of residents that attended was 76 with males outnumbering females by one quarter. The Extended Services Coordinator and school staff helped promote the event and a number of young people attended from Roundhay High and Kerr Mackie Primary School. Generally there was a good representation from all age groups with the exception of 17-29 years. The ethnic breakdown is representative of the Roundhay ward. Similar to the Moortown event, the Roundhay event took place in the school hall, however it was possible to partition the hall creating a smaller space and livelier atmosphere which encouraged people to stay longer and chat with each other and the officers, and members in attendance.

Chapel Allerton

11. The total number of residents was 53 with females outnumbering males by almost two thirds. There was under representation of the under 29 years age groups. The ethnic breakdown illustrated in the graph is reflective of census statistics. The venue was Space@Hillcrest on Cowper Street, Chapeltown. On the night, residents feedback was that they did not feel safe approaching the venue. This was exacerbated by anti-social behaviour in the area which intimidated some attendees.

Comparison with previous forum arrangements

12. The Area Committee has previously engaged with local people through traditional forum style meetings. In the report that was presented to the Area Committee in June 2007, a review of these arrangements suggested they had not been particularly effective in terms of encouraging wider participation, or enabling residents to feel they were influencing decision making as they did not particularly link with the work of the Area Committee through the Area Delivery Plan priorities. The table below highlights previous forums and attendance rates, and provides a useful comparison with the recent events. The attendance figure of 67 is attributed to a 'market place' style event, thus further demonstrating that there is greater interest and participation when engagement activity is planned in such a way that is interactive and user-friendly.

Area	Date	Attendance
Chapeltown Forum	6 th June 07	11
	20 th September 06	6
Chapel Allerton Village Forum	26 th June 06	67
	8 th November 06	14
Meanwood Forum	5 th December 06	13
Roundhay	26 th March 07	8
Moortown	25 th October 05	28

13. In addition the recent events seem to demonstrate that they reached a more varied audience both in terms of age and their general interests in their community. For example, residents that attended the Roundhay event ranged from ages 9 – 80 years. There is still work to do to target residents in the 25 – 45 year bracket as these were under-represented at all three events. A number of residents attended who had not been to the previous forum style events nor were members of community groups and these individuals are usually hard to reach when publicising community engagement events.

Publicity

14. The events were well publicised through coverage in the local media, huge banner near the venue, flyers, radio, posters, email and via local community groups and partners working with the community. For a full, detailed list of the publicity see appendix 4.
15. It was not possible to get flyers printed and distributed to all households across the inner area. During the initial planning it was felt this would be too costly, and following discussion, not convinced that flyers are the most effective method of getting the message across. Instead it was agreed to focus on targeted distribution of flyers via the Chairs of community groups who were asked to advertise the events at their next meeting, and distribution at some community buildings. Eye-catching posters were produced and displayed across the wards, including GP surgeries, supermarkets, schools, libraries and shops. However comments from residents who attended indicate they were not displayed sufficiently to attract attention. For an analysis of residents comments on publicity please see appendix 2.

Evaluation sheet findings

16. A short evaluation form was handed out at each event. A total of 45 forms were completed. Overall when asked whether the event allowed them to give their point of view, 80% answered yes. Encouragingly respondents indicated that they had enjoyed the event and understood its purpose. Particular strengths of the events included the availability of council officers and Members, and the interactive nature of the events. The majority of residents indicated they would want to attend future events.

Priority themes

17. The Area Management Team are currently undertaking a full evaluation of the issues raised by residents to inform the priorities for the 2008/09 Area Delivery Plan. As there are over 500 issues, this is quite an in depth exercise. However, it has been possible to undertake a headline appraisal of the issues now and for the Area Committee's information, these are presented in appendix . These are the themes and issues that appear to be raised the most often by residents across each ward. There are ward variations.
18. Because of the nature of the events, a wide range of issues were raised, not all of which are within the remit of the Area Committee or indeed the Council to resolve. Others are aspirational ideas that require further investigation regarding their feasibility, resourcing, and strategic fit before considering them for the Area Delivery Plan. Others are specific service problems relating to an area which have been referred to the relevant department to deal with immediately.
19. There was good commitment from council departments and other agencies in terms of attendance and input to the events. This has strengthened relationships between them and the Area Management Team which will help in delivering co-ordinated services in the inner area in the future. In addition we have shared the findings from the events with colleagues across the Council to help inform their service planning – for example, the priorities under children and young people have been passed on to Children's Services for use in the emerging North East Children and Young People's Plan.

Spring Events

20. The Area Committee agreed at the June 2007 meeting that the focus of the spring events would be to monitor the progress of the 2007/08 Area Delivery Plan, and to see feedback on what we have done so far with the issues they raised at the Autumn events. This could include residents seeing a draft Area Delivery Plan, however this will depend on the timetable and links between this and the Leeds Strategic Plan, which is still emerging.
21. The Area Committee is requested to endorse this as the focus for the events so that the Area Management Team can begin making arrangements. The team will also come up with ideas for making the event as interactive as possible for residents, as a follow up to the planning ahead format at the previous event. These will be discussed with ward members at the regular ward member meetings.
22. In addition the Area Management Team will be working with Members looking at lessons learnt from the recent events. This will include looking at publicity and ways to encourage greater attendance. If the Area Committee wishes to consider door to door leaflet delivery for future events, the total cost to print and deliver to approximately 30,000 households is £1,749 when delivered as an insert in the Leeds Weekly News. It is worth noting that resident feedback suggests this may not be the most effective method of communicating, as the majority of free leaflets delivered this way are considered junk mail.
23. In conclusion, resident feedback indicates that the foundations for effective community engagement have been put in place. A number of themes and priorities are emerging that will be incorporated into the 2008/09 Area Delivery Plan which will enable the Area Committee to demonstrate how they are empowering local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and delivery of services in the inner north east area.

Recommendations

24. The Area Committee is requested to:
 - a) note the contents of this report
 - b) endorse the theme and focus for the Spring events