

Report of: Inner North West Community Planning Officer

Report to: North West (Inner) Area Committee

Date: 28th October 2010

Subject: Community Planner Update

Electoral Wards Affected: Headingley Hyde Park and Woodhouse Kirkstall Weetwood		Specific Implications For: Ethnic minorities <input type="checkbox"/> Women <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled people <input type="checkbox"/>	
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"/>	

Executive Summary

The Community Planner resource, since June 2010, has continued to be well used by ward councillors, community groups and residents of the inner north west area. Alongside responding to a large number of general planning related queries the role has looked to progress significant planning issues in the area. These include the progression of community-led local planning documents; responding to significant applications in the area with planning advice and assistance; the lobbying of national government in relation to HMO legislation and student housing; and facilitating greater co-ordination between community groups/ representatives and Council teams.

These matters will be progressed over the short and medium terms whilst the Community Planner resource continues to be used to respond to new challenges in the area and changes in planning policy and legislation which affect local communities in the inner north west of Leeds.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 This report is intended to advise Ward Councillors on how the Community Planner resource has been used since June 2010. The report includes an assessment of how the key on-going themes in the area are progressing and of the future goals of the role.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Following a short period without a Community Planner in place, the role was filled on the 7th June 2010. Since this time the role has been used to progress a number of pre-existing themes and issues as well as responding to new planning related matters in the inner north west area.
- 2.2 The Community Planner fulfils a number of roles and responsibilities, many of which have been in place for considerable time. The nature of the role means that it includes both reactive (responding to planning related queries and providing planning advice) and proactive elements (having an influence in guiding planning related topics and issues in the area).
- 2.3 In brief, the Community Planner role incorporates a number of overall objectives which are outlined below:
- To advise and assist Ward Councillors, community groups and individuals on planning related matters;
 - To work with the Planning Sub-Group to raise awareness of area specific planning related issues and to support the planning related initiatives of the Area Committee;
 - To work alongside Council officers from a wide range of service areas to co-ordinate planning responses in the inner north west area.
- 2.4 A large part of the day-to-day role is involved with responding to enquiries from ward councillors, community groups and individuals and the importance of this aspect of the role should not be underestimated. However this report will outline the main planning issues in the inner north west area and how the Community Planner role has provided a planning response to these particular issues.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Below are details of the main ongoing planning-related themes in the inner north west area which the Community Planner role is integral to.

Student Housing and Related Management

- 3.2 The large student population in the inner north west area of Leeds, an area which accommodates the two main universities in the city, is a key issue for the area. Student housing and associated issues (such as waste management, antisocial behaviour, crime, parking etc.) have significant implications for the creation of balanced and sustainable communities in the area.
- 3.21 The Community Planner role has been utilised to work alongside community groups and Council officers in order to co-ordinate a response to the aforementioned issues. Examples of working groups in which the Community Planner participates are the Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group and the Waste Management Group, both of which address issues surrounding student housing. These groups consist of representatives from private landlord groups, the universities, UNIPOL, alongside Council Officers from the related Council teams. The Community Planner is able to represent the Inner North West Area Committee in these groups and provide feedback on relevant issues.
- 3.22 The post also fulfils a wider strategic role by working to progress local policy and legislative issues which support the aims of the Inner North West Area Committee. In the past the Community Planner role has been heavily involved with the lobbying of national government alongside local MP's, ward councillors, community groups and residents to address the problems surrounding the growth of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).
- 3.23 Since the introduction of changes to the national HMO legislation on the 6th April 2010 the Community Planner has continued this role by working with Council officers, community groups and residents to enforce against breaches of planning control in order to use planning 'tools' manage the spread of HMOs in problem areas. The Community Planner role

has also worked with Council officers to provide clear and coherent guidance to landlords, community groups and residents.

- 3.24 Following the new national government's proposed changes to the existing HMO legislation of the 17th June 2010 (which have been widely unsupported by local community groups and residents) the Community Planner has worked to lobby national government on behalf of the Inner North West Area Committee and the Council. At the time of writing this report these changes look set to be implemented.

Conservation and Design

- 3.3 The inner north west area contains unique character areas which are important to provide a sense of identity to local places and people.
- 3.31 The Community Planner resource has been used to assist the steering groups of the 'Headingley and Hyde Park Neighbourhood Design Statement' and the 'Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Design Statement'. These documents, both of which will have Supplementary Planning Document status, allow local communities to place importance on the character and features of local areas which they wish to see protected as part of future planning decisions. These documents also act to provide a steer on the type of development local communities wish to see in particular areas. The Community Planner role is facilitative in this instance, in that it provides assistance to steering groups by offering planning advice and representing the groups at council meetings. At the time of writing this report the Headingley and Hyde Park NDS has now been formally adopted with the Little Woodhouse NDS due to begin its public consultation period.
- 3.32 The Community Planner role has also been used in the past to work alongside the steering group of the Kirkstall Vision document which has now been officially launched.
- 3.32 The Community Planner role also involves working with community groups and representatives to report potential breaches of planning control which can have wider implications for the character and appearance of local areas. As well as this, the Community Planner works alongside Conservation officers and Landscape officers to provide planning advice to community groups and individuals on wider conservation issues such as the protection of trees in the area.
- 3.33 A further role of the Community Planner is to work with Council officers to ensure that the Regulation 7 Direction in relation to 'To Let' boards is being enforced in the area. This is an ongoing issue.

Joined up working

- 3.4 The nature of the Community Planner role means that a joined-up approach is required in order to co-ordinate Council responses to local issues specific to the inner north west area. Within the Council the Community Planner is responsible for working with colleagues from Highways, Housing, Environmental Health, Design, Conservation, Landscape, Planning Policy, Planning Enforcement, and Development Management (formerly Development Control). The Community Planner role has looked to build good working relationships with officers from these Council teams in order to ensure there is the regular communication required in order to facilitate a co-ordinated approach.
- 3.41 The Community Planner role also involves acting as a representative for the Inner North West Area Committee, particularly through the Planning Sub-Group, on planning issues. This often involves working closely with community groups and representatives.
- 3.42 The Community Planner resource allows Ward Councillors, community groups and individuals to be kept abreast of changes in planning policy and legislation as and when these issues arise. Of particular note in 2010 are changes to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order and changes to national Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing including the new government stance on 'garden grabbing'.

Significant Planning Applications

3.5 A number of significant planning sites have been discussed within the Planning Sub-Group since the 7th June. These include (amongst others):

- Leeds Girls High School
- The Former Glassworks
- Cookridge Hospital
- Kirkstall Forge
- Woodside Quarry
- St. Michaels College

3.51 These applications have significant implications for the inner north west area. The Community Planner role ensures that Ward Councillors are briefed on major schemes and given regular updates where appropriate. The Community Planner role also ensures strong local representation is well informed and is able to make constructive contributions to the planning process.

3.52 The Planning Sub-Group acts as an appropriate forum for much of these discussions and sets a planning agenda which is both responsive and proactive in relation to local issues.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 The Community Planner works to advise Ward Councillors, community groups and community representatives on Council policy and assist the Inner North West Area Committee in making representations in relation to proposed changes in Council and national government policy where relevant.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 The Community Planner is funded from the Wellbeing Fund and works alongside existing Council resources.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The Community Planner resource is continuing to be a well-used resource with positive feedback gained from Ward Councillors, community groups, and local residents. In the 4 months following the 7th June 2010 the Community Planner received around 200 individual queries from Ward Councillors, community groups, residents and Council officers.

6.2 The Community Planner role has several aims moving forward in the short and medium term. The continuation of existing work in relation to local 'community-led' planning documents, significant applications in the district, and wider issues such as student housing and conservation will be a key part of the Community Planner role in the coming months.

6.3 Of particular note are several upcoming projects and themes which the Community Planner role will be central to. These include the proposed changes to national HMO legislation, the rolling out of the national governments localism agenda where this has implications for planning policy, and the progression of significant planning applications and planning appeals.

6.4 In conclusion the Community Planning role will continue to meet the main overall objectives outlined in paragraph 2.3 above, alongside other related tasks and roles.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and comment as they feel appropriate. It is recommended that the Community Planner resource be continued to be

used to meet the objectives outlined in paragraph 2.3 above, whilst also looking to respond to the new challenges discussed in paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 above.