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**Report of the North East Area Manager**

**North East (Inner) Area Committee**

**Date: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Subject: Community Engagement**

<p><b>Electoral Wards Affected:</b> Chapel Allerton Moortown Roundhay</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ward members consulted (referred to in this report)</p>
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<p><b>Specific Implications For:</b></p> <p>Equality and Diversity <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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Council Function <input type="checkbox"/>	Delegated Executive Function available for Call In <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Delegated Executive Function not available for Call In Details set out in the report <input type="checkbox"/>
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**Executive Summary**

The Area Committee requested a workshop session to discuss their community engagement framework, following the feedback report on the autumn Planning for Real events that was presented to the December meeting. Members expressed a number of concerns that they felt required a separate session to discuss and resolve.

The workshop took place on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Members discussed the principles of community engagement, publicity, Area Committee meetings and the spring events. Members made a number of suggestions that could be implemented to engage residents in having an influence and say over service planning in the inner north east area. This report summarises the suggestions and requests the Area Committee confirms its support for implementing them.

## **Purpose of this report**

1. At the last Area Committee meeting Members received a report giving feedback on the Planning For Real events held in Autumn 2007. As a result of discussion at the meeting, Members requested a community engagement workshop be arranged. This took place on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008. This report provides a summary of the workshop.

## **Background**

2. The Area Committee agreed a Community Engagement Framework in June 2007. This made a commitment to empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and service planning. This is identified as a priority in the current Area Delivery Plan, and is given greater emphasis given the news that the Area Committee will shortly be delegated community engagement as a formal function. Area Committees will be tasked to consider local priorities in the context of the new Leeds Strategic Plan and the greater range of service and function responsibilities they will have from the start of next municipal year.
3. Following changes in partner boundaries, the 5 District Partnership model will be changed and it is proposed that Area Committees will in future provide a local governance and accountability framework for partnership collaboration through their new Area Delivery Plans which will be part of the Leeds Strategic Plan framework.
4. The Planning For Real events last Autumn were organised in this context. The feedback report to the December Area Committee concluded that they were successful in attracting more residents to attend in some cases, and a wider cross section of the community than had previously been engaged. However, Members expressed concerns in relation to:
  - Publicity and promotion (particularly how to attract hard to reach groups)
  - More Member involvement in planning the event to ensure their representative role is enhanced
  - Purpose of the spring events
  - Public involvement / interest in Area Committees themselves
5. The workshop event was organised to help discuss these issues.

## **Community Engagement Workshop**

6. The workshop discussions were framed around three themes:
  - Community engagement
  - Area Committee meetings
  - Spring event and publicity

## **Community engagement**

7. Members discussed what was meant by community engagement. In order to achieve successful community involvement, Members agreed they needed to look beyond forum style meetings that typically address single issues to a more interactive method of engagement. There was general agreement that the Planning

For Real format was good because it allowed residents to interact and be involved, rather than be a passive audience. Members suggested however that some element of formality be worked into future events so there is an opportunity for Members to lead or chair a debate on local issues and provide a chance for residents to raise issues publicly with them.

8. Members felt that themed events may help attract residents to the events. It is also crucial that area management involve Members in the planning of events from the outset because Members have the knowledge of, amongst other things, local issues.
9. There was discussion and recognition that ward wide events are unlikely to engage hard to reach groups. This would require a specific piece of targeted, intensive and more local engagement activity where the Area Committee wants to engage with a hard to reach group. This led on to a discussion about other ways of engaging with people, and the importance of feeding back to residents in the local area.
10. There was strong support from Members for an Area Committee newsletter to keep residents informed of feedback from events. The databases of contact details for residents needs to improve, and we should make use of email addresses to keep people informed of events and for feedback.
11. Members had expressed concern over how single issues raised by residents could be dealt with under this strategy. A 'take action' card, developed by the IMPaCT partnership was introduced at the workshop. This can be personalised to each ward. An example for Roundhay ward is attached in appendix 1. These can be returned to the Area Management Team, to be raised at Joint Tasking meetings and dealt with or referred direct to the relevant department / officer for action. If the resident provides contact information, feedback can be provided.

### **Area Committee meetings**

12. Members agreed that the current format was not conducive to involving the public. So that meetings could be more responsive and sensitive to local needs, and to develop partnerships between the Council and other agencies, Members suggested splitting the meeting into two halves.
13. One half of the meeting will be for the Area Committee to deal with council business and formal minutes taken. The other half will be an opportunity for residents to become involved in the work of the Area Committee and encourage their participation. Members were keen on the idea of each meeting having a theme, based on one of the partnership groups eg. the Divisional Community Safety Partnership or the Health and Social Care Partnership. Creative and engaging ways of involving the public could then be used to enable residents to have their say and suggest ways of tackling issues, for example a question time session.
14. Members agreed a forward plan should be agreed at the beginning of the year for each meeting theme. This needs to be well publicised. On top of this, more feedback at the Area Committee meetings needs to happen from the organisations funded by the Well-Being Fund.

### **Publicity**

15. Prior to the workshop a publicity factsheet, including costs of various different publicity methods was produced. This is attached in appendix 2. In addition, Members highlighted the importance of using local resources including local guides and radio. This would differ from ward to ward.

16. Members agreed that they could help publicise events by attending luncheon clubs and other activities such as school youth council meetings as Area Committee representatives.
17. The newsletter would be an important method of publicising events and Area Committee meetings, as well as providing feedback on outcomes from previous events or activities.
18. Members at the workshop discussed ways they can encourage greater resident involvement in Area Committee activities such as through sharing attendance lists from meetings they hold with the Area Management Team, and advertising the events through their surgeries and at other events they attend.

### **March events**

19. Members agreed to an event with a mix of formal and informal activities. There will be a brief introduction and formal beginning to the event, providing an opportunity for Members to address attendees. The event will provide an opportunity to highlight what has been achieved this year through the current Area Delivery Plan, and provide feedback to how the priorities identified at the autumn events will be used to inform the next Area Delivery Plan. Members agreed to use the priorities identified at the autumn events in an interactive activity which will give residents the opportunity to have spending power using 'Monopoly' money. Each resident will be given a fixed amount of 'Monopoly' money which they can then use to give to the priorities identified for the ADP that they think deserve funding. The room layout can be in market place style, giving residents the chance to tour each priority area and speak with Members and officers about their choices.
20. Following the event the Area Committee can use the findings to help inform the budget setting for commissioning Well-Being Funds in 2008/09. Residents will receive feedback and see that they have influenced how funding is allocated, and services delivered in their local area.
21. Members stressed the importance of getting the publicity right for the events, and agreed to send 1,000 letters out from their political offices in a joint agreement.
22. The Community Engagement Framework also commits to a summer event. Members discussed a range of ideas including holding outdoor events with barbeques. The area management team will work with Members nearer the time to finalise these events.

### **Conclusions**

23. The area management team will work with ward Members through the individual ward meetings to finalise the dates and locations for the spring events. Members will be consulted on the publicity arrangements for each event, based on their preferences from the attached publicity factsheet. This may involve a greater cost to the Well-Being Fund. The Area Committee has previously allocated £5,000 to community engagement in 2007/08. In order to cover the costs of publicity for the Spring events and the summer ones, the Area Committee is requested to set aside a further £3,000 from the Well-Being Fund. Proposals for the community engagement budget for 2008/09, including costings for the newsletter, will be brought to the march Area Committee meeting and reflected in the new Area Delivery Plan.
24. Prior to the March Area Committee meeting officers will work up a forward plan for the themed meetings for the municipal year 2008/09 and present it for approval at

that meeting. This will include scheduling in some of the organisations who have benefited from Well-Being Funding in the past.

## **Recommendations**

25. The Area Committee is requested to:
- a) confirm their support for community engagement as set out in this report
  - b) agree the format and theme for the spring event
  - c) approve an additional £3,000 for publicity of the community engagement events in spring and summer