



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 18th December 2008

Subject: Community Engagement

Electoral Wards Affected:

Hyde Park and Woodhouse
Headingley
Kirkstall
Weetwood



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

In November 2007, the Executive Board approved proposals to extend and enhance the roles of the Area Committees during 2008/09. Community Engagement was included as a specific function with a requirement for the agreement of a local community engagement plan for each area.

This report outlines proposals for community engagement in Inner North West Leeds and describes how the Area Committee could engage and involve local residents, enabling them to help shape future Area Committee priorities.

Purpose of this report

1. The Area Delivery Plan (ADP) for the Area Committee for 2008-11 uses the Leeds Strategic Plan (LSP) to drive its own local priorities and improvement strategies for the area. The LSP provides the opportunity to take community involvement and engagement forward to make sure that it forms an essential part of all plans and strategies. This report outlines proposals for community engagement. Members are asked to consider and comment on these proposals

Background

2. The need for community engagement is being driven nationally and locally through statutory obligations on local authorities, public agencies and local strategic partnerships. Area Committees are the means by which Leeds City Council devolves decision making to local communities, taking the lead on community engagement activity and enhancing the role of the local councillor as community champion.
3. Within the ADP there is a commitment to empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services, and to build the role of the voluntary, community and faith sectors. This priority is integral to the objectives of the Area Committee to:
 - enhance both the representative role of local elected councillors and the connections with their communities;
 - improve the quality of democracy and find new ways to facilitate citizen participation in local government.

Empowering local people – community engagement

4. Inner North West Leeds is an area with mostly dense populations, mixed neighbourhoods, diverse communities and strong community infrastructure. Since Area Committees were established in 2004, the Inner North West Area Committee, acknowledging the diversity of the area, has encouraged local people to become involved in its work and organises a range of engagement activities that enable people to identify their local issues and suggest ways of tackling them. Details of these are outlined in paragraphs 14 – 17.
5. The term “community engagement” is used in the context of this report to cover all the activities that support the involvement of residents, community groups and service users in the decision-making process. In addition, area committees are an effective tool for services and agencies to involve local residents on key strategies and future plans. For example, the Inner North West Area Committee has been used to consult and feedback on a whole range of plans and initiatives, for example the Local Development Framework.

National context

6. The Government has placed statutory obligations on local authorities, public agencies and local strategic partnerships to engage with communities about issues that affect them. Funding streams all emphasise the need for social inclusion,

community involvement and partnership. The challenge is how to do this in an informed way that is both effective and credible, and does not result in duplication or over consultation.

7. A set of indicators on citizen satisfaction with Council services has been drawn up. Under the existing Local Area Agreement in Leeds there is a mandatory target that measures residents' perception of public sector service improvements and their ability to influence service changes. The Audit Commission assessment of the Council will place a greater emphasis in its inspections on satisfaction indicators and whether residents think services are improving.
8. The Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill (Sept 2008) will create greater opportunities for community and individual empowerment. Local and regional governance arrangements will be reformed to empower communities and individuals by involving them in the design and delivery of local public services. Other measures will be designed to promote local democracy and encourage greater numbers of active citizens, for example by giving individuals a right of response from their local authority to local petitions.

Corporate context

9. The Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 to 2011, incorporating the Local Area Agreement, includes the following improvement priorities and targets linked to engagement and empowerment:
 - An increased number of local people engaged in activities to meet community needs and improve the quality of life for local residents;
 - An increase in the number of local people that are empowered to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public service delivery;
 - Enable a robust and vibrant voluntary, community and faith sector to facilitate community activity and directly deliver services;
 - An increased sense of belonging and pride in local neighbourhoods that help to build cohesive communities.
10. Indicators related to these priorities will be drawn from the national indicator set and measured by the Place Survey. The first survey to provide a baseline from which progress will be measured will take place in the autumn 2008.
11. In 2007, the Council launched a corporate approach to consultation and engagement, including publication of a Community Engagement Policy and the development of a consultation portal. However, the size of the council, the diverse focus of its activities and relationships means that promoting high quality, effective and coordinated community engagement is a significant challenge.
12. As part of the commitment to develop and embed a more robust approach, a Corporate Consultation Manager was appointed in April 2008, to:
 - support public and stakeholder consultation across council and partners;

- deliver corporate projects such as the statutory Place Survey, the Residents' Survey and the Citizens' Panel.
13. The Corporate Consultation Manager recognises the important role of neighbourhood and area based engagement to the Council and partners and has committed to support and work closely with colleagues leading on this.

Inner North West Leeds – existing arrangements

14. The existing arrangements for community engagement vary across the Inner North West area. In addition to encouraging resident participation at the area committee meetings, the following 3 community forums operate under the remit of the Area Committee and are facilitated by the Area Management Team.
- The Kirkstall Burley Forum meets between 3 – 4 times per year. The location is varied in order to reach different parts of the ward. The event is advertised in the Yorkshire Evening Post and Kirkstall Matters. Posters are displayed in the leisure centre, supermarket and housing offices.
 - Hyde Park and Woodhouse Forum meets 4 times per year. The event is advertised in the Yorkshire Evening Post and posters are displayed locally
 - Headingley Forum runs on an ad hoc basis. The event is advertised in the Yorkshire Evening Post and Headingley Weekly News. Posters are displayed in the Library, the Cardigan Centre, Headingley Community Centre and Burley Lodge.
15. The Little London Intensive Neighbourhood Management area also has a community forum. This area is subject to a separate community engagement framework, details of which will be presented to the area committee at a future meeting.
16. In addition to these forums, to ensure that council services, local agencies and local people can work together on specific issues, the Inner North West Area Committee have established themed sub-groups. These are chaired by the ward councillor identified as the “theme champion.”
17. The following are examples of other methods of community engagement undertaken on behalf of the Area Committee; some are additional one-off engagement events as a result of particular situation or emerging developments.
- **Partnership Events:** the first of a series of partnership discussions was held immediately before the Area Committee in September 2008 with the theme of Extended Services. Over the coming year, the partnership events will look at each of the ADP themes in turn. They are open to councillors and members of the public, and are attended by representatives of the relevant service providers.
 - **Area Delivery Plan development drop-in sessions** were held in each ward in May last year. A wide range of partner agencies supported the event, giving residents the opportunity to engage informally with councillors and service providers. A total of 48 residents attended the events, providing valuable

information, not only on their viewed priorities for the area, but also suggesting associated actions which would help to achieve improvements in the priorities. The wide range of issues raised were collated and helped to shape the 2008- 09 ADP priorities.

- **Kirkstall Vision Community Consultation Days.** A series of three events aimed at creating opportunities for local residents to have a say on the future development of Kirkstall.

Inner North West Leeds – proposed arrangements

18. The area in which the Inner North West Area Committee operates has a wide range of well organised, effective community and activist groups. Whilst it is to be commended that their engagement with the area committee is encouraged, it is suggested that the challenge for the area committee is to find means of making meetings and forums more accessible to a far greater number of residents, particularly those who are at risk of being marginalised or who find the formality of meetings intimidating.
19. Community forums enhance the representative role of local councillors and are a contact point for citizens to express their views and concerns about issues that affect them. They are also a useful link between partner agencies and local people. A review of these forums by the Area Management Team suggests however that they have not been particularly effective in terms of encouraging wider participation therefore provide only a limited and unrepresentative perspective. There are small number of attendees relative to the efforts and resources invested in the organisation of these events.
20. The total population figures in 2006 in the three wards where forums take place were:
 - Headingley 19,759
 - Hyde Park & Woodhouse 22,242
 - Kirkstall 20,673
21. At the same time statistics for the cycle of forums in quarter 1 and 2 this year are as follows:

Forum	Circulation list	Total attending	Residents attending	Cost
Headingley 2 meetings	70	42	26	£75.00
Hyde Park & Woodhouse	154	66	40	£68.00

3 meetings				
Kirkstall	86	77	58	£100.00
2 meetings				

- 22 The Area Management Team has examined the engagement methods in other parts of the city and this report suggests using alternative techniques for engaging with communities in the inner north west. This could include for example, innovative and eye-catching publicity and market-place style events where services and community groups can provide a wide- range of information, exhibits and presentations while giving local people the opportunity to comment. Community groups could assist in the planning of the events. Evidence shows that these events have had greater turn-out and feedback indicates that local people feel this is an effective way of obtaining a wide range of information, allowing them to choose what interests them. Local residents still feel engaged in the democratic process as they have the opportunity to engage with their local councillor. The event is also not prone to being dominated by the most vocal.
22. As part of the review of Area Management, Area Committees now have a more specific role in relation to community engagement in the future. The Area Function Schedule for community engagement sets out the role of the Area Committees. This involves the production of an area plan for community engagement which will include:
- **A community profile** of local data and intelligence, with information about the local communities, identified key contacts and routes to reach local neighbourhood and interest communities;
 - **A calendar of planned communication and engagement activity**, including information in “About Leeds” at least once each year;
 - **Community engagement activities** within particular neighbourhoods and communities, linked to ADP priorities.
23. It is proposed that the Area Management Team will maintain the **community profile**, combining local intelligence with statistical information. The **calendar of events** will be developed under the direction of the Area Committee. Proposals for **neighbourhood and community based engagement activities** will build on the current arrangements and it is proposed that new ideas will be introduced for reaching a wider sector of the community, particularly in priority neighbourhoods, for example targeted initiatives and activities to promote community cohesion and inclusion that engage groups currently underrepresented in the area.
24. Specifically, it is proposed that the Community Engagement Plan for Inner North West Leeds includes the following planned engagement activities:
- **Partnership Events**, taking the form of themed discussions before each of the six annual Area Committee meetings, will continue to be developed. A

variety of methods will be employed to structure and develop the discussions with leading roles being taken by the Member Champions for the relevant theme. The aim of these events is to encourage engagement by the public and partners with the Area Committee. A schedule of events began with the Extended Services theme in September and Community Safety in November. The theme for the February meeting will be Enterprise and Economy, to be followed by Health and Wellbeing and Environment.

- **Community forums** with local residents will be held in all 4 wards of Inner North West Leeds meeting 3 times per year and chaired by elected ward members. It is proposed that the promotion and format of the current forums is reviewed, and changed if necessary, to ensure maximum accessibility and value to all sectors of the community. The agendas will be developed with Members to ensure they are focussed on recognised local priorities reflected in the ADP and to allow greater involvement and information sharing on relevant local issues.
- **One event will be held per ward each year** and will be linked to priority setting within the themes already identified in the current ADP. Engagement activities should be an integral part of the service planning process so that results can be fed directly into decisions about service provision. This event will provide an opportunity for local residents to identify local priorities and help shape the Area Delivery Plan. By defining issues and solving problems together, the public and local services can target resources where they are most needed. This helps the Area Committee and the Council to provide services that are more responsive to the needs of local communities (within available resources). To encourage residents to get involved in the decisions the Area Committee makes about their communities, this will be an opportunity also for residents to comment on the appropriateness of services. Falling at the end of the municipal year, this will provide an opportunity to evaluate the actions in the ADP and take soundings for the following year.
- It is proposed that these events could be market-place style events, held at times and venues so as to enable as many people as possible to attend on a drop-in basis. By using service information 'stalls', informal themed discussion tables or 'planning for real' style maps to record issues or areas of concern, the services delegated to the Area Committee will have the opportunity to engage with members of the public, creating opportunities for residents to comment on the appropriateness and effectiveness of services.
- While the events will enable local residents to identify local priorities and help shape revisions to the Area Delivery Plan, customer feedback in the Leeds Annual Survey 2007 suggests that it would help engage more people if the consultation is focussed on recognised local priorities, such as youth provision, community greenspace, community centres or public transport provision. In addition it is suggested that a high priority is given to targeting attendance by young people, BME communities or other priority groups identified by the Area Committee.

- **Sub-groups.** Due to the diverse population and mixed neighbourhoods of the inner north west area, it is proposed that a range of sub-groups will continue to operate focusing on aspects of work in line with the responsibilities and functions of the area committee and the specific targeted work required that reflects the diverse population, such as the Students in the Community Group. These sub-groups have no decision making powers but table recommendations for consideration by the Area Committee. Their primary role is to drive the achievement of actions contained in the ADP. To ensure that each sub-group is clear of its objectives and that they perform effectively and efficiently, it is proposed that each group develops and agrees terms of reference.
- **Galas and festivals** events such as Hyde Park Unity Day draw large numbers of people of all ages. It is proposed to use such events to engage with people who might otherwise not get involved with statutory agencies to promote the work of the Area Committee.
- **One-off events.** There may be a need to facilitate additional one off engagement events as a result of particular situation or emerging developments. These can be accommodated, as can piggy-backing on to other occasions and pro-active engagement with hard to reach groups. Radio, new media and the press will continue to be used.
- **Website.** It is proposed to develop the Area Management website to raise the profile of the work of the Inner North West Area Committee and to develop links with other community networks.

25. It is proposed that a calendar of events will therefore include:

Activity	Frequency
Area Committee meetings	6 times a year
Area Committee partnership events	6 times a year
Area Committee sub-groups	Frequency varies
Community Ward Forums	3 times a year per ward
ADP development events	Once a year per ward in February/March

26. The timetable for the engagement calendar needs to be centred round the development and monitoring of the ADP to allow for maximum input by local communities. Appendix 1 provides detailed information on the different types of engagement events and methods that Members might wish to use for their ward events. Officers will talk Members through these choices at Ward Member meetings to help decide what format would best suit their particular ward. New and emerging community engagement techniques will be added to the database.

Implications for Council policy and governance

Member consultation

- 27 Members attended the community engagement events in their wards held last year to provide opportunities for local residents to identify priorities in the ADP. The results were used by Members and the Area Management Team to develop the 2008/09 ADP which the Area Committee has now approved.
- 28 Member Champions are leading the themed discussions which take place prior to each Area Committee and which are based on the Strategic Plan and ADP themes.

Evaluation of impact

- 29 Feedback sheets will be used at all the engagement events to gauge residents' views and demographic information will also be collected. The outcomes of the Community Engagement Strategy will also be measured through satisfaction levels expressed in the statutory Place Survey, the Residents Survey and Citizens' Panels.

Equality and diversity considerations

- 30 The Council has a long standing commitment to promoting equality, diversity and cohesion, aside from its legal duties. The Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008 – 2011 outlines its commitments and responsibilities as an employer, a service provider, a commissioner of services and as a leader.
- 31 The Stronger Communities section of the Scheme states that Leeds is a city that values the contributions of all the people of Leeds and actively engages with all our diverse communities. Leeds has set the goal of achieving Level 4 of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) Equality Standard by December 2008. A recent Interim Assessment of Regeneration Service against this Standard identified a number of areas for action, including the need to make sure that all equality groups are reached through consultation and participation activities. These will be monitored and activities put in place to address any gaps identified.
- 32 Equality Impact Assessment is a key element of the new CAA framework. The inspection will consider how well public services are knowing and meeting the needs of the diverse groups within communities; and focus on whether groups and individuals who can be subject to discrimination and prejudice receive equitable outcomes.
- 33 Equality monitoring, designed to ensure that we are reaching all sectors of the community and that barriers to participation in engagement activities are addressed, will include:
- ensuring that effective promotion of community engagement activities targets all equality groups, plus other socially excluded communities, e.g. people reliant on state benefits or excluded because of education or skills levels;
 - assessing what barriers people may face in, for example, accessing services or getting their opinions heard;
 - annual monitoring of regular forums and networks through a standard monitoring form for completion by attendees;
 - annual postal surveys of all households in the Inner North West area;

- use of a standard voluntary feedback and equality monitoring form at public events.

Legal and resource implications

34. There are no legal implications arising from this report.
35. The Area Management Team will be responsible for organising and co-ordinating community engagement activities and equality monitoring under the direction of the Area Committee. It is proposed that costs associated with holding forums and the individual community events are met from the Well Being Fund.

Conclusion

36. This report proposes a practical framework for engagement for the Area Committee to ensure that it engages with communities in a way that is coordinated, consistent and coherent.

Recommendations

37. The Area Committee is requested to comment on and approve the community engagement framework for 2009/10.

Background Papers

Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill (Sept 2008)

Executive Board report, 16th July 2008 'Area Committee roles for 2008/09'

Leeds Equality and Diversity Scheme, Lighter Touch Impact Assessment

Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 to 2011

Inner North West Leeds Area Delivery Plan 2008-2011

Area Committee Roles for 2008/09 report of Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Unlocking the Talent of our Communities – Central Government Empowerment White Paper