

# Agenda

## **1. Update from Strategy and Resources on 17 January and views of North Area Committee members on taking the project forward**

The scope of the Pilot was agreed and a report has been provided to North Area Committee inviting members to prepare a programme for the next year to try out the different approaches. North Area Committee will discuss this on 27 January 2011. A draft programme showing what could feature in the Pilot is included in the NAC report.

## **2. The views of partners on the Pilot**

The Police are supportive of the approach and are keen to get involved in the facilitation of a Café event to get the views of local people on community safety priorities. They are prepared to extend this offer to other Area Committees rather than wait for the Pilot to run its course. The local GP Consortium has been approached, but it may be too early for them to formulate an engagement strategy. The County Council are keen on our approach but have not, as yet, offered subjects for Café events or determined areas for delegation, although discussions are ongoing.

## **3. Options for Planning**

North Area Committee will be considering how to separate out the consideration of local planning applications into freestanding meetings. The role of Neighbourhood Plans, if coterminous with Area Committees, and the present Local Plan or its replacement is presently being thought through by planning officers. Cllr Blair and Planning Officers will be briefing members and area committees through the next cycle of meetings.

## **4. Extending Delegations**

A review of how decisions about area based developer contributions can be taken in Area Committees is underway.

## **5. Freeing up resources at the centre**

To seek initial views from members about lines of inquiry that officers should work on view a view to reducing the number of meetings and briefings

## **6. Role of Senior Officer Lead**

Agree the role of the Senior Officer lead who will act as a single point of contact to help shape agenda with the Chair and “get things done”. Agree nomination.

## **7. New Area Committees Web-page**

Please give your views on this new page. It is a starting point, pulling together some of what we have already.

<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/about-the-council/committees/area-committees/>

**Area Working – Participatory Pilot  
Informal Member Working Group**  
Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January: 5.30pm – 7.00pm

**Members present:**

Sian Reid (Leader)  
Ian Nimmo-Smith (North Area Committee: Chair)  
Amanda Taylor (South Area Committee: Chair)  
Lucy Walker (Labour Group representative)

**Officers present:**

Liz Bisset (Director of Community Services)  
Andrew Limb (Head of Corporate Strategy) – Chair  
Trevor Woolams (Head of Strategy and Partnerships)  
Graham Saint (Strategy Officer)

**Apologies:**

Simon Kightley (West/Central Area Committee: Chair)  
Tim Bick (Executive member for Community Services and Health)  
Lewis Herbert (East Area Committee: Chair)

**1. Update from Strategy and Resources on 17 January and views of North Area Committee members on taking the project forward**

The Director of Community Services updated members on progress to date. It was noted that there had been a positive response from members about taking the Pilot forward. There had been a debate about the definition of neighbourhood and place and the extent that the Council alone can respond to local problems – we needed a partnership approach.

**2. Arrangements for Planning**

North Area Committee favoured keeping their existing arrangement for considering planning applications, which was at the start of their meetings. This would still allow a separation of the meeting – as the committee could move into a different room or the room layout changed after a short break. If the workload of the committee reached a point where the main meeting was squeezed too much, members would review whether a separate meeting might be necessary.

### **3. Running different types of meetings**

To make a Café type meeting work we needed to be clear about getting appropriate subjects to discuss, why we are engaging, and managing any transition to decision-making points later on. An example of how it will work in practice will be useful.

The use of surgeries at the start of meetings was supported and it was suggested that there were separate tables for wards. It was uncertain how long surgeries might last – so there needed to be a cut off point to allow the main part of the meetings to start on time. It will be important to record agreed actions within the surgeries, so that they don't get lost, perhaps using a contact sheet. These can be then included in the committee's record of action that will be posted on the web-page.

### **4. Views of Partners**

Partners, particularly the Police, are supportive of a change of emphasis, to make the meetings less confrontational and more about working in partnership to resolve community problems. The County Council is reviewing the decisions it could delegate, highways and children and young people's provision, but had not yet reached a decision.

### **5. Community Engagement and Promotion**

A community engagement plan was being prepared to identify opportunities for members to talk to community groups, possibly pairing up with people in the community to carry out visits to under-represented groups, so that their voices can be heard in meetings. A draft paper will be presented at the next meeting. It was said that it was that it was important to get the product right – so that there was something substantial and fresh to promote - that was different to our previous practice. This will include changing the atmosphere at meetings and making the committees work more relevant to community activists.

The committee should look at the demand there might be for a Facebook page and if there were any willing community representatives who might moderate it. This might present a challenge to run a site outside of the local authority's control. Proposals for developing a site were being prepared by officers.

There is a small budget (£2k) to support North Area members to improve engagement and facilitation with local community groups. A suggestion was made that it could contribute to a street forum or “walk and talk” events. Officers will bring more detail forward at the next meeting.

## **6. Extending Delegations**

The decisions taken at scrutiny committees over the past year were being reviewed with the intention of identifying the type of decisions, based in North Area, which could be delegated to area committees. A paper will be presented to the next meeting highlighting the decisions that could be taken locally to get a feel for the impact on the area committee’s workload and that of the scrutiny committees. Work was also taking place to simplify the process for using developer’s contributions locally.

## **7. Role of Senior Officer Lead**

Strategic Leadership Team had identified a short list of senior managers that might take on the role of the single point of contact for the committee, and to help resolve difficulties in delivering actions. A person will be selected shortly and the role will be discussed and shaped with this person and then presented to the next meeting of the working group for consideration.



To: North Area Committee  
Report by: Head of Corporate Strategy  
Scrutiny committee: NORTH AREA COMMITTEE 27 January 2011  
Wards affected: North Area

## **Community Empowerment and Local Participation in Decision Making**

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The Council wants to extend the participation and involvement of residents in its decision-making, increasing their influence over what happens locally. This forms a prominent part of the Council's vision for strengthening community life in the City. Area Committees, where the Council has brought its decision-making into local communities, will provide a basis for developing forums that are welcoming and allow people greater opportunity to get involved and explore solutions to problems.
- 1.2 North Area Committee has been selected as a pilot to try out new ways of working that will encourage the engagement of local people and allow a wider range of decisions to be taken locally. This new approach was discussed in the Council's Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2011. Please read the report in Appendix 1, which sets out some of the background, learning from other local authorities that could be applied and approaches that have an emphasis on working in partnership that the pilot can test. The pilot will be for a year, starting from 1 April 2011.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to ask members of the committee to agree how they will run the pilot and the approaches they wish to try out.

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 The Area Committee is asked to:

- a) Agree to move regulatory decisions (planning applications) to separate sub-meetings. This will require additional meetings to be arranged (3.2).
- b) Agree the approaches to engagement that it wishes to test in the pilot, that it feels will extend participation, and the timing of meetings to involve interest groups (3.11).
- c) Agree a name for the pilot that will promote interest (3.1).

## **3. Background**

3.1 North Area Committee has complete discretion to choose the forms of engagement that members feel will improve participation, within the framework agreed by Strategy and Resources. The main point will be to get away from the traditional committee based approach for non-regulatory matters, where councillors sit around a table debating issues in front of an audience, who mainly sit and listen. It is suggested that a new name for the Area Committee is taken up, such as Community Forum or Area Forum to promote this new approach.

3.2 To give the pilot more capacity to do things differently it is proposed that the formal regulatory part of meetings, where planning applications are considered, is split out into 6 separate sub-meetings. Members will need to agree six additional meetings to consider regulatory matters.

3.3 The present cycle of planned meetings, which are scheduled to start at 7.30 pm, during the pilot is:

19 May (2011), 14 July, 22 September (2011), 24 November (2011), 26 January (2012) and 22 March (2012).

3.4 These meetings could be scheduled to run at different times of the day and be placed in a range of other settings, such as

the Meadows Community Centre, Brown's Field or Arbury Community Centres, to give a fresh feel and to try out new approaches. It is important that the approaches to these meetings are agreed at an early point to allow awareness of them to be raised and promotion to take place in communities.

- 3.5 It is suggested that a community workshop is staged with local people to agree a vision and priorities for the area. These will then be captured in a Local Community Plan that will inform the content of future meetings or events and allow for review towards the end of the pilot. The workshop could be structured around a number of themes such as local policing priorities, environmental issues, young people etc. and will be, hopefully, characterised by the energy of participants and a common ownership of the issues identified. Members may wish to consider holding the workshop at a weekend, to make it easier for local people to attend.
- 3.6 The agendas of future meetings would be shaped by the priorities shown in the Local Community Plan. The aim will be to create a setting in which most people will feel comfortable and free to talk, such as a café approach or interactive voting. It will be important for the Council's partners feel that they can contribute to meetings, so that issues that extend beyond the scope of the local authority can be tackled, but also to stimulate partnership working in the locality.
- 3.7 The café approach can hopefully bring in people who don't normally attend public meetings and provide a more creative atmosphere. Café type events involve people sitting around small tables and are lead by a facilitator who will ask or invite questions. The facilitator can either be a councillor or officer.
- 3.8 The community leadership role of councillors will be promoted in café type events as they will each be sitting around tables, talking to people at their table, but also representing other groups of people not attending. Where decisions are required, members can vote from their respective tables. Active community representatives can be

invited to lead discussions about how they are responding to local need.

- 3.9 Interactive voting approaches allow people to give an instant view, with votes displayed in summary almost immediately, about how they feel about different priorities. This would utilise handsets similar to those used by the Youth Participation Service. One challenge of this approach is to make the subject meaningful and to show at a later stage how the views have been incorporated into policy or action.
- 3.10 The use of “surgeries” on a 1-2-1 basis before meetings has been shown elsewhere to help meetings run more smoothly and provide greater satisfaction for residents, as they can talk freely about their individual issues and do not need to raise them in an open meeting. It is proposed to incorporate surgeries into this new approach. Community Fairs, where local groups get together, have also proven popular ways to improve networking for Area Committees and Forums as they give people a feel for what is available and can attract new volunteers for the groups.
- 3.11 Table 1 in Appendix 2 shows how the new approaches could be distributed across the six meetings. Local people, councillors, partners and officers are invited to propose matters for discussion, in addition to the Council’s own more routine decisions that have featured in previous meetings, that might be relevant to various interest groups. The timing of the meetings should reflect the needs of the group, e.g. young people will require an earlier meeting.
- 3.12 An important aspect of the pilot will be the way it follows up on its agreed actions, coordinating responses within the Council and from partners, and communicates with local people. A senior officer, single point of contact, from the Council will look to make “things happen” and help the Chair shape the content of meetings so that they are interesting as possible. People should enjoy the meetings and want to come again, but also feel they have been listened to and that their problem will be addressed, where possible. An ‘Issues Log’ will be maintained and can be posted on the Area Committee’s web page (see below).



3.13 Of course not everyone can or has the inclination to attend a meeting. Alternative forms of engagement, such as through a dedicated web-page or social networking, will be more attractive to certain groups of people who are familiar with these approaches. A proposal for the use of Facebook or Twitter will be worked up. Members will need to decide whether this is administered from within the Council or from within the community. Members may also want to try 'pairing up' with, say, a youth worker, to go out and engage young people and understand their local issues so that they can be brought back to the area committee meetings.

3.14 A new web-page for the Area Committee has been put in place and can be found here:

<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/about-the-council/committees/>

This page is a starting point and can be developed as the pilot progresses.

#### **4. Preparations for the pilot's launch**

4.1 As the pilot is scheduled to start in April the Area Committee will have a further meeting on 24 March to review preparations for the launch and to develop its programme (forward plan). The knowledge members and non-elected community representatives have about their communities and groups will be crucial in developing the pilot. By the March meeting it will be helpful if both members and participants can:

- Make contact with different groups of people, to encourage involvement in the community workshop, and to get the views of people who are less inclined to participate, so they can be fed in. For example, by visiting elderly people in sheltered housing schemes, young people in youth clubs or BME residents at their own community meetings. We could facilitate this by 'pairing up' some members with a City Council officer, partner officer or community representative who work with specific groups (e.g. a youth worker, sheltered housing officer, community development worker etc.)

- Contribute to an 'area profile' so that it uses existing information from things such as surveys and crime statistics to inform the workshop.
- Suggest issues to include within the workshop and the pilot's programme
- Tell people about the new approaches

## **5. Devolving Decisions**

- 5.1 Whilst improving people's experience of meetings and giving local people greater influence is a key aim of the pilot, it will be important that the pilot will be able to do more, espxxxxlly in the priority areas it has identified. For example, officers are presently looking at how greater influence over the way developer's contributions are spent can be given to area committees.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Environmental**

A more participative and devolved approach to decision making presents significant opportunities to encourage and support local people and local groups to become more environmentally aware so that they can help to improve the environmental sustainability of their neighbourhood. The pilot could be used to engage more local people in environmental projects. For example, around energy efficiency.

### **5.2 Community Safety**

This proposal would help to develop a more participative approach to neighbourhood policing and local community safety by bringing partners together with local people and collectively setting local priorities and exploring solutions to problems.

### **5.3 Equal opportunities**

The proposal for the pilot is flexible and inclusive and will enable Members to use different participatory events, depending upon the issues and the local people who are concerned about them.

We are aware that some people are less inclined to attend area committee meetings. For example, young people, BME

communities and people with mobility impairments. Our engagement methods must seek to address this by engaging with them in different ways.

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the monitoring process for the pilot.

#### **5.4 Financial, procurement and staffing**

The Pilot will be supported by an officer from Strategy and Partnerships working with other officers from Community Development and Committee Services. The pilot will require a proportion of time from a Head of Service or senior officer to give direction in meetings to coordinate meetings and ensure actions are completed. The pilot will also require work from front line officers, depending upon any additional budgets and/or decisions that are devolved.

The Pilot will inform Members about options for the way local services might be delivered for the 2012/13 and 2013/14 portfolio planning and budget processes, should they choose take some of the approaches forward.

No additional resources in terms of basic service delivery or capital expenditure will be re-directed from other area committees to the pilot area.

### **6. Inspection of papers and contact for information**

Background papers can be found at the following link:

- a) Summary of learning from visits to other local authorities in September 2010.
- b) Notes from member workshops in October 2010.

<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/democracy/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=12994&path=12993>

If you have a query on the report please contact:

#### **7. Appendices:**

1. Community Empowerment and Local Participation in  
Decision Making North Area Pilot: Strategy and Resources  
Committee, 17 January 2011.
2. What could feature in the Pilot

Author's Name: Graham Saint  
Author's Phone Number: 01223 457044  
Author's Email: xxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

## Appendix 2.

**Table 1. What could feature in the Pilot**

<b>When</b>	<b>How and what could feature?</b>
24 March 2011 Area Committee Meeting	Area Committee agrees a communication and engagement plan to inform and publicise the community workshop
19 May 2011 Area Committee Meeting	Member and officer surgeries to be held at the start of meeting for half an hour. Café type meeting. Officers present Area Profile Information and final arrangements for Community Workshop
4 June 2011 (Saturday)	Community Workshop to launch pilot. This will discuss a vision for the area and priorities to be worked on in smaller groups. A community plan to emerge from the event containing priorities that can be looked at in more depth during other meetings. This type of meeting may be better suited to an early-evening or afternoon. Meeting to use interactive voting to help identify priorities – perhaps for neighbourhood policing priorities?
14 July 2011 Area Committee Meeting	Member and officer surgeries to be held at the start of meeting for half an hour. Café type meeting - Discussion about how Workshop went and to agree local community plan.
22 September 2011 Area Committee Meeting	Member and officer surgeries to be held at the start of event for half an hour. Café type meeting to discuss various environmental improvements or ideas for neighbourhood improvements and use of community development grants. Could include community representatives talking about local issues.
24 September 2011 (provisional) (Saturday) Or could be incorporated into the 22 Sept meeting	Community event to review progress against Local Community Plan and to review the participative approach to give people the chance of discussing in small groups how the pilot is going and what can be improved. This will feed into the Council's decisions about how to extend the pilot to other areas.
24 November 2011 Area Committee Meeting	Member and officer surgeries to be held at the start of event for half an hour. Café type meeting to discuss local issues that could perhaps include how GP Commissioning is being developed.
26 January 2012 Area Committee Meeting	Member and officer surgeries to be held at the start of event for half an hour. Café type meeting to discuss local issues that could perhaps include how local community facilities are run.
22 March 2012 Area Committee Meeting	Look for an earlier meeting in the day to involve young people talking about life in the area and problems. Community Fair networking event to help promote community life.
May 2012 ( tbc)	Community event to review progress against Local Community Plan and review and agree new priorities. People to be asked to review the success of the pilot. This will inform a final report to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee making recommendations for more radical changes across all 4 area committees.

Community Empowerment and Local Participation in Decision Making  
Informal Member Working Group Meeting  
Committee Room 1, 5.30 pm to 7 pm on **7 March, 2011**

Participants

*Councillors: Tim Bick, Ian Nimmo-Smith, Lewis Herbert, Amanda Taylor, Simon Kightley.*

*Officers: Liz Bisset (Director of Community Services), Andrew Limb (Head of Corporate Strategy), Trevor Woollams (Head of Strategy and Partnerships), Graham Saint (Strategy Officer)*

Apologies

*Cllr. Sian Reid and Jonathan James (Head of Customer Services)*

# Agenda

## **1. Notes from the first meeting on 25 January 2011**

These are shown in pages 1 to 3 for the information of members.

## **2. Increasing decision-making.**

The attached paper, at pages 4 to 9, looks at decisions taken in Scrutiny Committees over the past year, highlighting those that might be delegated to area committees in the future. Members are invited to give views about the decisions highlighted.

## **3. Senior Officers to support Area Committees**

Jonathan James, Head of Customer Service, has volunteered for this role for the Pilot and has met with Ian to discuss how he can support North Area Committee. Other Heads of Service have also come forward to offer support to the other Area Committee Chairs, although this may work on a different basis outside of the pilot. Members are invited to discuss how this role could assist the work of Area Committees.

## **4. North Area and Community Engagement.**

Ian has now met with Community Development Managers to discuss how the Area Committee can engage with local people both within and outside its meetings. A draft paper has been prepared showing an approach for cascading information about the Pilot, based on a "Networking Pyramid". A draft paper is at pages 10 to 12.

## **5. Sharing Good Practice**

Area Committee Chairs are invited to share their good practice. The Pilot is looking at timing its agenda and using a Community Forum Session within its meeting to engage people in discussions about issues relevant to the local community. A suggestion for running a Community Forum Session is shown at page 13.

## **6. Project Initiation Document (PID)**

A PID document, which is at pages 14 to 25, is for the information of members. This document has been considered by SLT. A project team will be convened to shadow the Member Working Group.

## **Area Working – Participatory Pilot Informal Member Working Group**

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March: 5.30pm – 7.00pm

### **Members present:**

Ian Nimmo-Smith (North Area Committee: Chair)

Amanda Taylor (South Area Committee: Chair)

Tim Bick (Executive member for Community Services and Health)

Lewis Herbert (East Area Committee: Chair)

### **Officers present:**

Liz Bisset (Director of Community Services)

Andrew Limb (Head of Corporate Strategy) – Chair

Trevor Woolams (Strategy and Partnerships Manager)

Graham Saint (Strategy Officer)

### **Apologies:**

Sian Reid (Leader)

Lucy Walker (Labour Group representative)

Simon Kightley (West/Central Area Committee: Chair)

## **1. Increasing decision-making**

It was agreed that principles should be drawn up and used to guide the decisions that should be devolved to area committees.

Suggestions were:

- Decisions should only go to one committee.
- Decisions about policy should be taken by the relevant Executive Member and scrutinised centrally, to avoid the need for multiple reporting to each area committee.
- The default position for non-policy decisions is that they will be delegated to area committees unless there is a good reason not to do so (e.g. they relate to a city-wide decision).
- However, devolved decisions should be of general interest to local people to ensure effective use of agenda time.
- Devolved decisions should be taken by the relevant area committee within the centrally agreed policy framework.
- If all members of an area committee are inclined to support a decision then a vote should be taken as soon as possible to leave more time for debate about less consensual issues.

- Executive members should offer some flexibility, to visit area committees and take decisions then and there – without compromising the scrutiny of the decisions.

## **2. Role of Senior Officer**

Jonathan James has taken up the Senior Officer role for North Area Committee. Ian had met with Jonathan and agreed with him that the role will be developed over the course of the Pilot, responding to the needs of people attending, the content of agenda and the direction provided by members. Careful thought will need to be given to how officers contribute, espxxxxlly County officers, to avoid some from feeling unsupported in meetings. County Executive members to be invited to respond to high profile issues.

The principle of having a single officer point-of-contact for the committee is something the committee will work towards. The present action sheet will be developed to more accurately log issues and actions, and give feedback – the “you said, we did and are going to do” approach.

## **3. North Area and Community Engagement**

The use of identified community leaders and active community groups to cascade information to local people, to promote meetings and engagement events was accepted. An early meeting between members and officers involved with community groups will be arranged to identify engagement opportunities for members outside of meetings and to plan for the community event that will help identify local priorities for North Area Committee.

## **4. Sharing Good Practice**

The next North Area Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> March will be trying out a Community Forum session within its meeting – to mainly discuss the future of the library service. We will use this to learn form the experience and to inform future approaches. Emphasis will be on collective problem-solving rather than confrontation.

The agenda for the North Area Committee will be timed so that people know when the items that are of interest to them start. The



following Community Forum will be include community safety and is likely to try out a surgery.

Area Committee Chairs should continue to share good practice and learn from each other's meetings. The idea of Chairs attending each other's meetings, to see how they are conducted, was welcomed.

It was also agreed that people attending Area Committee meetings should be given priority over members in terms of giving their views about an item. This will help to make the meetings more participative and enable members to hear resident's views first before they debated an issue amongst themselves. Discussion between members will be kept to a minimum.

## **5. Project Initiation Document**

The Project Initiation Document was accepted.

## **6. Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Group will be on 29<sup>th</sup> March at 12 noon in Committee Room 1, subject to discussion with members not present.

## North Area Committee: Participation Pilot

# Draft: Creating a Community Engagement Network

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to show a community engagement process that will create a network of people who will have connections with the Area Committee.

### 2. Why Community Engagement and North Area Committee?

Cambridge City Council and its partners talk to local people and community groups about local services, to try and understand the issues that are significant and to ask for views about bigger decisions that will affect people's lives. You can view some of the recent consultation activity that the Council has carried out by looking at:

<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/consultations/>

Sometimes our consultations aren't always joined up and sometimes they might run in parallel to each other, with different parts of the Council asking the same groups of people slightly different questions. The Council is looking to prepare a Code of best Practice to make sure that a consistent approach is used and to make sure that local people don't get consultation fatigue.

The Participation Pilot for North Area Committee is part of the Council's drive to decentralise, so that elected representatives can connect with other community leaders, community groups, people working in front line services, communities and individuals to find the best solutions to local needs. This is a key part of the Council's vision for its communities and will be an **underlying principle of this strategy** and a central part of the message that we convey.

The Area Committee wants to improve its ongoing relationship and dialogue both within its meetings and outside of its meetings through more informal activities that come under the banner of community development.

### 3. Connecting to a wider network

A lot of activities are presently taking place in North Area that give local people the confidence to control their own circumstances and contribute to finding solutions to local issues. North Area Committee can utilise some of this civic energy and provide a useful forum for making things happen and removing barriers to participation. It will mean doing things differently and thinking of how the North Area Committee can fit in as a part of a wider community network, to coordinate local action, rather than acting as a single entity in isolation, across different community groups and settings.

Informal engagement, outside of meetings, reaches more people and allows people to get involved at a time and in ways that are meaningful to them. The more people the Area Committee can reach through such a network will help

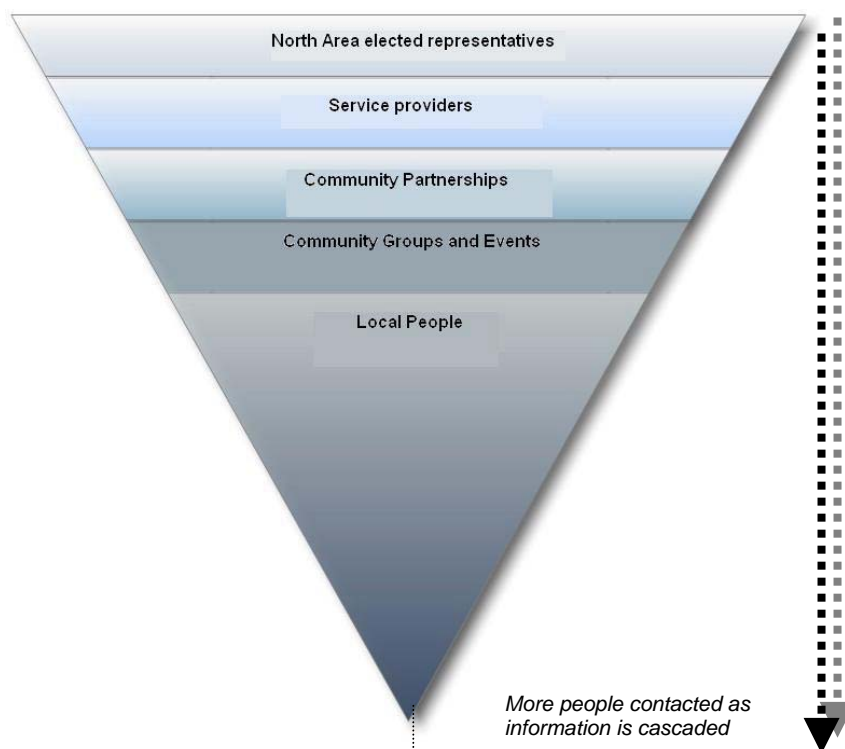
it obtain more information about what matters to a wider range of local people rather just those that attend the area committee meetings.

The way this network is pulled together and connects people to the area committee will form part of the **process for engagement**. This will involve people using the network to find out what is going on, sharing information about what is happening (and the outcomes of any activity) and feeding in what still needs be done.

Within this process for engagement there will be a number of **engagement events** and different methods for gathering information and feeding it back.

Diagram 1, below, shows a **network or engagement pyramid** for North Area Committee. It follows a process of increasing contacts between the layers with people identifying, in stages, key community contacts who can spread messages about how to get involved with the Area Committee, to other influential community members and to local people. Between each layer the number of people involved increases.

**Diagram 1: Network or Engagement Pyramid**



#### **4. Process of Engagement: Creating the Network**

This could follow a staged approach, working through the layers:

**Stage 1:** Elected members, together with officers, identify community partnerships, community groups and community leaders that are active in north area and opportunities for discussion with local people.

**Stage 2:** Community partnerships are asked to identify community groups and events, so that messages can be conveyed and some targeting can take place. This will include Arbury and Chesterton Carnivals.

**Stage 3:** Community groups raise awareness of the Area Committee and how to get involved, with their members. Community leaders attend Community Plan Workshop in June.

**Stage 4:** Local people and service users get involved in events and join the network.

#### **5. Key Messages**

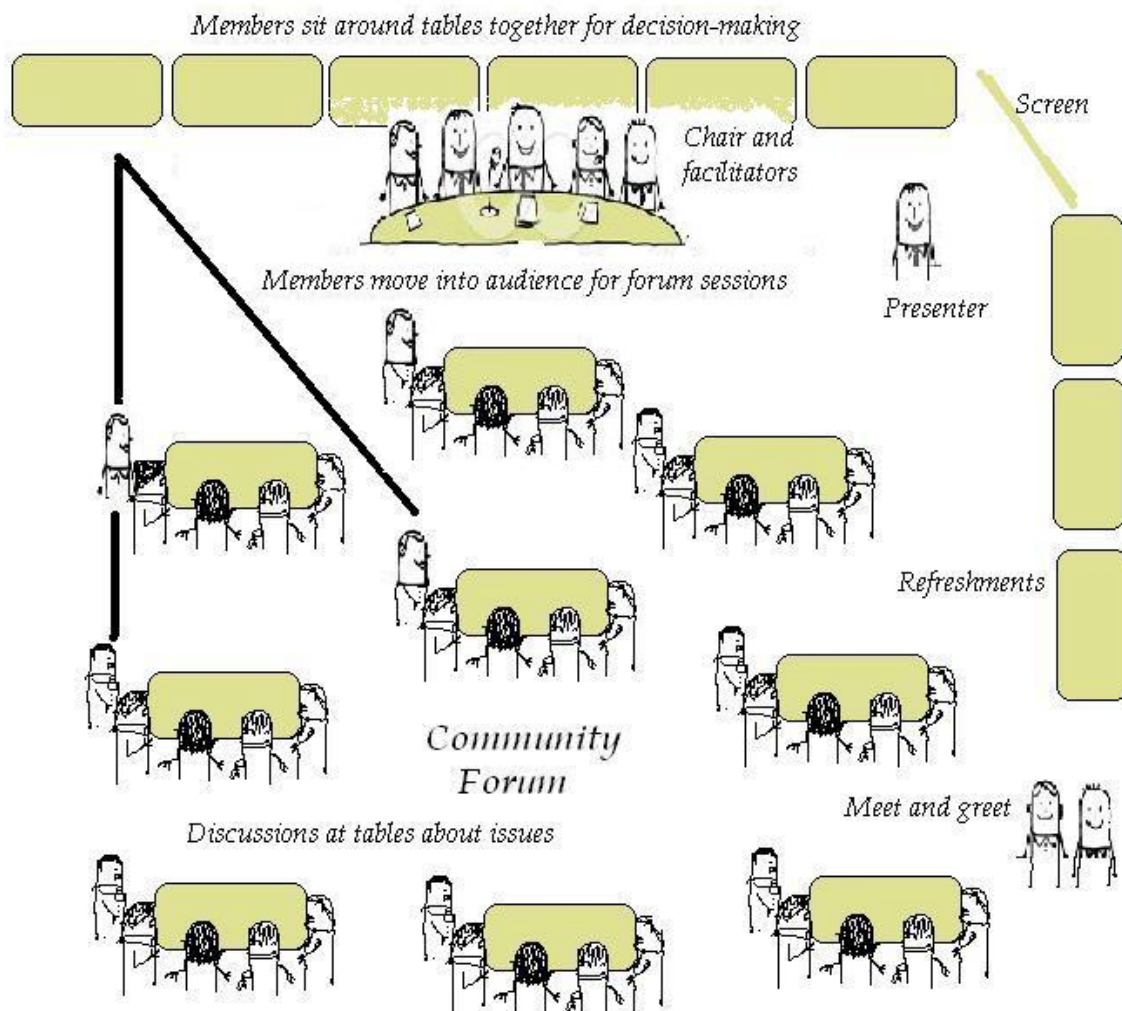
- The community forum section of meetings are new and will be run in such a way that they will give local people a greater opportunity to get involved and “Have their Say”. Why not give it a try?
- You don’t have to attend meetings to get things done. If you have something on your mind you can bring it to the attention of members of the committee and forum and then track the progress of your issue online. We recognise that there is life going on outside of meetings and want to better connect with local people.
- The Council and its partners will work harder to join-up their consultations with local people – so that you only need to tell us about a problem once in your area. We will ask your views about how community life can be improved and capture these in a community plan – so that you can see what the area committee is trying to achieve.
- Local councillors want the Area Committee to be at the “heart” of the community and want to hear from people that do not usually get to speak out about local issues. Tell us what is on your mind.

#### **6. Timeline**

Aims:

- To get Area Committee members together with officers in a workshop before the next meeting (24 March 2011).
- To start to get information cascading before the second meeting and to hold a Community Workshop in June in order to have a draft community plan ready for the July meeting.
- To use community outlets and newsletters to promote the meetings and keep the information flowing.

## **Suggested** Room Layout and Approach to Community Forum Sessions



### *Options for running a Community Forum Session*

1. Members move to different tables at the start of the session, introducing themselves to the people at the table. Chair remains at the front to help facilitate the session.
2. Presenter introduces subject and asks for views on certain points.
3. Chair then, either:
  - a. Asks for views from the audience directly, selecting individuals to speak in turn
  - b. Asks the people at the tables to consider the points and then each table to feedback to the whole of the meeting, varying perspectives
4. Gives the presenter the opportunity of responding to the points raised.
5. The Chair then sums up the main points, which are entered into the minutes of the meeting.

## **AREA WORKING**

### **Phase 1, North Area Pilot and De-Centralisation**

**DRAFT** Project Initiation Document (VERSION 3 dated 10.2.11)

Project Title	<b>Area Working Phase 1: North Area Pilot and De-Centralisation</b>
Start Date	1 January 2011
Target Completion Date	June 2012 (Phase 1)
Project Manager	Trevor Woollams
Project Champion	Liz Bisset
Commissioning Body	Strategic Leadership Team

## **Introduction**

### **Background**

The project will shift the focus of the Council's decision making to local areas and will strengthen community participation. It will take advantage of the government's localism agenda, align local decisions and local service delivery to the priorities of local communities and contribute towards achieving the Council's Vision. The project has been shaped after visits to selected "empowering" local authorities and informed by Member Workshops that looked at ways of improving community engagement and participation in decision making. Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee guided the development of this project and considered approaches to taking the work forward on 29 March 2010 and 5 July 2010. On 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011 the committee considered (and the Leader agreed) detailed arrangements to pilot a new approach to area working in the north of the City from April 2011. On 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011 North Area Committee met to plan the way ahead.

### **The Project**

The project will include a pilot for testing new ways of engaging and working with local people to shape local priorities and local service delivery and make decisions about local issues in the area covered by North Area Committee. The pilot will commence in April 2011 and end in March 2012.

The pilot will be reviewed in September 2011 and at the end of the project and recommendations will be made to implement changes across the other 3 areas.

In parallel to the pilot, officers will work with members to identify and evaluate options for reducing the amount of central decision making and scrutiny so that resources can be refocused on supporting the move to area working.

There will be some things that can be introduced across the City at an early stage without waiting for the pilot to conclude. This work will also be included in Phase 1 of this project.

The second phase, involving rolling out change, will be subject to a further PID when the pilot has been evaluated.

### **The Strands**

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Strand 1: | Significantly improve community participation in local service design, priority setting and decision making. |
| Strand 2: | Default is to devolve all decisions that relate to a local area to area committees.                          |
| Strand 3: | Free up capacity from the central decision making and scrutiny process to support area working.              |
| Strand 4: | Encourage partners to work with us and to devolve decisions about their services.                            |

## **1 Why is the project needed & where does it come from**

Area Committees were put in place in late 2003 and the aim was to take certain decisions out of the Guildhall and place them in local settings – to increase our transparency and openness. Attendance by the public increased significantly, using our central committees as a baseline, and local people have valued the opportunity to raise matters of concern with members. In recent years attendance has declined and it is felt that the Council needs to do more to involve local people in decisions that affect their lives.

The Leader made a decision at Strategy and Resources on 5 July, to develop a Pilot for the area covered by North Area Committee to trial approaches to increase community empowerment and local participation in decision-making to:

- Enable local people to agree local priorities for their area
- Increase participation and involvement by residents in the work of the Council and partners
- Improve local services by making them more responsive to the priorities of local people
- Strengthen the role of elected members within their local constituencies and provide opportunities for their development
- Strengthen local communities

The project assumes there is no additional resource. It will require elected members and officers to think and work differently. It has the potential to radically change the way we work.

There are some things we could do now and some things that need more detailed planning and testing to ensure that they work and that they are deliverable before being implemented following the pilot. This project will build upon the best practice that is presently available and work with a variety of stakeholders to bring about improvements to the way we engage and work with local people.

## **2 How does this project help achieve the Council's Vision Statement**

The Council's vision includes two statements about strengthening local communities and empowering local people in Cambridge:

- A city whose citizens feel they can influence public decision making and are equally keen to pursue individual and community initiatives
- A city which is diverse and tolerant, values activities which bring people together and where everyone feels they have a stake in the community

This project will improve the influence local people have over our decision-making, help make our local services more responsive, involve a wider range of people and provide a vision and practical action plan for bringing about improvements.



### **3 Identify the objectives and required benefits/outcomes of the project**

The outcomes this project (Phase 1) is aiming to deliver through the pilot are:

1. Significantly improved community participation in local service design, priority setting and decision- making.
2. Clearly define the scope of decisions that will be devolved to area committees (i.e. which decisions are 'local' and which are 'strategic').
3. City Council decisions that relate to local areas are either devolved to area committees or plans are in place to complete associated work so that they can be devolved.
4. Plans to take capacity from the central decision making and scrutiny process to support area working are agreed or have already been implemented.
5. Public sector partner organisations are fully engaged with area working. The County Council has devolved some decisions through the pilot.

### **4. Summarise impact on and major issues for Stakeholder & key results of initial consultation (see stakeholder analysis for detail)**

Members have been considering the basis of this project over the course of this year and have become more enthusiastic about what it could achieve and how it might transform our organisation. The October 2010 Member workshops had a high level of support. All members had the opportunity to shape a report to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011 which set out a framework for the pilot.

Partners, including the County Council and Cambridgeshire Constabulary, have welcomed the initiative as they have had concerns about the extent to which they can reach local people directly through our present arrangements.

Community representatives have yet to be fully briefed about the proposed approach but early discussions with some community groups and residents associations indicate that they would welcome the initiative.

Officers have been updated and informed through a Managers Briefing in October and through discussions at DMT's and service team meetings and will be involved in working up the detail of project. Heads of Service had input into the report to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> January.

North Area Committee discussed the pilot and agreed how they wanted it to proceed at their meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011

An Equalities Impact Assessment on the pilot will be carried out as part of an interim review and report to Strategic Leadership Team in August 2011 and report to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in October 2011.

**5. Summarise Key Risks your project aims to mitigate, or risks that might occur if the project does not take place**

**Key Project Risks:**

**1. Reputational**

This is a major project that is a political priority and addresses 2 key areas of the Council's vision statement.

There is a high risk that expectations of members, partners and residents will be raised but not met.

Risk that illegal or un-constitutional decisions are made (e.g. regulatory).

Risk that decision making route unclear or complex leading to delays with projects.

Devolution of decisions will lead to different decisions and prioritisation across the City which may result in negative publicity.

**2. Resources**

There are no *additional* resources (and may be less resources). There is a significant risk that members will not be able to reach agreement about how to shift resources (staff and budgets) that currently support the centralised decision making to support devolution.

**3. Resistance**

There is a risk that some staff, members and/or partners may resist change.

**4. Process**

There are risks around not ensuring our corporate and service processes (e.g. delegations) are changed or updated and properly communicated to staff and members to facilitate devolution.

**5. Governance**

There are risks around blurred responsibilities and accountabilities for staff and members.

There are risks around 'keeping control' of fragmented decision making processes.

## **6. Summarise consideration given to feasibility studies**

This project is a pilot which will 'test' different options and ideas for strengthening local participation and decision making.

Members sought guidance from Inspire East and looked at case studies of "Empowering Local Authorities" in the region to assess the relative merits of different approaches to extending engagement. Members also participated in a learning programme that involved visits to six local authorities selected from case studies posted on the I&DeA website. This learning has helped shape this project.

The key learning points from our visits to other authorities were:

- Demonstrate commitment by giving a senior officer responsibility for each area committee. Their role should be pro-active. They should work with the Chair to shape agendas, liaise with partners, follow up actions and ensure things get done.
- Build community capacity by informing and involving local people and community groups about opportunities for engagement and how they can influence decisions.
- Agree clear priorities for the local area by working with local people.
- Deliver prompt actions and keep local people informed. Newcastle Council followed the approach of "You said, We did, We're working on it" to demonstrate listening and action.
- Provide positive experiences of engagement so that local people feel they have been heard and want to return. Ipswich Borough Council has made their area meetings much more informal by placing members in the audience with local residents to reduce any status barriers.
- Don't expect all local people to come to an evening area committee meeting. Try and match the engagement method to the interest group. For example, younger people may be far more interested in engagement through social networking sites.

## **7. Summarise considerations for other ways of achieving the objectives**

The pilot will enable the Council to test more radical options and assess risk before implementing across the City. Full implementation now, without careful planning and thought would be a high risk strategy.

## 8 Estimate of Project Costs

The project will be managed within existing resources. But resources will need to be re-focused.

A radical shift in the focus of the organisation away from the centre towards local areas over the medium to longer-term will require major changes to the way we work. This will need careful planning, communication and implementation.

Many service areas are currently undergoing major reviews and re-structuring whilst managing a full workload. The pilot will be moving forward within the context of this major change and some services may not have the capacity to engage fully until a later stage. Some services will not have the same capacity as they do now.

We will need to move resources that currently support the central decision-making and scrutiny processes. This means reducing the number of central meetings, briefings and reducing the amount of reports that go through them. It means freeing up officer time, both in support services and those front line services where changes are made.

We will need to look at our internal processes. For example, how we make decisions, how we manage budgets, how our cost centres are set up, our risk management processes etc. We will need to plan in time for our Accountants and Legal staff to do this work. Our aim must be to simplify process and speed up decision-making.

There will be some costs associated with wider community engagement and with developing a local community plan for the pilot area which can be met from the corporate consultation budget during 2011/12.

## 9 Estimate of staffing resource – Phase 1 only

Skill/level/person	Estimated number of days	Estimated Duration	
		Start date	Finish date
Project Champion Liz Bisset	10	1 December	31 July 2012
Project Manager Trevor Woollams	60	1 December	31 July 2012
Policy / project support Graham Saint	120	1 December	31 July 2012
Head of Service lead for North Area Committee. Jonathan James	15	1 February 2011	31 July 2012
Senior Officer leads for other 3 areas. (To be agreed)	15	1 February 2011	31 July 2012
Community Development Staff to promote meetings and develop capacity in community	30	1 February 2011	31 July 2012
Committee Manger to administer additional meetings	10	1 February 2011	31 July 2012
Web-team to provide internet presence and communication	10	1 February 2011	31 July 2012
Coms team to promote meetings. E.g. through Cambridge Matters	5	1 February 2011	31 July 2012
Planning Policy – need to co-ordinate this work with Localism Bill's move to neighbourhood planning	unknown	1 January 2011	31 July 2012

Front line service managers. To be agreed	unknown	1 January 2011	31 July 2012
Support services to design / amend processes (Legal and Finance in particular)	Unknown	1 January 2011	31 July 2012

## **10 Identify any dependencies upon other work or projects. Identify any other projects which cannot progress until this particular piece of work is complete**

Key to the success of this project is understanding the input required by service managers to refocus their services and to prioritise, plan and project manage this work in the context of the wider organisational change. In particular we need to ensure that government proposals to localise Planning Policy through things such as Neighbourhood Plans, are co-ordinated with this project.

More radical change may not be possible until we have agreed how to significantly reduce the number of central scrutiny meetings and briefings.

An outline timetable for the project is attached

## **11 Governance**

### **Members**

The lead Member for this project is the Leader. She will work closely with the Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health and the Chair of North Area Committee.

A Member Working Group has been set up and is meeting monthly. Its role is to guide the project. Its members are:

The Leader  
Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health  
The 4 Area Committee Chairs (includes Leader of the Labour Group)  
Leader of the Green Party  
Cllr Walker

### **Officers**

The lead officer is the Director of Customer and Community Services. She will provide a direct link to Strategic Leadership Team along with the Head of Corporate Strategy.  
The Project Manager is the Strategy and Partnerships Manager.

The Project Team will meet monthly. Its role is to deliver Phase 1 of the project. Its members should be:

Liz Bisset	Director of Customer and Community Services	(Project Champion)
Trevor Woollams	Strategy and Partnerships Manager	(Project Manager)
Andrew Limb	Head of Corporate Strategy	
Graham Saint	Strategy Officer	
Jonathan James	Head of Customer Services	
Sara Saunders	Planning Policy Manager	
Ken Hay	Head of Community Development	
Gary Clift	Democratic Services Manager	
Ashley Perry	Corporate Marketing and Communications Manager	
	Legal	
	Finance	

## **11 Project Initiation Approval**

Commissioning body: Strategic Leadership Team

Strategic Leadership Team Date Approved

Date:

Committee Record of Decision Reference

Date:

## North Area Pilot and Area Committees – Timeline

Date	Action / Event	Comment
<b>November</b>		
Tues 9 <sup>th</sup>	Extended SLT	Opportunity to clarify process Portfolio Plan priorities Discuss draft with SLT
Wed 10 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> draft report	Circulate to SLT, Executive and Cllr INS for initial comments
Thurs 11 <sup>th</sup>	Manager's Briefing	On where we are, how things are shaping, how to influence report, comments & concerns
Mon 15 <sup>th</sup>	Initial comments from Exec & Cllr INS	Any major issues before wider circulation
Frid 19 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft report	Update draft report and send to all members plus HoS
Tues 23 <sup>rd</sup>	SLT	Brief SLT on latest proposals and initial Member view. Confirm SLT position.
Mon 29 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> draft report	Takes on board initial views from members, HoS and SLT position. Sent to all HoS, members and partners.
<b>December</b>		
Frid 3 <sup>rd</sup>	S&R drafts Lib Dem Group	Brief Chair & Exec Outstanding issues / concerns fed into group
Mon 6 <sup>th</sup>	City/County member meeting	Clarify County commitment
Tues 21 <sup>st</sup>	Finalise report	Report agreed with Leader, Exec Cllr CD&H & INS
Wed 22 <sup>nd</sup>	S&R Finals	Final report submitted
<b>January 11</b>		
Mon 17 <sup>th</sup>	S&R Scrutiny North Area - finals	Leader considers Scrutiny comments Leader agrees /amends report
Frid 21 <sup>st</sup>	North Area -Chair Brief	Brief INS, agree final format for discussion at North Area Committee
Thurs 27 <sup>th</sup>	North Area Committee	Discussion about proposals & agree how the committee want to take things forward
<b>February 11</b>		
Thurs 10 <sup>th</sup>	Briefing for Managers	Draft PID, issues, ideas, expectations
Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	SLT	Draft PID agreed
		Work with managers – clarify processes, roles etc.
		Publicity
		Prepare for community event etc.
<b>March 11</b>		
		Engage community groups, prepare for community event, Member/officer pairs, social networking options etc. etc.
Mon 14 <sup>th</sup>	North Area - finals	
Frid 18 <sup>th</sup>	North Area Chair Brief	
Thurs 24 <sup>th</sup>	North Area Committee	Finalise arrangements for pilot
		On-going work to review central scrutiny arrangements. On-going work with service managers
<b>May 11</b>		
Thurs 5 <sup>th</sup>	Elections	
Mon 9 <sup>th</sup>	North Area finals	
Frid 13 <sup>th</sup>	North Area Chair Brief	
Thurs 19 <sup>th</sup>	North Area Committee	Start of pilot, formal / informal split etc.

Date	Action / Event	Comment
June 11		
Sat 4 <sup>th</sup> (provisional)	Community workshop	Community event to discuss and agree local priorities
July 11		
Thurs 14 <sup>th</sup>	Area Committee meeting	
Aug 11		
		Interim report to SLT on how pilot is working – issues etc.
Sept 11		
Thurs 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Area Committee meeting	
Oct 11		
		Interim report to S&R on how pilot is working and proposals for any roll-out at this stage – feed into budget
Nov 11		
Thurs 24 <sup>th</sup>	Area Committee meeting	
Jan 12		
Thurs 26 <sup>th</sup>	Area Committee meeting	
Mar 12		
Thurs 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Area Committee meeting	
Apr 12		
		Pilot ends, data collection, feedback
May 12		
	Community event	To review pilot and community plan. Agree new priorities. Inform evaluation report
July 12		
		Evaluation report to S&R with final recommendations. Informs MTS and 2013/14 portfolio plans and budget



# Community Empowerment and Local Participation in Decision Making

## Informal Member Working Group Meeting

Committee Room 1, 12 noon **29<sup>th</sup> March, 2011**

### Participants

*Councillors: Ian Nimmo-Smith, Lewis Herbert, Amanda Taylor, Simon Kightley.*

*Officers: Liz Bisset (Director of Community Services), Andrew Limb (Head of Corporate Strategy), Trevor Woollams (Head of Strategy and Partnerships). Jonathan James (Head of Customer Services)*

### Apologies

*Councillors. Sian Reid and Tim Bick.*

# Agenda

## **1. Notes from the meeting on 7 March 2011**

These are shown in pages 1 to 3 for the information of members.

## **2. Review of North Area Committee on 24 March 2011**

An oral update from Ian Nimmo-Smith about how the meeting went, especially the new Community Forum session, and discussion about learning points to carry forward into future meetings. The next North Area Committee will take place on 19 May and is scheduled to try out a new "surgery session". Jonathan James will seek the views of members on how this could be run.

## **3. Community Engagement and Plans for a Community Event for North Area Committee**

Trevor Woollams will outline a draft action list for moving towards a community event for North Area. A provisional date for this has been set for 18 June at The Meadows Community Centre. A meeting between North Area Committee members and officers has been set for 31 March at which the extent of the Council's present community engagement with different groups in the area will be discussed and a framework for engaging people in the event set out.

## **4. Update about Devolving Decisions**

At the last meeting on the 7 March 2011, members discussed how decisions might be identified for delegation, and these are shown in the meetings notes. Trevor Woollams will discuss with members how these can be developed into a set of guiding principles.

## **5. Sharing Good Practice**

Area Committee Chairs are invited to share their good practice.

## **Area Working – Participatory Pilot Informal Member Working Group**

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March: 12.00 – 1.00pm

### **Members present:**

Sian Reid (Leader)

Ian Nimmo-Smith (North Area Committee: Chair)

Amanda Taylor (South Area Committee: Chair)

Lucy Walker (Labour Group representative)

### **Officers present:**

Liz Bisset (Director of Community Services) – Chair

Jonathan James (Head of Customer Services)

Andrew Limb (Head of Corporate Strategy)

Trevor Woollams (Strategy and Partnerships Manager)

Graham Saint (Strategy Officer)

### **Apologies:**

Tim Bick (Executive member for Community Services and Health)

Simon Kightley (West/Central Area Committee: Chair)

Lewis Herbert (East Area Committee: Chair)

### **1. Review of North Area Committee 24<sup>th</sup> March**

- General agreement that library debate and café format had worked well and fully engaged those attending.
- Parkour presentation was not so good – The learning was to fully brief presenters and ensure effective use of display apparatus (powerpoint slides were poor)
- Neighbourhood Plans discussion – many residents had left by then and energy levels were low. People were unclear about the context and what was being asked of them. It was more of a briefing. The learning was that the best discussions would be had when ideas were sufficiently well formed as to be meaningful but not ‘fully baked’.

SR Area committees are not the appropriate venues for briefings.

Need to have detailed agenda planning – Chair must have the authority to decide agenda in liaison with Lead Officer.

Need to cut down the numbers of officers attending.

INS Need a table for press with a clear notice.

Name badges for Cllrs and officers attending area committees.

SR Name plates and badges should be more informal and use first names (e.g. Sian Reid, Councillor)

Issues for next North Area Meeting:

- Review publicity of meeting
- Need additional roving microphones / better sound system
- Neighbourhood Policing Priorities to be the main participatory item
- Consider table layout by ward

**Action – JJ to liaise with INS, Glenn Burgess and Lynda Kilkelly**

### **3. North Area and Community Engagement**

- NAC Member workshop with Community Development officers planned for 31<sup>st</sup> March
- Draft action plan for engagement had been produced and would be expanded following the workshop
- Agreed that faith groups (covering all faiths) should be included in engagement plans

**Action – TW to update action plan after workshop**

### **4. Devolving Decisions**

A draft set of Principles had been produced to guide this work. Comments were:

- Re-word principle 5 to ensure the democratic process was retained.
- Add a new principle to establish that devolution must not require any net additional resource and that preferably it should require less resource.
- The note about option of exploring opportunities for Exec Cllrs to take decisions following debate at area committees (subject to re-thinking scrutiny arrangements) was noted but it was agreed that this should not be included as a principle and should not be pursued at this stage.

- The opportunity should be taken to look at officer delegations to identify options for members to consider that could speed up processes and free up capacity without compromising transparency and the democratic process.

SR – Asked that a paper be produced setting out a ‘devolution’ plan, shaped by the set of principles, with options and recommendations for members to consider.

**Action – TW to update the ‘principles’ and work with Project Team sub group to take work forward.**

## **5. Sharing Good Practice / Issues**

East Area

LW Problems following up actions with County Council colleagues.

Issues on the doorstep were often County Council issues

General

Need to make best use of policing agenda time

- more focused and inter-active

- shorter paperwork

- greater focus on analysis and what happens next

County officers – Mike Davey was keen for County Lead Officers to liaise closely with City Lead officers and Chairs over agenda planning.

## **6. Next Meeting**

Glenn Burgess will confirm monthly meeting dates / times for the rest of the year.

TRW 5.4.11

Community Empowerment and Local Participation in Decision Making  
Informal Member Working Group Meeting  
**Committee Room 1, 5.30 pm to 7 pm on Monday 23 May, 2011**

Invited participants

*Leader of Council, Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health, Area Committee Chairs  
Officers: Liz Bisset (Director of Community Services), Andrew Limb (Head of Corporate Strategy),  
Trevor Woollams (Head of Community Development). Jonathan James (Head of Customer Services) and  
Graham Saint (Strategy Officer).*

## Agenda

### **1. Notes from the meeting on 29 March 2011**

These are shown in pages 1 to 3 for the information of members.

### **2. Review of North Area Committee on 24 March 2011**

An update from Ian Nimmo-Smith (Chair of North Area Committee) about how the meeting went, especially the Community Forum session, which was focused on local policing priorities, and discussion about learning points to carry forward into future meetings. A new “drop-in session”, was also tried out for the first time in the foyer, supported by customer service advisors.

### **3. Update on Community Engagement and Plans for a Community Event for North Area Committee**

Trevor Woollams will outline progress towards a community “drop-in” event for North Area on 18 June at The Meadows Community Centre. A workshop involving North Area Committee members and officers took place on 31 March to help identify groups of people who could give a view on local priorities and be approached about the event. The intention of the event is to help set out local priorities that will inform the Area Committees future work and to help promote it to communities. A consultation will be launched asking people in North Area to give their views, using a circulated post card. An Engagement Plan is attached showing local opportunities to promote the event. A contact list has also been prepared .

### **4. Sharing Good Practice**

Area Committee Chairs are invited to share their good practice and opportunities for taking forward some of the lessons from the pilot.

### **5. AOB**

## North Area Committee – Engagement Plan

Event	Date	Lead Officer	Description
East Chesterton Information exchange	25 <sup>th</sup> May	Sally Roden/ Andrea Butler Tel 420309	Brownsfield YCC Opportunities to talk to residents from 12.45 – 2.00pm
Kings Hedges Eat and Meet	7 June	Marie Cassidy Tel 508197	North Arbury Chapel, Cameron Road. Opportunities to talk to residents from Kings Hedges Area
The Dec Bus	7 June	Janet Parish Tel 457810	Will be visiting: Shirley School from 2.45 – 3.45pm Scotland Road from 4.15 – 5.15pm
The Dec Bus	8 June	Janet Parish Tel 457810	Will be visiting: Mayfield School from 2.45 – 3.45pm
Arbury Carnival	11 June	Binnie Pickard Tel 508149	Marquee with opportunities to engage residents, promote the 18 June Meadows event and hand out postcards
The Dec Bus	13 June	Janet Parish Tel 457810	Kings Hedges Primary School, Northfield Avenue / Aragon Close from 2.45 – 3.45pm
The Dec Bus	13 June	Janet Parish Tel 457810	Campkin Road Shops from 4.15 – 5.15pm
The Dec Bus	14 June	Janet Parish Tel 457810	Arbury Primary School, Carlton Way from 2.45 – 3.45pm
The Dec Bus	14 June	Janet Parish Tel 457810	Akeman St (or Bateson Rd if unable to park) from 4.14 – 5.15
Arbury Information Exchange	16 <sup>th</sup> June	xxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx Tel 508302	82 Akeman St Opportunities to talk to residents from 12.15 - 1.15pm
The Play Boat	7 and 14	Paula Bishop	Opportunity for councillors to attend one of two

Event	Date	Lead Officer	Description
	June		sessions (between 4 pm and 6 pm) to talk to users of the Play Boat. Play Boat supervisors to promote completion of postcards at all sessions.
Asian Women's Group	Dates tbc	Binnie Pickard / Luthfa Khatun Tel 508149	Opportunity to engage Bengali women form Arbury and East Chesterton area
Tenants Meetings	Various	Marella Hoffman Tel: 458325	Opportunity to use existing tenant events and meetings to engage tenants about issues
Rangers	Various	Bob Carter Tel:4578205	Opportunities to distribute postcards to residents
Police	Various	Jason Wragg (Sgt.)/Steve Kerridge (Insp.)	Offer for Councillors to take part in "Insight" Patrols to find out more about policing in the local community Opportunities for Police to distribute cards and publicise 18 June event during beat walks
<b>Community Event Meadows Community Centre &amp; The Dec Bus</b>	<b>18 June</b>	<b>Graham Saint / Sally Roden</b>	<b>To bring together all the issues from the above and to give people the opportunity to vote on the highest priorities from 10.00am to 2.00pm</b>
City Homes North. Street Walkabout	22 June	Bev Clissold Tel 458403	City Homes officers will be walking around the Minerva Way estate with residents from 4.00 – 6.00pm note other street walkabouts are planned for: 14 July - East Chesterton (Dundee close etc ) - Matt Siggery 6 September - Cockerell Road / Perse Way - Nacer Dali
Chesterton Festival	25 June	Sally Roden Tel 420309	Opportunity to engage residents in East and West Chesterton at Community Fun Day event 1-5pm Pyes Rec Ground
Arbury Carnival	11 June	Binnie Pickard	For distribution at event
Sure Start Childrens' Centre(county)	various	Wendy Lansdown 699683	Opportunities to distribute postcards to residents

Event	Date	Lead Officer	Description
Libraries(county)	various	Wendy Lansdown	Make cards available to users
Youth Locality Team(county)	various	Wendy Lansdown	Explore opportunities that may be available through youth locality team – possibly including an electronic version on Parentmail.
Local GP Surgeries	Various	Inger.OMeara@cambridgeshire.nhs.uk	Cards available in waiting rooms



# **Area Working – Participatory Pilot Informal Member Working Group**

Monday 23 May: 5.30 pm – 7.00 pm

## **Members present:**

Sian Reid (Leader)

Ian Nimmo-Smith (North Area Committee: Chair)

Tim Bick (Executive member for Community Services and Health)

## **Officers present:**

Liz Bisset (Director of Community Services) – Chair

Andrew Limb (Head of Corporate Strategy)

Trevor Woollams (Strategy and Partnerships Manager)

Graham Saint (Strategy Officer)

## **Apologies:**

Simon Kightley (West/Central Area Committee: Chair)

Lewis Herbert (East Area Committee: Chair)

Amanda Taylor (South Area Committee: Chair)

Jonathan James (Head of Customer Services)

## **1. Matters arising from notes of 29th March 2011 meeting**

It was said that offices were applying the “principles” for devolving decisions, previously agreed by the Group, to decisions taken at scrutiny committees over the past year. Early indications were that: Local projects and schemes funded through developer contributions; some local development briefs; Safer City Grants, and; non- statutory tree works offered some scope for delegation.

The group asked officers to look at how agenda time was presently split across area committees, how an “ideal” meeting might run, and some of the consequences of increasing decision-making locally on the present structures.

## **2. Review of North Area Committee 19<sup>th</sup> May**

The Community Forum had gone well, an improvement on the previous approach, with presenters offering shorter more concise introduction and more focused questions for table discussion. The policing priorities section had succeeded in identifying a short-list of actions, to be considered by the NAG, and the different partners of community safety (council, police and fire brigade) integrated well. There were still questions about the running order of the meeting and where the Open Forum section best fits – too early and it delays the start of the Open forum and too late and people run out of energy to contribute. The timed agenda had worked well.

The use of the customer services desk in the foyer, for people to drop-in and raise issues was a moderate success with 6 contacts. It was said this innovation would continue for the next meeting and hopefully gain some momentum as people became more aware of the opportunity it offered.

### **3. North Area and Community Engagement**

The member workshop had helped shape a contact list and post cards inviting people to say what they liked about the area and what they felt could be improved was beginning to be distributed to it. The idea was that the contacts (consisting of resident representatives and other community activists) could then encourage the people they came into contact with to fill them in and return them. A community event on 18 June would allow people to help prioritise what had been said until that point. The consultation closes on 30 June.

A parallel approach was being used to involve young people, largely based around the “Dec” bus. Opportunities for members to meet local people (including young people) at events run by officers (such as mingle munches and talk and walk sessions) have been circulated to members.

### **4. Sharing Good Practice/ Preparations for next pilot meeting**

No practice was shared beyond the pilot. The holding of the next meeting of North Area committee in Buchan Street Neighbourhood Community Centre was welcomed, but there needed to be a concerted effort to raise awareness of the new location. The content of the meeting is likely to cover health improvement for adults and a discussion about findings from the consultation.

Community Empowerment and Local Participation in Decision Making  
Informal Member Working Group Meeting  
Committee Room 1, 5.30 pm to 7 pm on Monday 27 June 2011

# Agenda

## **1. Notes from the meeting on 23 May 2011 and matters arising**

Notes from this meeting are attached, for the information of members.

Liz Bisset (SLT lead for the project) will give a brief introduction to the project for new members.

## **2. North Area and Community Engagement.**

Graham Saint will give a brief update on progress with the consultation, including headline findings to date from the consultation survey (CB4 postcards) and the headline priorities from the drop-in community event held on 18 June at the Meadows Community Centre. A paper about the consultation is attached.

Members are also asked to give a view on the launch of a Facebook page dedicated to North Area Committee.

## **3. Increasing decision-making**

Trevor Woollams will give an update on progress with devolving further decisions to the pilot. A paper about this is attached.

## **4. Outline of next Area Committee “Pilot” agenda**

Ian Nimmo-Smith (Chair of North Area Committee) will give an outline of possible Community Forum items, including feedback from community event about future priorities for the committee and health improvement, and options for structuring the meeting.

## **5. Sharing learning from Area Committees**

Discussion about what knowledge could be transferred between committees.

North Area Committee Participation Pilot  
**Findings from Consultation and Community Engagement**

## 1. Summary of Findings

**Table 1. The overall themes that received greater levels of support**

*The priorities in the returns and conversations were:*

- i. **Improving the Streetscene**, including: control of dogs; provision of additional bins, improving the appearance of recycling areas and communal bin areas for flats; reducing obstacles in the street and levelling some uneven pavements.
- ii. **More things for young people to do**, including more fixed play equipment for older children, better playground maintenance, and; additional recreation activities.
- iii. **Feeling safer**, increase the number of PCSO patrols where possible and improve the visibility of the City Council's Ranger Service in the area
- iv. **People getting along better**, including better promotion of events and existing community development, leisure and sustainable city grants so that community groups can involve more people in their work.
- v. **Better shops**, including a reduction in litter around them and encouraging people to come forward to run shops/outlets, possibly supporting a café.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the consultation and focus of the community engagement activity being carried out on behalf of North Area Committee was to:

- i) Find out what local people felt was the best things about living in north area, and
- ii) What one thing would make living in the area better.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 Consultation and community engagement started on the 20 May and closed on 30 June. On the 18 June the headline findings, at the time, were presented at a community event and the people attending indicated their priorities. After the close date the findings were presented at North Area Committee's Community Forum.

- 3.1 The intention is that an action plan is prepared that will help guide the committee's work in the future. This will allow the committee's work to be directed by the needs of local people and will hopefully lead to more informed and interesting agenda in the future.

## 4. Methodology

- 4.1 Postcards containing these questions and a covering letter from the Committee Chair were sent out to community groups and activists in north area to encourage their members and neighbours to complete and return them. There was also a separate postcard for young people used and collected on the Dec Bus. Just over 7,000 cards were distributed.
- 4.2 Local council officers in north area, such as Rangers, Community Development Officers and Housing Officers, who have contact with local people and groups, promoted the return of the cards and attendance at the drop-in community event on 18 June.
- 4.3 At the drop-in event, between 10 am and 2 pm, in the Meadows Community Centre, just under 50 local people had the opportunity of looking at the issues pulled out of returned cards (grouped under themes) and to vote for their priorities (using a limited number of green dots). There had been a lot of activity in the local press about what people felt about living in north area and the event received some publicity.
- 4.4 At events taking place in the area, such as the Arbury Carnival and Chesterton Festival, officers attending completed postcards with local people. At the close of the survey nearly 700 people had responded.
- 4.5 North Area Committee members were given a list of events and contacts where they can talk to people, they may not previously have had involvement with. This includes sessions run by the Dec Bus, Eat and Meet lunches, Street Walkabouts and Community Police Patrols.

## 5. Learning

- 5.1 One of the learning points has been that people prefer to be informed about the cards on a face-to-face basis, so that that they can quickly understand the rationale, give an opinion and not spend too much of their valuable time on the consultation. Groups meeting in community centres were also supported and their focus on issues produce well thought through responses.
- 5.2 The cards were channelled through community groups and locally based officers, rather than sending them out cold, to encourage people to respond. A number of groups got behind the consultation and gave it their support.

## 6. Findings

- 6.1 The greater level of support for issues, given at the community event and in the community forum, is shown in bold, below.

### **We like living in north area**

- 6.2 People said they liked living in north area because:

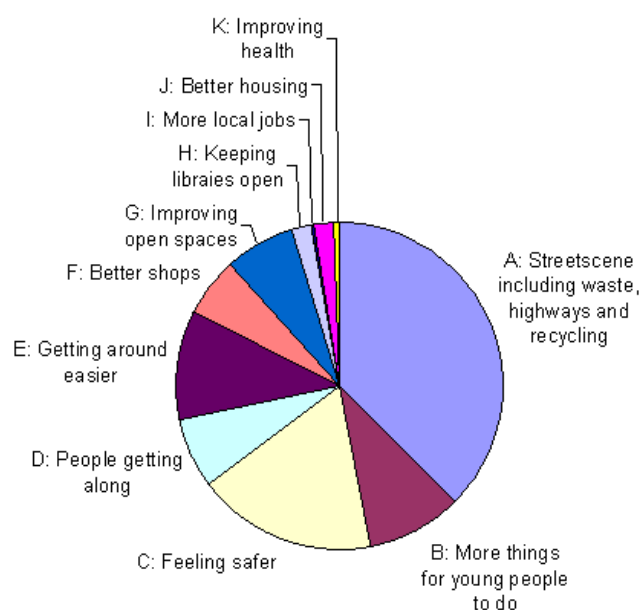
- **People are friendly**
- **There are wonderful green spaces**
- It is quiet
- There is community togetherness
- There is a lot to do
- There is a feeling of safety
- It is near to the City Centre
- There is a good bus service
- There are great Community Centres and Churches

### **The one thing we would like improved**

- 6.3 The responses were grouped into themes. Chart 1 (below) shows the level of support for each of the themes. It can be seen that what has been called Streetscene issues had the highest level of support. This was followed by Feeling Safer and then Getting Around Easier and More Things for Young People to Do.

### **Chart 1. Level of support for each of the themes**

Findings from "CB4" Survey: by theme



- 6.4 Each of themes is made-up of a number of issues. The following shows a breakdown of the themes.

**A. Improvements in their Street-scene**

- **Reduce the amount of litter on the streets**
- **More dog bins**
- **Better pavements, as some are uneven and cluttered**
- Reduce the amount of dog fouling on pavements and in green spaces
- Improve the appearance of recycling areas
- More frequent rubbish collections
- Prevent dumping around flats
- Reduce parking on grass verges
- Too many cars parking on bends
- Better care for trees
- Reduce the noise from the A14
- Fewer cars

**B. More things for young people to do**

- **Activities for young people in the evenings, indoors**
- More organised recreational activities in open spaces
- Encourage clubs for 8 – 13 year olds
- Provide tennis courts
- Extend the opening hours of the community centres
- Provide free Wi-Fi in the area
- More activities on the river
- Local swimming pool

**C. To feel safer**

- **Increase the number of police and PCO foot patrols**
- **More Rangers in the area**
- **Greater attention given to disruptive families who can spoil it for the rest**
- Prevent drug dealing
- Clamp down on drug taking
- People abusing alcohol and being rowdy
- Anti-social behaviour outside pubs
- Young people hanging around in groups
- Feeling safe at night
- Reduce the number of burglaries
- Too much late-night noise
- Reduce racism in the area

#### **D. People to get along better**

- **More opportunities for people to get together as a community (carnivals, etc.)**
- **Better promotion of the good things about the area**
- Work to reduce tensions where people live close to each other
- Greater investment in local services
- Encourage more people to get involved in organising community events
- Improve the level of respect people have for each other
- Local people encouraged to get involved in local decision-making

#### **E. To get around easier**

- **Cheaper bus fares**
- Dedicated cycle lanes
- Better on-street parking
- Less congestion
- Reduce conflict between cyclists and pedestrians on pavements
- Buses should run on time
- Reduce the speed of cars
- More bus stops
- More frequent buses into town
- More speed restricted areas
- Better lighting on cycle paths
- Being able to use Park and Ride without driving to Milton

#### **F. Better shops**

- Encourage new tenants for shops with a wider range
- Bigger retail outlets in area
- A local bank
- More charity shops
- A good coffee shop

#### **G. Improved green open spaces**

- **Cleaner playgrounds with regular maintenance**
- **Better equipped playgrounds, with more equipment for young children**
- More playgrounds
- More fitness equipment in open spaces
- Fences around playgrounds to keep dogs out
- Reduce the number of overhanging trees
- Help for older people to maintain their gardens

#### **H. To keep libraries in the area open and maintain opening hours**



### **I. More local jobs with decent pay**

### **J. Better local housing**

- **Improve the quality of social housing**
- **Provide affordable rents**
- Reduce the amount of high-density housing
- Bigger gardens
- More affordable house prices

### **K. Health inequalities reduced**

- Easier access to GP surgeries
- More “give up smoking” groups

## **7. Next Steps**

- 7.1 Local people, who contributed or heard about the consultation, had the opportunity of attending a discussion of how the issues could be taken forward at North Area Committee’s Community Forum on 14 July. A more detailed action plan showing how the emerging priorities will be responded to will be presented at the 22 September North Area Committee meeting.

# **DEVOLVING DECISION MAKING**

## **Discussion Paper for Informal Member Working Group Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The Working Party previously agreed a set of principles to help guide officers looking at decisions in services that could be devolved to area committees (Appendix 1). At the last meeting the Working Group asked that the present capacity of area committees, to incorporate additional decision-making, be rapidly appraised and the implications for the totality of our decision-making assessed.
- 1.2 The purpose of this paper is to give members of the Working Group the opportunity of discussing the emerging issues and give direction to officers.

### **2. Proposed Approach to Devolving Decisions**

- 2.1 Officers have looked back at all the decisions taken through scrutiny over the last year and identified those that *could* be devolved. The MWG's principles were then applied and the following types of decisions have been identified, for officers to look at in more detail.
  - Local projects and schemes funded through developer contributions.
  - Local Development Briefs (e.g. Mill Road). We will need to maintain a robust approval process. We will also need to take account of the Localism Bill's inclusion of Local Neighbourhood Plans.
  - Safer City Grants
  - Non statutory tree works
- 2.2 Officers are also continuing to encourage the County Council to devolve decisions about selected Area Joint Committee functions (e.g. local traffic management and highway schemes, cycle schemes, bus shelters).

### **3. Capacity**

- 3.1 The table on the following page shows, in broad terms, how agenda time was split across the 4 area committees during the March/April cycle. We did not record actual agenda times for previous meetings.

Key: Consultative items / open forum = blue, planning = green, formal decisions = red

### March / April 2011 cycle (actual times)

	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm
North		green	blue	blue	red	
South			blue	red	green	
East		blue	blue	red	red	green
West / Central			blue	blue	blue	green

- 3.2 The table below shows the number of planning applications decided by each area committee over the past year (6 cycles). The highest number in one cycle was 10 in East Area (they were split over two meetings).

Year	2010				2011		
Month	M/J	J/A	S/O	N/D	J/F	M/A	Total
North	3	5	2	1	0	2	13
South	7	2	1	5	3	3	21
East	5	5	1	10	1	4	26
West/Cent	5	2	1	2	4	4	18

- 3.3 The table below shows how the agenda of 'an ideal' area committee meeting might be split. It assumes a separate planning meeting starting at 6pm. A separate meeting gives residents the certainty of a definitive start time but also provides flexibility should a high number of planning decisions be required at a single cycle.

	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm
Ideal		blue	blue	red		
Planning	green					

- 3.4 The assumptions made in proposing this view of 'an ideal' meeting are:

- That it is probably unreasonable to expect residents to actively engage and concentrate for longer than 3 hours in the evenings.
- That it is unreasonable to expect residents (and members and officers) to stay at meetings later than 10pm.
- That making regulatory decisions late at night increases the risk of challenge.
- That separate planning meetings would enable members to make decisions about planning matters in a more formal, regulatory meeting, enabling the main area committees to be far less formal and participative.
- That area planning meetings could start earlier because residents are more likely to want to attend for a specific item of interest as a 'one off'.

## **4 The Totality of the Council's Decision Making Process**

- 4.1 The issue of devolving decision making to area committees needs to be considered in the wider context of the totality of decision-making processes in the council, and the resources currently dedicated to servicing those processes.
- 4.2 An analysis of the number of meetings and the time taken in them or preparing for them (e.g. in member briefings) in 2005/06 showed there were 26 Council or Scrutiny Committee meetings and 72 briefing meetings, lasting over 200 hours; with around 1,900 member hours and over 1,750 officer hours spent in meetings and briefings.
- 4.3 This analysis did not include Civic Affairs, Planning, Licensing or HMB meetings or briefings, or area committees, so the total figure including those would be considerably more.
- 4.4 As we devolve decision making to area committees we need to ensure that the total member and officer time taken on decision making is reducing rather than increasing, bearing in mind pressure on resources.
- 4.5 We have reviewed our decision making and scrutiny processes before. Capacity in terms of officer and member time could be re-focused on area working by reducing the number of central scrutiny committees. To do this we would need to significantly reduce the volume of decisions currently reported through central scrutiny. Any significant reduction would need a radical change to our model of scrutiny – for example:
  - By not having automatic pre-scrutiny
  - By having a focused annual scrutiny plan with focussed scrutiny projects
  - By focusing scrutiny on performance management and policy review, rather than decision making
- 4.6 Any new model would need to take account of accountability and transparency issues.

## **5. Officer Delegation**

- 5.1 The Member Working Group has previously suggested that office delegations be reviewed alongside the work to devolve decisions to area committees to see where processes might be streamlined. This could be an opportunity to review officer delegations across the board to help free up resources.

## Appendix 1

These principles were agreed by the Member Working Group on Area Working on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and are being used by officers to develop recommendations on further devolution.

### PRINCIPLES FOR DEVOLVING DECISIONS TO AREA COMMITTEES

1. Decisions should only go to one committee.
2. Decisions about policy will be taken by the relevant Executive Member and scrutinised centrally, to avoid the need for multiple reporting to each area committee.
3. The default position for non-policy decisions is that they will be delegated to area committees unless there is a good reason not to do so (e.g. they relate to a city-wide decision or fall into a category of decision that is evidenced to be of little interest to local people).
4. Devolved decisions will be taken by the relevant area committee within the centrally agreed policy framework.
5. The process of devolving decisions must not require any net additional resource and preferably require less net resource.
6. If all members of an area committee are inclined to support a decision then a vote should be taken as soon as possible to leave more time for debate about less consensual issues. However, residents must be given the option to raise questions to ensure a proper democratic process is maintained.

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Community Empowerment and Local Participation in Decision Making  
Informal Member Working Group Meeting  
Committee Room 1, 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm on Thursday 28 July 2011

# Agenda

## **1. Notes from the meeting on 27 June 2011 and matters arising**

Notes from this meeting are shown below, for the information of members.

## **2. Review of North Area Committee meeting on 14 July**

A brief review of how the meeting went and the learning gained. Some of the learning points are shown below.

## **3. Scoping the Interim Progress Report**

A discussion about the possible shape and content of the interim progress report to be provided to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 10 October 2011. It is suggested that the report covers:

- The framework originally set out by Strategy and Resources on 17 January 2011 (what do we want to achieve?);
- How North Area Committee decided to take the pilot forwards on 27 January 2011 (what will we do?);
- What has worked well in practice so far?
- What have we learnt?
- What could be transferred to other area committees?

## **4. Update on progress with delegating decisions**

An outline of where we have got to with the decision areas previously identified and how the phased approach will be taken forward.

## **5. Community Engagement**

Some of the headlines from the "CB4" survey are shown below. These will form part of an action plan for the committee, showing how we are responding to the main issues raised. A progress update with the development of a Facebook page for the area committee will also be given.

## **6. Looking forward to the next North Area Committee**

A chance to discuss what might feature in the Community Forum and any new approaches at the next meeting on 12 September 2011.

## **7. Sharing learning from area committees**

An opportunity to discuss good practice. The next area committee meetings will be on: 18 August (East); 25 August (West/Central); 22 September (North), and: 26 September (South).

## **8. Next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 23 August at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 1.

# 1. Notes from meeting on 27 June 2011

- The interim headline findings from the “CB4” survey and community engagement were noted and it was agreed that an action plan should be prepared to “close the loop”. It was noted that whilst the response rate had been good, with over 600 people taking part, the findings should not be used to represent all views in the area – it was only a snapshot of immediate concerns – and further more in-depth work would be useful, especially with young people.
- People who attended the community event provided a useful contribution to the prioritisation of the surveys findings.
- It was agreed that a Facebook page should be set up for North Area Committee, as a part of the pilot, on a trial basis.
- It was agreed that officers should continue to look at the following decision areas for delegation with a view to introducing them by 1 April 2012:
  - Local projects and schemes funded through developer contributions covering formal and informal play areas in open spaces
  - Local Development Briefs (e.g. Mill Road), whilst maintaining a robust approval process. We will also need to take account of the Localism Bill's inclusion of Local Neighbourhood Plans.
  - Safer City Grants
  - Non statutory tree works such as tree planting.
- It was agreed that a look at the findings from the “CB4” work and health improvement in north area in the next Community Forum
- It was said that the new area committee chairs and other members were welcome to attend future North Area Committee meetings to find out more about the new approach being taken. Members were encouraged to “try out” different area committees to experience different ways of working.

## 2. Possible Learning Points

North Area Committee meeting 14 July 2011

### About the meeting

- Took place in a new venue, for the committee
- 24 local people (excluding members) and 11 officers attended the Community Forum
- 7 people said they had not been before
- Enquiries to customer services at the desk in the Foyer were limited
- The meeting concluded at 11 pm

### Completed Feedback Forms (4) from meeting said:

- People liked the venue
- They still liked the new approach and felt they could have their say and join in discussions
- There was confusion about what the Community Forum (7.30 pm to 9 pm) section of the meeting was about and it was thought that the promotion of its duration was slightly misleading – the overall meeting didn't end at 9 pm!
- Some people attending ("the regulars") wanted to start with the Open Forum and to talk about the issues that concerned them and then go home
- Some people said that they found the presence of laptops and other hand held devices on the tables discourteous.

### What did we learn from the meeting?

- The tasks in the Community Forum were a bit complex and the background material on the tables superfluous: we need to make things simpler in the future
- The paper for environmental improvements should have been more directive – we need to have greater clarity about decisions to be taken rather than options
- For people new to the way we do things, there should be a bit more guidance about how the meeting is structured and who the members are
- Make sure the tasks involve some facilitation from tables to keep discussions informed and focused
- It is hard work getting people to evening meetings - we did get some new people with our publicity but not as many as hoped.
- We need to be more responsive and flexible in running the meetings – to move on or rearrange when people don't seem interested or have the energy for tasks
- Sometimes the decision-making section should be the feature of the meeting and we might need to take this into account in promoting meetings with different audiences



## 5. Findings from CB4 Community Engagement

### **People said they wanted:**

#### **A. Improvements in their Street-scene**

- Reduce the amount of litter on the streets
- More dog bins and dog control
- Better pavements, as some are uneven
- Improve the appearance of recycling areas and dumping near them

#### **B. More things for young people to do**

- More activities for young people in the evenings, indoors

#### **C. To feel safer**

- Increase the number of police and PCO foot patrols and Rangers in the area
- Greater attention given to disruptive families who can spoil it for the rest

#### **D. People to get along better**

- More opportunities for people to get together as a community
- Better promotion of the good things about the area

#### **E. To get around easier**

- **Cheaper bus fares**
- Reduce the speed of cars
- Better on-street parking
- More dedicated cycle lanes

#### **F. Better shops**

- Encourage new tenants into shops with a wider range
- Bigger retail outlets in area
- A local bank

#### **G. Improved green open spaces**

- Cleaner playgrounds with fencing and regular maintenance
- Better equipped playgrounds, with more equipment for young children

#### **H. To keep libraries in the area open and maintain opening hours**

#### **I. More local jobs with decent pay**

#### **J. Better local housing**

- Improve the quality of social housing
- Provide affordable rents

#### **K. Health inequalities reduced**

- Easier access to GP surgeries
- More “give up smoking” groups

Community Empowerment and Local Participation in Decision Making  
Informal Member Working Group Meeting  
Committee Room 1, 6 pm to 7 pm on Tuesday 11 October 2011

## AGENDA

1. **Interim Review of Pilot**  
Cllr. Sian Reid will briefly introduce the report presented to S&R on 10 October 2011, which highlighted the progress of the pilot and some of the issues involved in any extension of the project. Members are invited to discuss how area committees can take the pilot forward. The report to S&R is attached, for information.
2. **Review of North Area Committee meeting on 22 September**  
Cllr. Ian Nimmo-Smith (Chair of North Area Committee) will talk about how the last area committee participation pilot meeting went and what lessons can be taken forward to the next meeting on 24 November 2011.
3. **Update on Devolving Decisions**  
Andrew Limb will give an update on progress being made to delegate the identified decisions, which include: certain local projects and schemes funded through developer contributions; certain Local Development Briefs (e.g. Mill Road); Safer City Grants and categories of non-statutory tree works.
4. **Launch of Facebook Page**  
Jonathon James will give an outline of the Facebook page called North Cambridge Community Forum and how it is progressing. This page will be displayed at the meeting.
5. **Sharing Good Practice**  
Chairs of Area Committees are invited to present and discuss things that are going well with their area committees.

The next Informal Member Working Group Meeting is scheduled for 29 November 2011 at 5.30 pm in Committee 1.

## Notes from Informal Member Working Group Meeting 11 October 2011

### 1. Interim Review of Pilot

- It was said that S&R committee accepted the findings of the interim review. Area committee chairs could now take forward some of the approaches that could be easily transferred.
- To help inform the chairs of what they could do it was said that a guide would be presented at the next meeting showing the learning that had been gained from the pilot.
- A senior officer would be available to assist chairs in bringing in any changes and to help administer the area committees. SLT would confirm the names of the officers.
- It was agreed that at the centre of the pilot was the community forum. It was about members listening to local people rather talking at them.
- It was accepted that the capacity of meetings was limited and that if the number of planning items were excessive, a separate planning meeting should be arranged to take items that could not be completed in the set time.
- Each area committee should take a view on where in the meetings planning applications were considered. It was agreed that taking decisions late at night was not ideal for members or the public.
- It was suggested that members should be asked their views about the pilot.
- It was agreed that local residents should help set the content of meetings so that what is presented is of interest to them. Chairs should not accept reports that have little wider interest.

### 2. Review of North Area Committee meeting on 22 September

- Some of the momentum of the meeting was lost when the large number of people attending for a planning item left.
- It was felt that the presentation of the policing priorities was sharper than previously but that more emphasis was given to taking clarifying question than table discussion.
- It was thought that the Chair should ask in future what the forum wanted as its policing priorities and then ask members to vote to accept them or otherwise, to give clear accountability. Cllr. Tim Bick, as the Executive Member whose portfolio covered community safety, would be asked to agree a view about whether a standard approach should be applied to all area committees.
- **It was agreed that a police representative should be invited to attend the next meeting** to discuss with members how this section of the agenda was run in all area committees. It was acknowledged that the police ran these meetings in a different way, in other districts, and could offer insight into other approaches.
- It was accepted that the officer reports in the decision-making section could have been more directive and shorter. There were errors in the

grant papers. These should be submitted as drafts first to allow the lead officer for the area committee to make changes.

### 3. Update on Devolving Decisions

- It was agreed that councillors would continue to take decisions during the decision-making sections of the meetings.
- More details about progress with devolving decisions would be presented to the next meeting.
- Care will need to be taken that more decision-making by area committees doesn't lead to longer meetings.

### 4. Launch of Facebook Page

- The facebook page for North Area Committee had be set up. So far 26 people have said they "like" it.
- Linking the page to other used pages should help promote it.
- The questionnaire part of the page should be made use of.
- Following evaluation at the end of March 2012 a decision will be taken about whether to offer this to other area committees.
- The link to the page should be promoted in council publications.

The informal meeting ended at 7 pm.



To: The Leader  
Report by: Andrew Limb, Head of Corporate Strategy  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Strategy and Resources 10 October 2011  
Wards affected: All Wards

## **Interim Review of Area Working and the North Area Pilot**

### **Key Decision**

#### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The Council wants to extend the participation and involvement of residents in its decision-making and increase their influence over what happens locally. North Area Committee was selected as a pilot to try out new ways of working and to identify those that could be rolled out to other Area Committees.
- 1.2 We have learnt a lot from the pilot about how to run Area Committee meetings in a more participatory way and to engage the community in identifying local priorities. In parallel officers have been working with a small Member Working Group to explore options to devolve more decisions away from the Guildhall to area committees. This report makes recommendations about which decisions could be devolved.
- 1.3 One of the challenges going forward will be to ensure Area Committees have enough capacity and time on their agendas to increase public participation whilst also making more decisions locally. Further work will be needed to look at how we respond to this challenge, including potentially redistributing resources from the central decision-making processes.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Leader is recommended to:
  - a) Agree in principle to the delegation of the decisions set out in paragraph 3.11 to area committees by 1 April 2012.
  - b) Encourage the other area committees to take on board the successful elements of the pilot that can be easily transferred, as set out in paragraph 4.1.

- c) Agree to investigate what resources might be needed and how they might be found (potentially by reprioritising work or doing it differently) to transfer some or all of the elements of the pilot which have resource implications, set out at paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 (such as the community engagement activity), to other area committees.
- d) Agree to investigate how to increase the capacity of area committee meetings to incorporate both participatory elements and further devolved decisions, including potentially transferring resources from the central decision-making process.

### 3. Overview

- 3.1 North Area Committee was selected as a pilot, at Strategy and Resources on 17 January 2011, to try out new approaches within existing resources that will:
- Provide positive experiences for local people at meetings
  - Provide additional support for the Chair to manage and facilitate meetings
  - Agree clear actions at meetings and provide feedback
  - Engage the local community outside of meetings
  - Devolve more decision-making to area committees
  - Work closer with partners to help set agendas
- 3.2 North Area Committee, at its meeting on 27 January 2011, decided to:
- Start meetings earlier (at 6.30 pm) with formal planning items
  - Time its agenda and aim to finish at 10 pm at the latest
  - Utilise a Head of Service to help coordinate and facilitate meetings
  - Try interactive processes so that residents find it easier to participate, including a Community Forum session where members sit with an audience around tables and discuss issues
  - Set up a customer services point prior to meetings where residents can “drop-in” and discuss issues
  - Carry out community engagement and hold a community event
  - Set up a webpage and try out social networking
  - Take on more decision-making in the area
  - Promote meetings more actively
- 3.3 The pilot formally started at the North Area Committee meeting on 25 March (2011) and has developed through the 19 May (2011) and 14 July (2011) meetings. The pilot will run until April 2012. At the time of writing this report the meetings on 22 September (2011), 24 November (2011), 26 January (2012) and 22 March (2012) are still to be held. This is an interim report setting out progress and learning so far.

## **What has worked well in the pilot so far?**

3.4 The pilot has allowed new approaches to be tried out and learning about what works to take place. The following elements of the pilot have worked well:

- Scheduling the more formal planning items at the start of the agenda has made them feel like separate meetings, especially when there is a break between the sessions, so there is less confusion about the type of engagement being offered. It also means that those who are specifically interested in planning matters do not need to attend the whole meeting.
- For the non-planning items, Members have moved out from behind the “top table” and joined local people in discussions, which has allowed more of a listening / engaging approach.
- The Chair has exercised facilitation skills in controlling the sessions and summarising contributions.
- Local residents attending the meetings have found the meetings more welcoming, have had a greater opportunity to contribute and found the content of the meetings interesting.
- Partners from the county council, police and health services have actively contributed to Community Forum sessions and found the views expressed by residents useful in assessing local need.
- The North Area Committee has established more community contacts through the pilot and they have been made aware of more Community Forums.
- The webpage for the Committee has been developed and allows people to contribute, by using forms to ask questions, and follow actions from the meeting remotely.

3.5 An extensive community engagement exercise was undertaken which involved a mix of:

- Face-to-face conversations
- Discussions with groups in community centres
- Stalls at Arbury Carnival and Chesterton Festival
- A ‘CB4’ postcard survey, which attracted over 600 responses.
- Use of ‘The Dec’ bus to involve and consult young people
- A community event at The Meadows Community Centre where attendees were asked to prioritise the issues arising from the CB4 survey.

- 3.6 The findings from the consultation have been discussed in the North Area Committee's Community Forum and clear local priorities for residents in the area, including improvements to their streets and open spaces, were identified. An action plan for the area committee showing how the City Council and other partners will respond to the priorities has been prepared. This was then discussed at the area committee, to check that the actions were appropriate, and circulated to the area committee's contact list (local groups and organisations who were involved in the consultation). It has also been promoted through the committee's webpage and other media to show that the committee has listened and doing something about the issues raised.
- 3.7 The priorities taken from the consultation will also inform the topics for future discussion in the 'community forum' discussions, and the type of decisions that the Council seeks to devolve to area committees.

### **Community Participation - What have we learnt?**

- 3.8 Officers have actively promoted and publicised the meetings but this has had a limited impact on the number of attendees. It seems to take a lot of effort to attract a limited number of additional people to evening meetings.
- 3.9 However, wider community engagement outside of the meetings has allowed more people to exert influence, either through their ward councillors, resident association representatives or others who attend the meetings, or via other means such as those activities highlighted at 3.5. This has helped reach a more diverse range of people than currently attend Area Committee meetings, including young people.
- 3.10 This out-of-committee engagement seems likely to be the most fruitful route to pursue and develop further to increase public participation in the council's (area committee) decision making. The soon-to-be piloted North Area Facebook page will provide another channel for this type of participation. However, the community engagement work in the North Area pilot has consumed a significant additional amount of officer time, so there would be resource implications of extending this approach.
- 3.11 The open forum and community forum need to be well-managed. The role of the senior lead officer for the Committee has proved very valuable, particularly in supporting the Chair in facilitating and preparing for the meeting. The Chair and Members also need to use a different skill set in these forums compared to the traditional approach, to ensure residents feel they have had a chance to contribute to the debate and be heard.



- 3.12 Despite allocating times to the agenda items, two of the three pilot meetings so far have finished later than scheduled and very late in the evening (at 11 pm). This is likely to have an impact on community engagement, as it is unreasonable to expect residents to attend and actively engage in long evening meetings.
- 3.13 There is also the potential for the late finishing times to have an impact on the quality and robustness of decisions taken by the Committee on statutory items, as members and officers may be less able to concentrate fully late in the evening.
- 3.14 There is therefore a need to consider starting and finishing meetings earlier, and a strong case for scheduling those regulatory items for the first part of area committee meetings in all areas (as well as potentially increasing the frequency of area committee meetings in those areas that tend to have most planning applications).
- 3.15 The length of current meetings also raises issues of how additional business (such as further devolved decisions) could be accommodated within the meetings. We will need to consider a range of options such as chairs enforcing agenda timing more strictly (and possibly guillotining speakers on individual items more rigorously), or even looking at the frequency of area committee meetings (or the days on which they are held). However, the resource implications of this would need to be investigated further. Officers plan to bring forward recommendations in a further report to this committee in March.

## **Devolving Decisions**

- 3.16 An Informal Member Working Group (comprised of all area committee chairs, executive councillors and spokespersons) has been giving guidance to officers on how to approach delegating further decisions to Area Committees. A set of principles has been used to assess different kinds of decisions and to identify a number that could be devolved. The principles are attached at Appendix 1. Officers are recommending that the following decisions are devolved to area committees:
- Local projects and schemes funded through developer contributions relating to:
    - informal open spaces,
    - provision for children and teenagers,
    - community facilities,
    - public realm and public art;

- Neighbourhood Development Briefs (e.g. Mill Road - we will need to maintain a robust approval process. We will also need to take account of the Localism Bill's proposals for Local Neighbourhood Plans);
  - Safer City Grants; and
  - Non statutory tree planting
- 3.17 Work is underway to explore how it would be possible to devolve these decisions from 1 April 2012, and any constraints or criteria that would need to be adopted to ensure consistent and constitutionally-sound decision making, and to balance the strategic needs of the wider city with local area priorities. Relevant Heads of Service and Executive Councillors have been consulted and detailed reports on changes to process will be taken through relevant scrutiny committees in January.
- 3.13 Discussions are on-going with the County Council to try to reach agreement about decisions that they will be prepared to devolve to area committees and / or other ways in which we can work together with the County Council and other partners to jointly address issues of high priority to local residents in our areas.

#### **4. What next?**

- 4.1 Some aspects of the pilot could be transferred to other area committees relatively easily and without requiring too much additional resource, such as:
- Tighter agenda planning and control so that meetings finish earlier and are focussed on issues of high importance to the local community
  - The designation of a Head of Service as a lead officer to assist the Chair, and fewer officers attending area committee meetings
  - The use of a Community Forum session, involving round table discussions, provided there is time in the agenda and space in the venue.
  - The Chair acting in a facilitating role and members actively listening more to residents as a part of round table discussions
  - Starting meetings earlier with the consideration of planning applications to ensure robust, high quality decision-making on statutory items
- 4.2 Some aspects of the pilot would require resources to support the new way of working, such as additional member and officer time to:

- Facilitate meaningful input from presenters in the Community Forum
  - Provide the Customer Services “Help Desk” at the front of each Area Committee meeting.
  - Carry out wider community engagement outside of the meetings, including:
    - face to face conversations with local groups of people to find out about local priorities;
    - organising a “CB4”-type survey and promoting responses at local community events;
    - using the Dec Bus to reach out to young people; and
    - organising a community consultation event.
- 4.3 Other aspects of the pilot are still being developed and, if successful, would also require additional member and officer time, including:
- Utilising social media, such as developing a Facebook page and maintaining engaging content
  - Preparing an action plan for the committee to respond to issues raised in its community engagement work and working with lead officers and partner organisations to deliver and report progress against this action plan.
- 4.4 If the approaches set out in sections 4.2 and 4.3 are to be offered to other area committees, we need to assess what resources can be reprioritised, doing what we are presently doing differently or what additional resource might be needed. The ‘community infrastructure’ in the north area (in terms of community buildings, community development staff etc.) is generally more developed than in the other three areas which means that effective community engagement may be more of a challenge.
- 4.5 If the other Area Committee meetings are to become more participative and consider more devolved decisions, this requires a willingness on the part of the Committees to do things differently and sufficient space within agenda. Other area committees currently consider a greater number of planning applications than the North Area Committee, which could make it difficult to accommodate additional content.
- 4.6 As outlined above, one option would be to hold more frequent meetings (e.g. moving to a six-weekly cycle) for the area(s) receiving the most planning applications. This would create more space for area committees to do more participatory work and take more decisions, but it would have additional resource implications.

- 4.7 Any new model will also need to be accountable and transparent. The Member Working Group has suggested that officer delegations be reviewed alongside the work to devolve decisions to area committees to see where processes might be streamlined.
- 4.8 We should take this opportunity to review officer delegations across the board to help free up resources (e.g. by reducing the total number of items that need to go to scrutiny committees for approval). This review of central decision making processes and structures could potentially take place during 2012-13.

## **5. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 Officers have carried out a Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on the pilot and it has been used to inform this report and the suggestions for moving forward with a more devolved and participatory approach.
- 5.2 The key issues highlighted by the EqIA were:
- The people that attend pilot meetings value the new approaches tried out in the meetings, saying they are more welcoming and enjoyable. This makes it easier for new people to join in.
  - People should be encouraged to complete monitoring forms at meetings, as well as giving their feedback on what they thought about the meetings.
  - Attracting a wider range of people to pilot meetings is difficult - few people want or are able to attend long evening meetings where they haven't got a specific interest in an agenda item.
  - It is recognised that more work needs to be done in engaging people outside meetings, in settings where they feel comfortable - the pilot has contacted inequalities groups as part of its priority setting exercise and these groups will need to be kept informed about progress on an ongoing basis
  - The pilot provided opportunities for members to meet inequalities groups. It is hoped that the same opportunities will be available if the pilot is extended to other area committees.
  - The next Citizen's Survey should include questions (as the previous "place surveys" did) that ask people if they feel they have the opportunity of getting involved in or influencing local decision-making

## **6. Implications**

### **6.1 Environmental and community safety.**

This proposal will increase local public participation and involvement around these issues. Officers anticipate a minimal climate change impact.

### **6.2 Equal opportunities**

See Section 5 above. The proposals are flexible and inclusive and will enable Members to use different participatory events, depending upon the issues and the local people who are concerned about them. The EqlA will help identify ways of involving all communities, including those who are more disadvantaged.

### **6.3 Financial, procurement and staffing**

6.3.1 A small budget of £8,000 would be required to carry out similar community engagement in the other three areas, but the main resource needed would be staff time. The Pilot has been run and managed within existing resources, re-prioritised through the 2011/12 service planning process. The same process could not be effectively replicated across all 4 area committees without additional staff or a significant re-allocation of existing staff time.

6.3.2 Depending on how the project is taken forward, spending may need to be reallocated within the 2012/13 service planning and budget process.

6.3.2 No additional resources in terms of basic service delivery or capital expenditure have been directed from other areas to the pilot area, other than the reprioritisation of staff time in Corporate Strategy and Community Development, plus the time of the Lead Officer for the North Area.

### **6.4 Consultation and communication**

Extensive consultation through community engagement at a range of events and through postcard feedback has taken place on the North Area priorities. The outcome of the priorities exercise, and the continuation of the pilot scheme will be communicated through Open Door, Cambridge Matters, on the website, the North Area Facebook page and the City Council's twitter account. If the changes proposed are made to other area committees, officers would undertake similar communications through those media or through other community events in those areas.

## **7. Inspection of papers**

Appended to this report:

**Appendix 1. PRINCIPLES FOR DEVOLVING DECISIONS TO AREA COMMITTEES**, agreed by the Member Working Group on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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These principles were agreed by the Member Working Group on Area Working on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and are being used by officers to develop recommendations on further devolution.

### **PRINCIPLES FOR DEVOLVING DECISIONS TO AREA COMMITTEES**

1. Decisions should only go to one committee.
2. Decisions about policy will be taken by the relevant Executive Member and scrutinised centrally, to avoid the need for multiple reporting to each area committee.
3. The default position for non-policy decisions is that they will be delegated to area committees unless there is a good reason not to do so (e.g. they relate to a city-wide decision or fall into a category of decision that is evidenced to be of little interest to local people).
4. Devolved decisions will be taken by the relevant area committee within the centrally agreed policy framework.
5. The process of devolving decisions must not require any net additional resource and preferably require less net resource.
6. If all members of an area committee are inclined to support a decision then a vote should be taken as soon as possible to leave more time for debate about less consensual issues. However, residents must be given the option to raise questions to ensure a proper democratic process is maintained.