

Report of the Community Planning Officer

Report to the Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 23rd February 2012

Subject: Community Planner Update Report

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Are specific electoral Wards affected? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): | | |
| Headingley | | |
| Hyde Park and Woodhouse | | |
| Kirkstall | | |
| Weetwood | | |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: N/A | | |
| Appendix number: N/A | | |

Summary of main issues

1. The objectives of the community planner role include providing advice to ward members and community groups on planning matters, working with the inner north west Area Committee (INWAC) Planning Sub Group to respond to local planning issues, and working with council officers from a range of service areas to co-ordinate planning responses in the inner north west area.
2. The community planner work programme over the last 12 months has included working with the INWAC Planning Sub Group to co-ordinate responses to local planning issues and working on locally significant planning projects such as the Article 4 direction to require planning permission for new houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), the creation of new HMO planning policy and the monitoring of the letting board direction. The community planner has provided officer support for community drop-in sessions to discuss significant planning applications, attended community meetings to discuss the neighbourhood planning proposals emerging from the Localism Act and attended the private sector strategic working group to engage with landlord groups. In addition to this the day-to-day duties of the role also make up a significant proportion of the community planner workload.
3. If Area Committee determine to continue funding for the community planner post for 2012 to 2013 there are a number of emerging projects and themes which are likely to

form part of the future work programme alongside the continuation of many of those above. One of the most significant of these is likely to be the emergence of 'neighbourhood planning' which will provide communities with powers to create new planning policies at a neighbourhood level in order to shape new development in local areas. The community planner post will also be used to support the renewal of the Far Headingley, Weetwood and West Park NDS, work with colleagues in housing services to respond to local housing strategy issues, and continue to update the community planner website as a source of local planning information for community groups and local residents.

Recommendations

4. Members are asked to note the contents of the report and comment as they feel appropriate.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report is intended to give an update to Ward Councillors on the community planner work programme for the past 12 months. The report will also introduce those emerging projects and themes which are likely to be central to discussions at the inner north west Area Committee (INWAC) Planning Sub Group over the next twelve months and introduce the proposed work programme for the community planner over this period, if Area Committee determine to continue funding the post.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The overall objectives of the Community Planner role are outlined below:

- To advise and assist Ward Councillors, community groups and individuals on planning related matters;
- To work with the INWAC 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.

- 2.2 In order to meet these objectives over the last 12 months the Community Planner work programme has included the following:

- The co-ordination of the INWAC Planning Sub Group; including the setting of the agenda to discuss significant planning applications, changes to national and local planning policy, and the ongoing monitoring of 'community-led' planning documents.
- Working alongside colleagues in the planning policy team to bring into effect the Article 4 direction to require planning permission for the conversion of family homes to small HMOs. This has included organising workshops to encourage community engagement in the formulation of new planning policies aimed at managing high concentrations of HMOs in the future and attending community meetings to raise awareness of the direction.
- Working alongside colleagues in the Planning Enforcement team on the continued monitoring of the Regulation 7 direction restricting the erection of letting boards in the defined direction area.
- Working with Ward Councillors to hold eight community drop-in meetings for significant planning applications.
- Organising workshops for community groups interested in 'neighbourhood planning' and attending a number of community meetings to discuss the proposals with local residents. This work is being progressed through the

INWAC Planning Sub Group with a special meeting held in February to discuss the emerging issues.

- Attending meetings of the Private Sector Working Group to engage with landlord associations on relevant planning matters such as the Council's Article 4 direction.
- The creation of the community planner website on the Council's web pages to create an information resource for local community groups and residents.

2.3 As well as the above, the Community Planner resource has continued to be well used by ward members, community groups, and local residents as a first point of contact for planning related issues. Responding to these queries has formed a significant proportion of the Community Planner workload.

3 Main issues

3.1 There are a number of emerging and existing planning projects and themes which are anticipated to be priorities in inner north west Leeds over the next twelve months. The INWAC Planning Sub Group will continue to respond to these priorities through its monthly meetings. The community planner post will continue to support the group with a work programme over the next twelve months based on the following themes.

INWAC Planning Sub Group

3.2 The community planner post will continue to co-ordinate the INWAC Planning Sub Group to discuss significant local planning applications and issues and monitor the use of community planning documents such as Neighbourhood Design Statements. The group will also lead on work aimed at informing and engaging community groups on the changes to the planning system emerging from the Localism Act; specifically those changes relating to neighbourhood planning.

Neighbourhood Planning

3.3 The introduction of a fourth tier of plan making in the planning system at the 'neighbourhood' level represents a significant change to the planning system. This change, which is one of the key themes of the Localism Act, presents new opportunities for community and resident groups to get involved in producing new planning policies at a 'neighbourhood' level which will help to shape future development. The INWAC Planning Sub Group will have an important role in working with interested groups who wish to explore these opportunities. The community planner, in conjunction with colleagues from the city development department, will provide advice on neighbourhood planning and other opportunities to become involved in the planning system emerging from the Localism Act.

3.4 There is a considerable amount of interest in neighbourhood planning in inner north west Leeds as had been demonstrated at workshops and meetings held over the last twelve months. Regulations which set out how neighbourhood planning will work in practice are expected to be released in April 2012. The

INWAC Planning Sub Group will continue to work with community and resident groups over the next twelve months to provide advice and support.

Article 4 Direction and HMO Planning Policy

- 3.5 The Council's Article 4 direction came into effect on 10th February 2012. The direction requires planning permission to convert a family house into a small house in multiple occupation (HMO). There has been a high level of community support in inner north west Leeds for the introduction of the direction as demonstrated by the number of local residents who wrote in support of the direction during the public consultation period in Spring 2011 and the number who attended a community workshop in October 2011.
- 3.6 The next stage in the process is to introduce new local planning policy on which to base the determination of planning applications for the conversion of properties to HMOs. The Community Planner will continue to work with the planning policy team on the drafting of this policy. The community planner will also be working to engage with community groups, landlord groups, the universities, student groups and other interested parties during this time.

Community Planner Website

- 3.7 At the Area Committee meeting of April 2011 members of the committee expressed support for the introduction of a community planner website. The website came online in July 2011 and has aimed to provide community groups and local residents with planning and planning-related information which is relevant to inner north west Leeds. The website currently includes copies of community led planning documents, lists of planning applications received by the Council in the inner north west area, and meeting notes from INWAC Planning Sub Group meetings. There is also further information on relevant planning issues such as houses in multiple occupation, letting boards and neighbourhood planning.
- 3.8 It is the intention to continue to develop and expand the community planner website with information relevant to planning matters in inner north west Leeds over the next twelve months.

Community Led Planning Documents

- 3.9 In the recent past the community planner post has supported the steering groups of the Far Headingley, Weetwood and West Park Neighbourhood Design Statement (NDS), the Headingley and Hyde Park NDS, the Little Woodhouse NDS and the Vision for Kirkstall Ward. The Far Headingley, Weetwood and West NDS was adopted in 2005 and the steering group are now looking to update and renew this document with an community exhibition planned for February 2012. The community planner will be used to support the steering group through this process.

Letting Boards

- 3.10 The community planner will continue to support the Planning Enforcement team in the enforcement of the letting board code in the Regulation 7 direction area.

Drop-In Sessions for Significant Planning Applications

- 3.11 The community planner will continue to provide officer support for community drop-in sessions to discuss significant planning applications with local residents.

Housing Strategy

- 3.12 The community planner will continue to liaise with officers from Housing Services, on behalf of the INWAC Planning Sub Group, in order to progress discussions in relation to housing priorities in inner north west Leeds.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 This report is intended to inform ward members in inner north west Leeds on the community planner work programme. As such this report has not been subject to public consultation.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.2 There are no specific equality considerations arising from this report. As such it has not been necessary to prepare an Equality Impact Assessment.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 This report does not have any direct implications for Council policy.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The community planner is funded from the Wellbeing Fund and works alongside existing Council resources.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications as this report does not relate to a key or major decision.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 There are no significant risks identified in this report.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The community planner resource has continued to be well used by ward members, community groups and local residents over the past twelve months. Those projects and themes outlined in section 3 of this report are anticipated to form the core work programme of the community planner post over the next twelve months alongside the day-to-day duties of the role.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and comment as they feel appropriate.

7 Background documents

7.1 None.