

**Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities)**

**Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012**

**Subject: Scrutiny review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils - draft terms of reference**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. In June 2012, the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services made a request for Scrutiny to conduct a review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils and explore how this can be strengthened.
2. In agreeing to undertake this review, draft terms of reference have been produced and are attached to this report for Members' consideration and approval.
3. The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules require that, before embarking on an inquiry/review, the Board seeks and considers the views of the relevant Director and Executive Member. These views will need to be taken into account when agreeing the terms of reference for this review.

**Recommendations**

4. Members are asked to consider and agree terms of reference for its forthcoming Scrutiny review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report presents draft terms of reference in relation to the Scrutiny Board's forthcoming review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Local (community, neighbourhood, parish, village and town) councils are statutory bodies that are recognised nationally as the grass-roots level of local government. Their role is to provide a voice for communities, helping people to feel more involved in the decisions that affect them. Within the Leeds area, there are 31 local Parish and Town Councils currently established.
- 2.2 Mutual recognition of the added value gained in developing a closer working relationship had led to the agreement of a Parish and Town Council Charter in October 2006. This Charter sets out how Leeds City Council and the local councils aim to work together for the benefits of local people. A copy of the latest Charter is attached for the Board's information (see appendix 1).
- 2.3 This Charter is intended to be flexible and adaptable to the changing circumstances and arrangements of local government. A review of the Charter is therefore carried out on an annual basis with the local councils to keep pace with developments.
- 2.4 However, in June 2012, the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services made a request for Scrutiny to conduct a separate review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils and explore how this can be strengthened.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 In agreeing to undertake this review, the Scrutiny Board also recognises the associated links with the Council's current review of area working. Within the terms of reference for this wider review, one of the key objectives is to 'consider the effectiveness of partnership working at the local level and the ability of local councillors and their communities to hold local services to account and influence decision makers to deliver improved local services'. In line with the Area Committee Procedure Rules within the Constitution, Area Committees are already expected to promote working relationships with Parish and Town Councils.
- 3.2 Within the current Parish and Town Council Charter, particular reference is also made to the relationship between local councils and their respective Area Committees. It states that 'Area Committees will seek to maintain and promote partnership working and funding arrangements with their local councils as appropriate for the sustainable social, economic and environmental wellbeing of their local communities'. As part of this, the Charter also makes reference to local councils being consulted, as appropriate, on the annual Area Delivery Plan of their respective Area Committee.
- 3.3 The activities of local councils generally fall into three main categories: representing the local community; delivering services to meet local needs; and striving to improve the quality of life and community well being. In doing so, local councils must also promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members (this duty is reinforced by the Localism Act 2011).

- 3.4 However, as relationships between Area Committees and local councils are not consistent across the city, there is added value to be gained in focusing the Scrutiny Board's review around such relationships to explore how these can be strengthened in the future. Once completed, the review findings and recommendations can also feed into the Council's wider review of area working.
- 3.5 The draft terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils is attached for Members' consideration and approval (see appendix 2).

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules require that, before embarking on an inquiry/review, the Board seeks and considers the views of the relevant Director and Executive Member. These views will need to be taken into account in finalising the terms of reference for this review.
- 4.1.2 Any comments received on the draft terms of reference will be reported to the Board at the meeting.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 Equality and diversity will be a consideration throughout the Scrutiny Board's review and due regard will be given to equality through the use of evidence, written and verbal, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The Area Committee Procedure Rules and the Parish and Town Council Charter already promote partnership working between local councils and Area Committees. Such partnership working is also relevant to the delivery of the Council's 'Best city....for communities' priorities, as set out within the City Priority Plan.

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.4.1 This review aims to strengthen the relationship between the Council and local Parish and Town Councils, thereby maximising existing resources to provide a voice for local communities, helping people to feel more involved in the decisions that affect them.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board's forthcoming review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils is attached for Members' consideration and approval.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Members are asked to consider and agree terms of reference for its forthcoming review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.