
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Planning and Improvement)

To: Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 14th April 2011

Subject: Area Leader's Report

Electoral Wards Affected:

Hyde Park & 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

This report provides updates on two project in inner North West Leeds that the Area Committee has requested regular updates on.

1.0 Purpose of This Report

1.1 This report updates Members on the current position of the delegation of Environmental Services to the Area Committee and the Dobby Row BMX trail in Kirkstall.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 At its meeting in February 2011, the Area Committee received a report on proposals to delegate some parts of Environmental Services to Area Committees.

2.2 A feasibility study was commissioned by the Area Committee into a proposal to build a BMX trail on land off Kirkstall Road known as Dobby Row.

3.0 Environmental Services Delegation

3.1 Further to the report submitted to the last Area Committee, the following provides a brief update on the progress towards achieving the delegation of environmental services from June/July 2011.

- 3.2 Work is progressing on the development of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for each Area Committee, with a generic template agreed by Area Chairs on 11th February. A first draft of the Inner North West Area Committee SLA will be shared with Members at a workshop scheduled to take place on 28th March, 10am-1pm, to which you will have received an invitation on 31st January. To inform the detail of the SLAs, service resources have been allocated across the City on a wedge basis, detail of which will be available at the March workshops, if not already shared with Members. Members will have further opportunity to input and comment on their SLA prior to the final version being presented for approval at the June/July Area Committee.
- 3.3 Appointment of the three Locality Manager posts, who will manage service delivery to meet the requirements of their respective area's SLAs, is due to take place in March. Area Chairs will be involved in part of the recruitment process for the posts, with the final decision on appointments however, remaining with senior officers. As soon as the appointments are formalised Members will be informed of who their Locality Manager is.
- 3.4 At their last meeting, Area Chairs discussed the potential roles of Deputy Area Chair, Environmental Champion and Environment Sub-group. Presently, some Area Committees have one or more of these roles, whilst others have none. It was agreed that whilst the roles will remain informal, i.e. have no decision making authority, they will be a valuable mechanism for dealing with the SLA and service delivery matters in a timely manner between formal Area Committee meetings. With regard to the function that a sub-group could undertake this would be especially relevant prior to and during the initial stages of the delegation. Once the delegation is in place and effective then local arrangements can be made as to how to deal with operational issues and the SLA, agreed as a wedge and/or between the Area Committees and their Locality Manager. In some cases the sub-group may be a time limited 'task and finish group', in other areas the sub-group may fulfill a more ongoing role of overseeing the SLA outside of formal Area Committee business.

4.0 Dobby Row BMX Trail

- 4.1 At its December 2010 meeting, the Area Committee received an update on the Dobby Row BMX trail feasibility study. The Committee was advised that a resolution on the future ownership of the facility would need to be agreed.
- 4.2 Below is an extract from the a Kirkstall Ward Member briefing held on 1st March 2011 which outlines the various reasons why the scheme could not progress further at this stage:
- Site Selection: Dobby Row is located directly alongside the A65 in Kirkstall. The land is vested with City Development and has very steep topography and a history of land uses which have limited its development potential. LEDA were asked to consider various sites for BMX activity in 2009 and objected to the development at Dobby Row due to the requirement for woodland clearance and the negative impact on the wider area which would result. The BMX riders consulted are keen to develop the site as a BMX trail because of the wooded nature of the site and steep slopes being suitable for BMX trail riding.
 - Project Need: While it's clear that some BMX riders may wish to see a BMX trail developed at Dobby Row, a more detailed understanding of the levels of need and the suitability of the location is still required. Any approval for significant funding or a

lease from the council would need this setting out in a business case which has yet to be developed in any detail.

- Design: Strategic Design Alliance (SDA) has been commissioned by the Area Committee to undertake a design and consultation process with BMX riders and have drawn up plans for a BMX scheme costing in the region of £200k to complete.
- Capital Funding: A potential opportunity to raise the necessary funds required to complete the scheme was identified through the tipping of Quality Bus Initiative (QBI) spoil on the adjacent Dobby Row site. Tipping the spoil locally would create a savings for the QBI scheme, some of which could be passed on to the Dobby Row scheme and could be used to pay for the creation of the jumps and to address the other capital elements of the scheme.

In order to take advantage of this opportunity and secure approval from QBI programme board to begin tipping the spoil on the site, a deadline of end of January 2011 was set for Cllr Illingworth to resolve a range of site management issues with the BMX group he is developing. This was always going to be challenging to achieve in the time available, but as the deadline has now passed, the opportunity to tip the spoil and secure the associated funding has now passed.

Alternative sources of capital funding will need to be secured should members wish to proceed with the scheme. At this stage it is unclear where this may be provided from, but members may wish to allocate capital Well-being, Ward Based Initiative or Section 106 funding. The charitable status of the group may enable the project to secure external funding from sources not available to the local authority.

- Planning: A planning application has been submitted for a BMX trail at Dobby Row and objections were raised due to issues with parking in the design as submitted. Revisions to the design are required to address the lack of parking. This should be possible to achieve with the available land on site.
- Liability: BMX trail riding is an inherently risky activity and insurance would be required for the Dobby Row site. The insurance section of Leeds City Council has confirmed that the BMX trail could not be covered by the Council's existing insurance policy if it was being managed by an external body. Kirkstall members resolved to seek clarification on the justification for this decision. It's unlikely that the BMX group would be able to raise the revenue required to pay for liability insurance so this is a key issue for the viability of the scheme.
- Maintenance: Parks and Countryside have confirmed that they could not accept the maintenance of the facility in their portfolio due to budget pressures, citing that it would cost in the region of £30k a year to maintain. Cllr Illingworth has developed a limited company that he would like to manage the site on completion, but there are questions about the capacity of this group to take on this level of responsibility.
- Lease: Due to the lack of suitability for the proposed BMX site to be managed by Parks and Countryside, Cllr Illingworth would like the BMX group to secure a long lease from the council. While no formal discussion has taken place on the terms of the lease, it's likely that the capacity of the group to insure and manage the site will need to be evidenced before the council would enter into such an agreement. Cllr Illingworth is recommended to seek the advice from property services on what requirements would be placed on the group in relation to site management including maintenance and insurance.

- Project Support: Area Management have responded to members' requests to assess the feasibility for developing a BMX trail at Dobby Row. This process has identified a number of challenging issues to resolve. Should Kirkstall Members wish to continue to develop the scheme, it is recommended that a robust project management framework be put in place and that a department from Leeds City Council with suitable technical ability be identified take up the role of project sponsor to aid in the development of this leisure activity.

5.0 Hyde Park Neighbourhood Conference

- 5.1 Following the launch of the Hyde Park Neighbourhood Management programme in January 2011, a conference was held at the Cardigan Centre on the 24th of March to bring a wide range of participants together to identify key priorities for the Hyde Park Neighbourhood Improvement Plan.
- 5.2 The event was chaired by Cllr Peter Gruen (Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing). Over 52 delegates attended from the public, voluntary and community sector including, residents, students and landlords.
- 5.3 Participants contributed a range of ideas which will help to target the work of the Tasking Team, enable the development of a communication plan and the Neighbourhood Improvement Plan.
- 5.4 The Hyde Park Board will meet on the 29th of March to discuss consider the outcome of the event and agree those actions which will be prioritised in forthcoming service and stakeholder meetings.
- 5.5 The Area Management Team will support further opportunities for residents to contribute to the development of the Hyde Park Neighbourhood Programme.

6.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 6.1 There are no implications for Council Policy and Governance.

7.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 7.1 None

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 Members have been briefed on the draft Service Level Agreement, and further information on the proposed delegation of parts of Environmental Services will be presented to the Area Committee at future meetings.
- 8.2 The proposal to build a BMX Trail at Dobby Row in Kirkstall ward has been put on hold due to a number of issues that need resolving before work on the scheme can progress further.
- 8.3 A recent event in Hyde Park was successful in bringing together a broad range of participants to contribute to the development of the emerging Neighbourhood Improvement Plan.

9.0 Recommendations

9.1 The Area Committee is requested to:

- (i) note the contents of the report,
- (ii) note the progress made on the Environmental Services delegation to the Area Committee
- (iii) note the current position of the Dobby Row BMX scheme
- (iv) note the recent Hyde Park Neighbourhood Management Activity

Background Papers

None