

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board
Strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils

Desired Outcome – That there is a quality standards benchmark scheme that is attractive and accessible to all local councils in Leeds.

Recommendation 1 – That the Council's Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with the Chief Officer of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations to consider the outcome of the national Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme review and compare the merits of the updated national scheme against the potential benefits of a localised benchmark scheme.

Formal response:

Chief Officer, Communities to meet with the Chief Officer of Yorkshire Local Councils Associations to review and compare the quality assurance schemes and make further recommendations by September 2013.

Desired Outcome – That the capacity levels of local councils are continually developed to instil greater confidence within communities and amongst partners.

Recommendation 2 – That the Council's Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with the Chief Officer of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations to develop a strategy aimed at promoting existing support services for local councils and also maximising resources to provide any additional support and advice that will enable local councils in Leeds to undertake their roles with confidence.

Formal response:

Chief Officer, Communities to discuss with the Chief Officer of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations and the Area Chairs Forum/Area Committees the most effective way of engaging Town and Parish Councils in discussion initially to ascertain existing support arrangements and how additional support services could develop.

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board
Strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils

Desired Outcome – There are clear pathways and protocols in place to enable open and meaningful dialogue between local councils and their respective Area Committee on matters that impact on their local communities.

Recommendation 3 – That local councils and Area Committees give a commitment to work closely together to develop clear pathways and protocols that will enable open and meaningful dialogue on matters that have specific impact on their communities.

That Area Leaders take the lead on developing these clear pathways and protocols and report progress back to Scrutiny by December 2013.

Formal response:

Area Leaders to collate what is in place and working in each area, discuss with their area committees and T&PCs and agree action plans where improvements are needed. Commitments are already set out in AC role and P&TC Charter. These commitments need reviewing as part of this process. Consult on the ideas of holding a workshop to be held in Autumn to develop pathways and protocols involving Area Chairs and Parish and Town Council chairs. Also see 5 below.

Desired Outcome – Area Committee meetings are utilised effectively to address matters of local relevance.

Recommendation 4 – That the Council's Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) promotes the following as good practice amongst Area Committees:

- The development of a forward work programme and identification of a major 'theme' or 'topic' for each area committee meeting
- That Area Committee reports include a separate section indicating any potential local impacts or challenges

Formal response:

Links to the Area Review recommendations. Area Chairs Forum workshop session to be held on 28th June also involving Area Officers to develop new ways of working through Area Committees – this is likely to include themed meetings/forward work programmes and reviewing agendas.

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board
Strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils

Desired Outcome – That local councils and Area Committees work in partnership to maximise local intelligence and achieve more locally responsive and accountable services.

Recommendation 5 – That Area Leaders ensure that input is sought from local councils as part of any future area based delegation scheme and particularly around the negotiation of Service Level Agreements.

Formal response:

This will be considered as part of the actions set out in 3 above. In Outer NE a report will go to the September Area Committee following a review of the terms of reference for their Parish & Town Council Forum over the summer. Outer South and Outer East Area Committees have a report on the scrutiny recommendations in the June/July round and the recommendation is to establish a working group of AC and T&PC members to discuss and agree options for strengthening links. Outer NW Area Committee are initially having a sub-group discussion on the 28th June to agree way forward.

Desired Outcome – That there are effective operational relationships with all local councils in relation to Planning Services and Highways and Transportation.

Recommendation 6 – That, in accordance with the Leeds Parish and Town Council Charter and supplementary document, the Director of City Development leads on strengthening and ensuring there is a consistent approach to the operational relationships with all local councils in relation to Planning Services and Highways and Transportation.

Formal response:

Fully supportive of the need to ensure we have effective operational relationships.

There are good and effective working relationships established in relation to development management, local and neighbourhood planning and enforcement. The Planning Charter, which has operated for several years, was revised and updated at the Annual meeting at the end of January and includes new sections – discussions have not yet been finalised to agree the updated Charter but will be progressed shortly – the outstanding issues relate to content about tree works information, the Community Infrastructure Levy and Neighbourhood Planning.

In terms of Neighbourhood Planning, 39 areas across Leeds are either working on Neighbourhood Plans or have shown an interest; of these areas, 25 are Town or Parish Councils, which equates to 75% of the Town and Parish Councils in Leeds. Recently, six other Town or Parish Council areas have shown an interest in Neighbourhood Planning and are being advised accordingly. Eight Parishes have shown no interest in Neighbourhood Planning to date (Allerton Bywater, Arthington, Drighlington, Gildersome, Great and Little Preston, Micklefield, Morley and Swillington). It is possible that this position will change as a result of the site allocations consultation being carried out in June/July.

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board
Strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils

The Neighbourhood Plans are at different stages and there are different capacities locally to prepare them; for this reason they are receiving different levels of support from minimal to intensive (the intensive support being given to the pilot areas of Boston Spa, Otley and Kippax). No Neighbourhood Plans have been adopted yet, as this cannot happen until the adoption of the Core Strategy, which is expected to be in mid to late 2014.

12 Town or Parish Council areas have completed Stage 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning process (designating a relevant neighbourhood area) and are now working to producing a draft Neighbourhood Plan document (Stage 2). There are seven pending neighbourhood area designations in Town or Parish Council areas.

Planning and Sustainable Development now have wedge-based nominated contact officers, to ensure a single point of contact for Parish Councils and to ensure greater continuity.

Through the Charter, local planning processes and Neighbourhood Planning, we ensure greater contact with Town and Parish Councils and a means for them to feed into the wider planning process.

A Highways and Transportation supplement that sets out the links and services provided in the local council areas has been provided and is updated on a regular basis. In addition officers within the service work closely with their local councils to provide services which address local needs such as highway maintenance operations, street lighting and local traffic management.

Details of planned road works are provided to local councils and a new on-line system called 'roadworks.org' is currently being brought on stream which should in due course provide improved levels of communication and notification. Contact details for key officers in the local council areas are provided.

The supplement is currently updated on an annual basis to reflect both changes in the services and issues that may be raised by local councils and residents during the year. A further update for 2013 is planned and ways of improving the usability and level of information provided within the document are presently under review.

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board
Strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils

Desired Outcome – That local councils and Area Committees work in partnership to explore opportunities for maximising available resources to best meet the needs of their local communities.

Recommendation 7 – That Area Leaders proactively work with local councils and Area Committees to identify opportunities for maximising available resources to best meet the needs of their local communities.

Formal response:

There are already good examples of collaborative work and spending between Area Committees and P&TCs. These will be reviewed and new opportunities identified through the sub-group, workshop and P&TC Forum discussions on all the recommendations over the summer. Link to Area Review implementation plan.

Desired Outcome – That residents are actively encouraged and supported in undertaking volunteering initiatives that will benefit their local communities.

Recommendation 8

- (i) That local councils are proactive in promoting volunteering initiatives and encouraging people to take an active role within their community.
- (ii) That the Council's Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Chief Officer Communities, lead on actively supporting approaches made by local councils for any advice and assistance directly associated with local voluntary initiatives.

Formal response:

The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) agrees with this recommendation and will work with the Chief Officer Communities, in ensuring that the appropriate pathway for Parish and Town Councils to request advice and assistance associated with local voluntary initiatives is transparent.

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board
Strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils

Desired Outcome – That partnership working between local councils and Area Committees continues to be actively promoted across the city.

Recommendation 9 – That the three Area Leaders actively promote partnership working with local councils as part of the integrated locality working agenda in the three wedges of East North East, West North West and South East.

Formal response:

Linked to 3 & 5 above, need to agree clear link arrangements that meet local need e.g. Outer NE P&TC forum. Area Leaders to feed in to sub-group, workshop and P&TC Forum discussions over the summer. In particular Area Leaders to introduce discussion on the role town and parish councils could play in local delivery groups and partnership arrangements.

Desired Outcome – That the relationship between local councils and Area Committees is continually monitored and developed.

Recommendation 10 - That the Chair of the city wide Parish and Town Council Forum ensures that the Forum's annual meeting is used to provide an opportunity for local councils to openly share their experiences of working with their Area Committees, share good practice and identify potential areas for improvement.

Formal response:

The Chair believes this is already the practice. The annual meeting in January 2013 was the best attended, with 21 Parish and Town Councils represented. The Chair is keen that ongoing improvements continue to be implemented.

Desired Outcome – That the relationship between local councils and Area Committees is continually monitored and developed.

Recommendation 11 – That Area Leaders work closely with Area Chairs to ensure that Area Committees continue to monitor their relationships with local councils in order to identify strengths and potential areas for improvement.

Formal response:

This will be included as part of the Locality Working annual review report. Area Chairs forum will pick up and discuss in the first instance.

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board
Strengthening the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils

Desired Outcome – That the Council is proactive in supporting the development of new local councils within the Leeds area.

Recommendation 12 – That the Chief Executive of the Council nominates a Chief Officer to work closely with the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations in encouraging and supporting the development of new local councils across the city.

Formal response:

The Chief Officer Communities has been nominated to undertake this role.