



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

To: West (Inner) Area Committee

Date: 8th September 2010

Subject: Community Engagement Programme Update

Electoral Wards Affected:

Armley
Bramley and Stanningley

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 provides an update on the development of a programme of community engagement utilising the Leeds Citizens Panel to give local people a greater say in how services are developed and improved. It will discuss in detail the delivery of a pilot project targeted at the West North West Part of Leeds that uses surveys and focus groups to gain a greater insight on local priorities. The report will conclude that the use of the Leeds Citizens Panel for undertaking consultation at a more local level provides a flexible, efficient and reliable way of gaining the views of local people.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To provide the area committee with a summary of the progress made in the delivery of the West North West area management team's Community Engagement Programme since the last report in December 2009.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Working Context

The WNW Community Engagement Programme is delivered within a complex and dynamic working environment that presents a series of competing priorities that Area Management have addressed through a range of means. Chief amongst these are the limitations of finite resources and a commitment to the narrowing the gap agenda.

Below is a brief description of some of the key elements of the working context for the community engagement programme.

2.2 Leeds Citizens Panel

A body of 1800 residents currently form the Leeds Citizens Panel. Through the council's Communications Team a programme of city-wide consultation is undertaken with this demographically representative group of Leeds residents. An agreement has been reached between the Communications Team and WNW Area Management for the citizens panel to be used more intensively at the Wedge and Area level with a significant increase in membership city-wide.

Following the successful use of the Citizens Panel as part of the WNW pilot, plans are now underway to roll out this activity across the whole city. A recruitment process of additional Citizens Panel members will be required to bring the panel membership up to 5000 members. That would offer about 500 panel members for each Area Committee area.

2.3 Area Delivery Plans

The Area Delivery Plans (ADPs) represent the primary strategy for Area working in Leeds. The community engagement work programme has a direct link to the cycle of Area Delivery Plan updates that culminate with sign-off by Area Committees and the Executive Board each year. Key elements of the work programme are listed within the ADPs and in some cases actually support the monitoring of certain ADP actions.

3.0 Main Issues

The West North West area management team has developed a community engagement programme that consists of the following elements:

3.1 Citizens Panel

The programme uses the Leeds Citizens Panel as a population sample from which to undertake community engagement at the Wedge and Area levels. Area Management have secured agreement with Corporate Communications to have access to membership database for undertaking consultation activities.

3.2 Research

Building on the quality of population sample that the Citizens Panel provides, the team have developed the use of two qualitative and complementary research methods by which panel members have been consulted.

- Online Surveys

A programme of quarterly surveys distributed to citizens panel members through Talking Point has been developed. The first of which is the "Community Safety and Environment Survey" which was undertaken in March 2010 and received 71% response rate. A further 3 surveys on a range of themes are planned for the 2010-11 financial year.

- Focus Group Sessions

To complement the surveys, a series of focus groups sessions with the Citizens Panel members have been commissioned to the external research agency, Enventure who will undertake one focus group session in each of the four Areas.

Area Management have undertaken the recruitment to focus group sessions while Enventure will facilitate the sessions and provide a report setting out the findings.

3.3 Area Web Pages

Area Management has developed a series of Leeds City Council webpages: 1 for the wedge and one for each of the four Area Committee Areas in the West North West part of the city. <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/wnwareamanagement> These web pages provide a broad range of information to visitors and serve to raise the profile of work of the Area Committees and Area Management Team and highlight the value of the Area Delivery Plans.

A project team within the WNW Area Management have been assembled to oversee the development of the Area Web Pages as part of community engagement programme. They have liaised closely with Corporate Communications and IT to undertake the development of the web content.

3.4 Area Charter

Following the success of the ENE Area Charter pilot, the team have begun to investigate how a similar approach can be undertaken in the WNW. A printed Area Charter for each of the 4 areas in the wedge will form an important component of the team's community engagement programme in 2010-11. 2000 copies of the Area Charters will be printed (500 X 4 Areas).

The development of high quality web content has reduced some of the need for the team to invest in the production of printed materials, but there is a recognition that print media will continue to be part of how information is communicated to communities at the Area level.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

4.1 There are no implications for council policy or governance

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

5.1 There are no legal or resource implications

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The introduction of the Citizens Panel to the community engagement programme in the West North West has clearly increased the number and demographic representation of local people contributing their views. This toolkit of engagement provides a robust framework for driving service improvement and supports a process of local decision making.

6.2 The high rates of response received from the Community Safety and Environment survey and the detail of the findings received from the focus group sessions has enabled the team to significantly improve the quality of the team's engagement activities.

- 6.3 The content of the Crime and Grime survey has been developed in close partnership with a range of the environment and community safety partners who have committed to use the findings of the research to inform their programme of service planning.
- 6.4 The development of a web page for the WNW wedge and one for each of the 4 areas represents a considerable step forward in how the public is able to access information about the area and will provide a useful means by which members of the public can be directed to online surveys.

7.0 Recommendations

Members of the Area Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the scope and content of the WNW Area Management Team's Community Engagement Programme and make any comment as necessary.
2. Consider, and provide feedback on the use of the Citizens Panel as part of a wider tool for community engagement.

Background Papers

None