



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

Originator: Dylan Griffiths

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Report of the Head of Planning, Policy and Improvement

Report to Inner West Area Committee

Date: 2nd April 2009

Subject: Sustainable Communities Act

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 Sustainable Communities Act provides a channel for local authorities to submit proposals to improve the sustainability of their areas that require government action. Such action can include a change in legislation or the transfer of a function (and accompanying budget) from one organisation to another. The deadline for submission of proposals is 31 July 2009.

Leeds City Council has opted into the Act and is now consulting panels of citizen representatives including elected Members, parish and town councils, voluntary and community groups and partners through the Leeds Initiative to collect proposals for Leeds City Council to consider and from, which it can select one or more proposals to submit before 31 July 2009

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This report provides background information on the Sustainable Communities Act and the approach agreed by Leeds City Council for developing and preparing a submission by Leeds City Council to the Selector.

2.0 Background

Proposals to promote sustainability

- 2.1 The Secretary of State invited local authorities to submit proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act in October 2008. The deadline for submission of proposals is **31 July 2009**. The Sustainable Communities Act provides a channel for local authorities to submit proposals to improve the sustainability of their areas that require government action. Such action can include a change in legislation or the transfer of a function (and accompanying budget) from one organisation to another.
- 2.2 An example of a legislative change would be a request to change the Traffic Management Act 2004 so that the Council's Enforcement Officers can issue fixed penalty notices for offences like dangerous parking or causing an obstruction as well as offences like parking on double yellow lines where they already have the power to issue fixed penalty notices.
- 2.3 An example of a transfer of a function from one body to another could be a local authority taking over the running of post offices in parts of its area as Essex County Council has done. Other examples might include transferring responsibility for nature conservation and water quality from Natural England or the Environment Agency to a local authority.
- 2.4 The Act is deliberately broad in its scope and very little is ruled in or out in terms of what a local authority can propose beyond it must require government action and should be intended to promote sustainability and wellbeing in the area. Although sustainability is associated with the environment and green agenda, it is broader than this and measures to promote social or economic wellbeing can also be proposed under this Act.

Preparing and Considering Proposals

- 2.5 Before submitting proposals a local authority is required to establish or recognise one or more panels of representatives of local persons, consult with them and try to reach agreement with them about each proposal to be submitted. The Act does not prescribe which groups should be included in panels, how panels should be constituted or how many panels a local authority may choose to establish or recognise beyond saying that local authorities should involve groups that it considers to be 'under-represented' in civic and political activity. Guidance to the Act states that local authorities will wish to consult with parish councils in their area about proposals to be submitted.
- 2.6 Proposals may come from citizens or originate from the Council (or other body). Although the Council must consult with panels of local representatives there is no requirement for the panels to agree with the proposals to be submitted. Similarly, if the Council proposes the transfer of functions from one body to another, the Council must consult with those bodies but there is no requirement for the body whose function is being transferred from to agree to the proposal.

Submitting and Judging Proposals

- 2.7 Proposals are submitted to the Local Government Association who will act as 'Selector' and submit a shortlist of proposals to the Secretary of State who will publish her response

to each proposal and work with successful authorities to develop and implement their proposals. Detailed proposals that are specific about the changes required by Government are more likely to be successful.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 Leeds City Council has decided to 'opt into' this Act and consult with representative bodies to develop proposals to submit to the selector. These panels include elected Member groups, Parish and Town Councils, Leeds Initiative groups and voluntary, community and faith groups.

3.2. The Corporate Policy Team is coordinating the Council's consultation of representative bodies and suggestions for groups to consult with or proposals for the Council to consider submitting to the selector should be sent to Dylan Griffiths (Dylan.griffiths@leeds.gov.uk tel. 0113 3950401).

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report

Background Papers: None