

Cabinet

6 March 2012

Report of the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion

Neighbourhood Working – A New Approach

Summary

1. This report proposes a new model of Neighbourhood Working through which the Council will work with partners to deliver better services for York's communities.

Background

2. The Localism Bill sets out a series of challenges for local government and specifically for City of York Council. Some of the key issues include the community right to challenge to run local authority services, the right to bid to buy community assets, and neighbourhood planning: The ability to set out development plans at a neighbourhood level. All of these presuppose the existence of well-established and well-supported neighbourhood groups with an interest in undertaking such work.
3. In addition to the devolution of powers from the central to the local, there is also a planned devolution of power and action from the institution to the smaller group of committed activists / employees / volunteers. York has signed up to the Co-operative Council movement with the intent to empower employees who wish to take a greater stake in their work. At the same time, the Open Public Services white paper encourages the public sector to explore the opportunities for establishing social enterprises and working with the voluntary sector.
4. Co-production is a new vision for public services based on recognising the resources that citizens already have and delivering alongside their users, their families and their neighbours in partnership with the public.

5. The Council's approach to Neighbourhood Working should be seen in the context of a co-ordinated city-wide approach to boosting connectivity between people at neighbourhood level. The essence of this approach is about supporting different, flexible ways to attract people to give time and resources to initiatives and causes on their doorstep, in their local communities, that matter to them.
6. The ethos of neighbourhood working means working alongside residents as equal partners to shape their own areas and neighbourhoods by developing local solutions for the things that matter most to them. This approach is about developing "Good Society" where:
 - Residents establish local priorities
 - Communities develop and deliver their own innovative solutions
 - Service providers work together to deliver efficient services shaped by residents
 - The voluntary sector gets increasingly involved in helping meet local needs

A Neighbourhood Working Model

7. An "Area Working" pilot took place for 12 months up to September last year in Acomb, Dringhouses / Woodthorpe, Holgate, Micklegate Rural West, and Westfield wards. It is clear that the approach taken in the pilot was overly bureaucratic and would not be sustainable on a city-wide basis. In developing a new model we have, however, been able to take account of some useful approaches that Members identified during the pilot including:
 - a) Ward profiles that provide a comprehensive picture of the needs of communities and audit information that tells us what is already available in a ward and where the gaps are.
 - b) Working with service deliverers and partners on delivery plans to address the ward priorities developing new initiatives and sharing good practice.
 - c) Working with CVS to develop a volunteer database and a corresponding volunteer opportunities database to link residents to the volunteering opportunities that suit them.
 - d) Locating staff within wards, making them a 'hub' for local information so they can work more effectively with communities.
 - e) Introducing Facebook and Twitter and regularly getting messages out into the community.

8. In order to meet the challenges of the new Council Plan we now propose a new model of Neighbourhood Working that will be simple and non-bureaucratic and which will:
- a) Be led by ward members
 - b) Build on current ward committee arrangements and be flexible to suit the needs of different wards
 - c) Provide a strong project management approach to delivering the priorities identified by members
 - d) Streamline officer roles and remove duplication amongst officers working in wards
 - e) Provide for integrated partnership working at ward level
 - f) Recognise that some wards have greater needs than others
 - g) Provide clear channels for members to report problems / service issues and have them dealt with efficiently
 - h) Provide strong leadership to embed equalities good practice in local service delivery
 - i) Deliver efficiency savings
9. The new model will support members in the following areas:

Ward Profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These documents will contain ward level data relating to economy, employment, community safety, environment and levels of satisfaction. This data will be complemented by local knowledge and will enable members to make informed choices in relation to the priorities for each ward.
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Ward Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These will tell the ward member what facilities exist within the ward, what activities are being delivered and by whom, and about schedules of work e.g. footpath / highway improvements, road sweeping and litter bin collection. <p>The Ward Audit will give residents easy access to what is available to them and reduce the perception that ‘nothing is happening’. It will help us to work with service providers to identify where there are any gaps and develop ways to address them.</p>
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Ward Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members will set priorities for the ward using the profile data, local intelligence and resident ambition. An Action Plan will then be drawn up. <p>Ward audits will help in framing actions by highlighting existing provision and enabling members to identify any gaps in provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Action Plan will help residents to hold the Council to account for activity to address the priorities as we report back on the web and at Ward Committees. It will also enable us to respond quickly for example when external funding becomes available.
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Community Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most significant new element of the Neighbourhood Working model, Community Contracts will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on services that will contribute to addressing the ward priorities identified by members, whether delivered by the Council or other agencies. Stipulate what level of service local communities can expect to receive. Record what is expected of local communities. Provide data against which communities can measure service delivery. Enable the ward to redesign services in a way that meets community need within available budget. Guide the allocation of resources to wards by the Cabinet in the form of “credits”.
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10. Key elements of setting up and running Community Contracts will be:

- a) Ward Members will take the lead in drawing up the Community Contract through Ward Team Meetings. Led by the ward members and involving representatives of partner agencies as required, these will replace Ward Partnership Boards.
- b) Twice yearly the Neighbourhood Manager will report back to the Ward Committee Meetings on the progress that has been made in delivering against the Community Contract allowing members to monitor service delivery. These reports will be supplemented by more frequent data where appropriate.

- c) Heads of service and their partner equivalent will work together (using “Lean systems” thinking) to redesign service delivery in response to the Community Contract. This will be supported by the Council’s new Innovation Team.
- d) In many wards the Community Contract will simply constitute the monitoring of a straight forward service level agreement type document which will be facilitated by data relating to Council services produced through the Council’s existing data systems. In wards with particular needs, however, the Contract is likely to involve a range of agencies and will guide the development of new services and new approaches to address particular issues.
- e) In response to the Council’s commitment to fairness and equality the Community Contract will identify how services have accounted for equality issues based on an equalities impact assessment.

Neighbourhood Budgets

11. The Fairness Commission has recommended that ward budgets are not continued in their current form. In order to provide improved scope for Ward Members to work with their communities to shape service delivery through Community Contracts it is proposed to replace ward budgets with a new system with four components:
 - a) **Ward Budgets:** Each ward will have an allocation to use as grant funding to commission local voluntary and community organisations to meet identified needs. Ward members will allocate these grants annually involving residents in decision making as appropriate to local circumstances. This funding will be allocated by wards only to organisations based in the ward and providing services in the ward. City-wide organisations which might provide services to more than one ward will not be allowed to apply to this pot. Eligible organisations will include voluntary sector organisations, residents associations, community halls, sports and other clubs. Parish Councils and other public agencies will not be eligible to apply. It is proposed to allocate £75k to this pot in 12/13 which is in line with the spending profile in 11/12.
 - b) **Other Voluntary Sector Support:** It is recommended that £130k is allocated to a pot to support those voluntary sector organisations that provide services to more than one ward and that are currently forced to apply for a plethora of individual ward committee grants. This would clearly benefit the voluntary sector. It will be made available for community development and outreach work. A connection to wards will be maintained in that applicants will be

expected to have regard to ward priorities and will get their applications endorsed by ward members where appropriate.

It is not intended that this fund would be open to Council services such as Street Sport; however, it is proposed that in the first year only, whilst the Ward Credits pot is being established, Council services are allowed to bid.

It is recommended that management of this pot is put in the hands of a standalone third sector management organisation. This would administer the schemes according to the Council's criteria and priorities and would provide support to the recipient organisations including accessing additional funding / revenue sources, helping them to become more sustainable.

At the same time this arrangement could create further efficiencies as the burden of assessing the performance of current grant holders would transfer from authority officers to the third party provider / administrator.

This arrangement could draw together a range of different Council funding streams allowing for closer alignment of funding streams beneath a single, simplified reporting structure. Other potential funding streams to be included in this arrangement will be further considered in the Voluntary Sector Strategy paper which will come to Cabinet in April.

- c) **Ward Credits:** A "credits pot" will be created to be allocated to identified wards to be used to commission new services, either from within the Council or from other partners / sectors, to deliver on the Ward priorities.

The credits pot will be formed by creating headroom within existing budgets. To do this new, minimum service standards will be defined during 2012/13 for those core local services that are to be included within Community Contracts, particularly those services currently delivered by CANs. This minimum level would become the default position for Community Contracts across the city. Where services currently exceed those minimum standards Cabinet will be able to aggregate the appropriate "spare" resource into the credits pot. It is recommended that credits are allocated only to wards with the highest levels of deprivation.

In the first instance the credits pot will have £19k allocated to it. Over time further budget areas may contribute to the credits pot. A further report will be brought to members on this during 2012/13.

- d) **Street Environment budgets:** These will remain available to address environment related priorities identified within wards.

12. In future requests for additional Council services such as street lighting or salt bins will go direct to provider departments.
13. Funding available to wards will therefore be as follows:

	All Wards	Wards with higher deprivation
Ward Budgets	✓	✓
Street Environment budget	✓	✓
Other Voluntary Sector Support Pot	✓	✓
Ward Credits		✓

Supporting Members to deliver Neighbourhood Working

Neighbourhood Management:

14. A smaller Neighbourhood Management team will support Members to deliver neighbourhood working by:
- Gathering local information to create ward profiles and ward audits.
 - Supporting Members to identify ward priorities.
 - Helping members to work with communities and partners to negotiate Community Contracts based on the priorities for the ward.
 - Providing project management on the Ward Action Plan and reporting performance back to members and residents.
 - Negotiating changes to services with providers at a ward level.
 - Commissioning services at a ward level based on the priorities for the ward using “credits”.
 - Understanding the needs of residents from the various communities of interest including communities within wards who are marginalised and through the community contract process ensuring they have appropriate accessible services to meet their needs.
 - Promoting volunteering and linking people to the right opportunities.
 - Procuring support for community centres and resident associations.

- Supporting partners and communities to recognise and address community tensions.
 - Helping to support communities in respect of the Neighbourhood Plans proposed in the Localism Bill.
15. As the team will be small they will need to focus on those wards with higher levels of need and provide a light touch in the majority of wards.

Ward Committees:

16. In order to create a more cost-efficient and effective system it is proposed that the arrangements for ward committee meetings are changed so that there will be:
- a) One “Annual” Ward Committee meeting, normally to be held during May / June. This meeting will be arranged and facilitated by the Democracy Services team with relevant officers and representatives in attendance as at present with the Neighbourhood Manager attending to report back on progress against the ward action plan and community contract.
 - b) Up to two further meetings held on a more informal basis to consider particular topics identified by residents. These will be supported by the Neighbourhood Manager only and will include a further report back on progress against the ward action plan and community contract.

Members may of course choose to organise additional Councillor / Resident focus groups that they will lead themselves.

A proposed revision to the Council constitution is set out in the Annex A.

Communications:

17. The Council’s ambition is to ensure that its communications are increasingly tailored to specific audiences and delivered through a channel that best suits that audience. In addition, it is essential that communications become much more two way and that residents have a clear voice.
18. The Council plans to shift the emphasis of its generic city wide paper based media towards better targeted community communications. This will be achieved by including Council messages and content in partner organisation’s magazines where they reach specific audiences. It will also include the use of free newspapers and magazines – particularly those used by the supermarkets and retail outlets in York. In addition to these activities, there will be an

increase the media available through our Explore Centres and Community hubs that features services and initiatives of interest to local residents.

19. The Your Voice newspaper will regularly be produced to meet the needs of specific wards and communities and highlight the work going on within them. There will be 3 ward publications a year, one for each ward, which will include ward agenda, meeting details, and contact details.
20. There will be a transformation in the way we communicate with communities: Alongside the traditional communication tools, there will be an increase in the availability of online services / data and new media. There will be specific areas of the Council website available to wards and communities to enable residents to understand the range of services being offered and to allow them to request a service or participate in a survey or initiative for example. Communities will be encouraged to post content on our websites. In addition, the popularity of Facebook and Twitter means that for some parts of the city, there is an appetite for customers to communicate with the Council in this way. Phone apps will be in wide use. The corporate communications team is committed to broadening the use of new media and enabling more choice for customers about the way in which they communicate with us.

Equalities:

21. The proposed development of the Neighbourhood Management Unit will support the Council to consult and engage with a range of communities, identify specific service needs and develop community contracts. The Neighbourhood Management Unit will be central to the development and design of services and understanding the gaps in service provision.
22. There is a need to ensure that when we are consulting with communities or designing services to meet the needs of our service users and residents we are able to develop solutions to sometimes complex issues that can arise in the design of services. The quantitative data from the Business Intelligence Hub and Public Health will also support the Council to work with those who are most disadvantaged and vulnerable.
23. To bring this together it is recommended that the Equality and Diversity Unit is incorporated within the new Neighbourhood Management Unit. This will enable the authority to ensure equalities

sits at the heart of consultation, engagement and development of services.

Who Ward Members will Contact

24. The following grid shows how ward members will be able to access the support they need:

Contact:	About:
<p>York Customer Centre (YCC): Provides a variety of contact channels, e.g. via 551550, email and Do It Online which allows members to raise service requests and track their progress.</p> <p>A mobile App where photographs of environmental crimes can be recorded and logged with the relevant services and then tracked is being developed.</p> <p>By April 2012 YCC will also be handling complaints including member complaints / enquiries about unresolved issues.</p>	<p>One-off issues concerning street scene and environmental matters, non domestic business rates, council tax, refuse, electoral, frontline planning & building control and signposting to other council services.</p> <p>A monthly report from the contact centre would alert the ward team meeting to any recurring themes and a more in depth response can be explored.</p>
<p>Street Environment: A named Street Environment Officer will be provided for each Ward within area teams (see below). They will liaise with other front line staff within the area team.</p>	<p>Street scene, environmental and enforcement issues where there is a bigger or more persistent issue e.g. where a number of residents have reported a problem or where there is a need for a more concerted, proactive approach.</p> <p>Delivery of agreed services within the environmental section of the community contract.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood Management: A named Neighbourhood Manager will be allocated</p>	<p>Delivery of the priorities in the ward plan, ward profiles and audits. Drawing up of Community Contracts. Working with partners to fill any “gaps”</p>

Examples of Neighbourhood Working in Action

25. **Families:** York is part of the Community Budgets initiative addressing Families with Multiple Problems by supporting communities and combining public resources in the most effective manner. We are currently pulling together specialists including those delivering the family intervention project, support for children at 'The Edge of Care' initiative, and others to focus their work and resources in the most deprived areas of York starting in Westfield Ward. Neighbourhood Working will support this initiative by:
- a) Harnessing the contribution of other colleagues and partners delivering front line services in the ward through the ward team meeting. Partners will include the Police, youth workers, children centres, schools and the voluntary sector. They will use their relationships with local communities to develop a support network for referred families that will remain in place long after the project has finished.
 - b) Progress will be reported to members as part of the ward action plan update at Ward Team meetings and to residents yearly through the Ward Committee meetings.
26. **Older People:** We know that five key indicators put older people on a downward spiral: Falls, strokes, incontinence, bereavement, dementia. Imagine Mr Johnson turns up to see his GP having had a fall. During the course of the conversation his GP discovers Mr Johnson's wife died 2 months ago. The GP can treat the fall but needs support for Mr Johnson to reduce his loneliness and isolation:
- a) The practice manager accesses the ward audit and discovers that whilst there is a luncheon club in the ward it is too far for Mr Johnson to travel.
 - b) The practice manager raises the fact that there is only one luncheon club in the ward with the Neighbourhood Manager who takes the issue to the Ward Team meeting. There ward members explore whether this is an issue for the wider community, whether any other organisation can introduce an additional service within their existing resources or whether members want to consider supporting the development of something with ward budgets, credits or other funding.
27. **Environment:** Supposing an area is experiencing a high level of graffiti and similar anti-social behaviour:
- a) The Ward Member will be able to liaise with their Street Environment Officer to have the graffiti dealt with immediately. The SEO will also be able to liaise with the enforcement team

and other agencies in the area, who can then find out about the perpetrators and potentially to organise an immediate response, for example in the form of diversionary activities.

- b) The Neighbourhood Manager will be able to call on a number of tools to help the ward members engage the views of young people. These tools, now described on the *YorkOk* website include the “Change Champions” initiative and others to suit different circumstances.
- c) A specific ward action plan may be developed that includes both improved reporting arrangements, co-ordinated activity between partners and some new services. It may involve the co-ordination of some new volunteer activity.
- d) Discussion through the Ward Partnership Team and the Ward Committee may lead to the establishment of a new Ward Priority reflected in a Community Contract. This will involve officers from across the Council, for example from Young People’s services, the voluntary sector, the Police, etc. and may well lead to commissioning some additional services or provision using ward “credits”.
- e) Regular reports will be made to Ward Members on progress.

Options

- 28. The principal options available to members are to:
 - a) Adopt the new model as proposed
 - b) Retain the status quo
 - c) Adopt an amended version of the model

Analysis

- 29. The model proposed is recommended as it provides the opportunity for residents to work with and through their ward committees to establish local priorities and come together to develop and deliver their own innovative solutions. Community Contracts will assist service providers to work together to deliver efficient services shaped by residents.

Council Plan

- 30. The Neighbourhood Working model is key to delivering the Stronger Communities priority within the Council Plan and its key priorities:
 - a) Community Engagement – more residents will understand and be engaged in planning, budgeting, priority setting and problem solving in their communities

- b) Stronger voluntary sector – there will be a strong volunteering infrastructure with increased levels of volunteering in the city and opportunities for not for profit organisations to deliver services
- c) Safer inclusive communities – we will achieve safe, resilient and cohesive communities where no person or community feels left behind or disadvantaged
- d) Improved community infrastructure – we will establish an appropriate infrastructure including housing, leisure, schools and businesses supporting opportunities for capacity building, work and enterprise
- e) Healthy sustainable communities – we will create healthy and sustainable living options in communities
- f) Communities where young people flourish – we will consult with young people to build communities that reflect their needs

Implications

- 31. **Finance:** The base budget for Ward Committees for 2012/13 is now £224k.
- 32. **Equalities:** We have completed an EIA of Ward Committees and developed an action plan to make them accessible to all. As part of the roll out of Neighbourhood Working the EIA will be further developed to include the Community Contract process.
- 33. **HR:** Restructuring of the Neighbourhood Management Unit and relevant front line teams in CANs will take place to create the area approach outlined under the scheme of delegation and in line with the Council's Management of Change procedure.
- 34. **Crime and Disorder:** The review of Capable Guardian arrangements to move to a "Team York" approach will impact positively on addressing crime and disorder issues.
- 35. **IT:** The communications approach outlined will have implications for the development of the Council's IT systems.
- 36. **Planning:** These proposals are part of developing a local approach to how the new rights under the Localism Bill might be exercised. At a strategic level the Core Strategy Submission (Publication) (September 2011) supports the preparation of neighbourhood plans. The LDF promotes community cohesion and the development of strong, supportive and durable communities through the creation of sustainable, low carbon neighbourhoods. This will be delivered through the Core Strategy through a number of measures, including

the preparation of neighbourhood plans and implementing any planning actions through the development process. As such, the strategic approach to neighbourhood planning in the emerging Core Strategy fits in with the neighbourhood working model.

37. There are no additional property or other implications.

Risk Management

38. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives and failure to meet stakeholders' expectations. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score all risks has been assessed at less than 16. This means the risks need only to be monitored.

Next Steps

39. Following approval of the model work will be undertaken to:

- Implement a restructure of the Neighbourhood Management Unit and Equalities Team – to be undertaken by the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods under the Council's scheme of delegation
- Develop Ward Credits for implementation in 2012/13 with a further report to be brought to Cabinet in due course
- Secure a third sector management organisation for the administration of grant funding
- Create a new front line delivery system for environment related services – to be undertaken by the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods under the Council's scheme of delegation. This will ensure that services work together in order to improve efficiency and responsiveness. Area teams will bring together relevant resources to tackle street based enforcement activities to take action, using a range of powers, on issues such as graffiti, fly-tipping, parking offences and dog fouling, etc.

The approach is encapsulated in the work on the *Love Where You Live York* initiative:

www.lovewhereyouliveyork.wordpress.com

The 'Love where you Live' team will aim to reduce the amount of reactive action to enable partners to concentrate on real sustainable improvements in local neighbourhoods. This will be underpinned by improved working relationships with other services, partners and communities including young people together with improved reporting and resolution of environmental

issues tailored to the needs of local neighbourhoods and engaging local communities.

Each area will also have a named officer responsible for reactive issues and ensuring that members' and residents' issues are resolved by the appropriate route. This role will be an enhancement of the current Street Environment Officer role.

- Some ward committee members also currently host / chair Capable Guardian meeting. These meetings are designed to bring front line partners together to address issues such as anti-social behaviour. Members may wish to review the current system and develop it as a means of bringing together partner resources to address a wider range of issues as part of the ward team meetings badged as "Team York".

Recommendations

40. Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Adopt the model of Neighbourhood Working including the arrangements for:
 - i. Community Contracts as set out in paragraphs 9 and 10
 - ii. Ward funding as set out in paragraph 11
 - iii. A new remit for the Neighbourhood Management and Equalities Teams as set out in paragraph 14
- b) Recommend to Council a change in the Council's constitution in respect of ward committee arrangements as set out in the Annex
- c) Instruct the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods to:
 - i. Carry out a restructure of the Neighbourhood Management Unit and Equalities Team under the Council's scheme of delegation in order to deliver the new model
 - ii. Deliver the new 'Love where you Live' approach?
 - iii. Procure a third sector management organisation to undertake the administration of the voluntary sector funding pot

Reason: To deliver better services for York's communities

Annex A: Proposed revisions to the Council Constitution in respect of Ward Committees

Contact Details

Author:		Chief Officer responsible:			
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Stewart Halliday Head of Strategy, Partnerships & Communication		Report Approved	✓	Date	21.2.12.
Specialist Implications Officers:					
Patrick Looker Finance Manager		Frances Sadler City Strategy			
Wards Affected:					All ✓
For further information please contact the author of the report					