

Role and Successes of the NMU

- **Ward committees** – This is not only about the team's role in delivering, arranging venues, and facilitating the 18 ward committee meetings on a quarterly basis. They also personally support elected members in the role as community champions; hold ward team meetings, which include multi-agency problem solving groups dealing with issues such as anti-social behaviour; ensuring the involvement of partners to give effective ward level management of issues; they produce Your Ward, including editorial, graphic design and delivery; they consult on the delivery of local improvement schemes; and have developed the future thinking of ward committees with the Neighbourhood Action Plans (discussed in more detail below).
- **Development of Neighbourhood Action Plans and working in partnership with others** – This newly developed service area has led to profiles based on statistical information being produced for ward committees. These have been developed into ambition and vision statements, following public consultation for every ward committee. Not only have these provided a targeted focus at a ward level but they also provide an opportunity to strategically link local priorities with the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy with partners, council departments, and the voluntary sector. Links have already been established to strengthen the NAP's for example, because 17 out of the 18 ward committees have an ambition / vision statement around community safety, North Yorkshire Police have seen the value in their utilisation of ward committees as consultation mechanisms to consult the public on the local police priorities in the wards. A new delivery mechanism has been approved by the Safer York Partnership Board to provide a platform for this and thereby negating the need to provide and facilitate Joint Action Groups in all wards. This work has also provided a platform for improved working relationships with NYP.
- **Housing tenant involvement service** – This service has been greatly developed over the last 12 months to provide more innovative engagement strategies with Residents Associations (RA's) and the tenants Federation. The Federation now have more of a voice to challenge council policy, they also have direction and focus provided by a Business Plan, developed with them by officers of NMU. The ongoing day to day support of Residents Associations has been strengthened through cluster group sessions which have led to the production of individual RA Action Plans looking at issues such as their longevity, training needs, area specific projects etc. The NMU is also assisting Housing Services with a number of project areas of key importance to them and their successful service delivery when assessed against the Key lines of Enquiry. These range for the implementation of the Respect Standards for Housing Management to the Repairs consultation.
- **Parish Liaison** – The team continue to work with parish councils to secure their engagement with the council, in particular with the ward committee

Supplementary Information Sheet A

interface. Corporately we also work with the York Local Councils Association to ensure that they receive information they need corporately across the council. The NMU was also given responsibility for resolving Double Taxation disputes on behalf of CYC. This has been a challenging and resource intensive issue that has strained Parish Council relationships. Previously CMT provided direction to enable a cross authority working group to be established to support the NMU in this area. However, this area of work does not readily fit in the Neighbourhood Services Directorate, due to it prejudicing relationships with the parish councils. CMT may wish to consider putting this responsibility elsewhere in the council. This would enable the NMU to continue the development work with Parish Councils.

- **Community centres** – This diverse area includes the direct management of Burton Stone Community Centre and time intensive support to management committees of other centres, which are covered via a SLA. Considerable work has been needed to support at least one centre which is currently not financially viable including providing financial support, development of the management committee, business planning and training.
- **Community development** – assist groups of individuals to gain constituted status and apply for funding and the provision of Discretionary Rate Relief to community organisations.

Supplementary Information Sheet A



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21 January 2008

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Dear Zoe,

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for providing such a useful and informative programme for Martin White during his recent visit to York. Martin came away with a more complete understanding of York's activities around participatory budgeting and neighbourhood working.

I have to say that I have been very impressed with York's programme. We are producing an article, as discussed, focusing on York and participatory budgeting for our Cll'r Magazine's "Empowerment" issue, due to be published in March. I have been particularly impressed by the way your authority has kept elected members at the centre of your process. I feel it is a fine example of elected members acting as a conduit for the community with the council. It demonstrates not only community empowerment but also empowerment of frontline councillors. I also think the links made to neighbourhood planning is of critical importance. I would like to continue to hold York up as an example for other local authorities as to how, with commitment, communities can be empowered and that local democracy benefits from such activity.

In terms of participatory budgeting, I think York has an important story to tell. I hope that we can continue to work together to celebrate the good work York has been doing and ensure that others can learn from your experience. I will be running a series of seminars, along with the PB Unit and hope that you might be available to participate. In addition, if you agree, I would like to provide your details to the PB Unit as they are very interested in your work.

Again, let me congratulate York on the work you've been doing and I look forward to continuing to watch as this work continues to evolve.

All the Best,

Maureen W. Alderson
Head of Centre for Local Democracy

INDEPENDENT INTELLIGENT INFORMATION

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