Annex B

Community Engagement Scrutiny Review

Notes from meeting of members of the Community Engagement Task Group with RA Federation on 7 March 2013

Representatives came from the Federation, Dringhouses and Woodthorpe, Foxwood, Cornlands and Lowfield, Kingsway, Muncaster, the Groves, Clifton, Nunnery Lane and Micklegate.

Key Points –

- Some local councillors attend RA's monthly meetings but some don't – they would like that to be consistently the case. Estate Managers are also important and should be present if possible.
- Community engagement has been improving but there is still more to do.
- RA minutes should go to local councillors (electronically).
- The Federation is important to bring everyone together and is a good channel for communication both ways.
- Information on the Federation was being provided online via the council website, to encourage more individuals to get involved. The Task group agreed it would be helpful if the same information could also be made available offline for those residents with no internet access.
- Clashes of dates are not helpful to the attendance of councillors at RA meetings – the council should include dates of RAs in the council corporate diary (which are regular) in they same way as Parish Council dates are included.
- Clashes of dates with resident forum meetings (formerly called ward committee meetings) are particularly regrettable and resident forum dates need fixing early to avoid this which should encourage better attendance. The inclusion of RA meeting dates in the council's corporate calendar would help mitigate this problem.
- Council documents should be checked for jargon (the need for Plain English has come up at previous meetings).

- Early consultation is needed (where consultation is appropriate) – using the Neighbourhood Management Unit (NMU) and its officers to alert RAs to submit responses in time. Sufficient time for consultation should be given as consultation needs to go to a meeting for discussion, not just to individuals.
- NMU officers use resident surveys and these could incorporate consultations or notify residents that there is a consultation so that communication improves and the response rates are raised.
- People will often respond if there is an amount of money to be spent in their area, even if the amount is small. RAs also have their own funds, just as PCs do.
- There was considerable resentment of the lack of consultation on some services, especially on such items as salt bins, litter bins and Christmas recycling arrangements. They felt they could have helped here, e.g. they could have suggested which litter bins were least used and which most.
- There was a lot of disquiet about not locking parks and once again, RAs had not been consulted. They would like to have more input during the budget decision-making process in order to better understand the rationale behind it.
- Their preferred method of communication was face to face – Cindy was a great help and so were councillors who were in touch.
- They emphasised the need to publicise meetings properly – whether they were formal or informal did not matter.
- RAs' notice boards could be used to publicise events and consultations.
- They would like time to be able to give feedback, especially if a deadline came before their next meeting (this is also a common problem with PCs).
- It was pointed out that not all areas are covered by RAs e.g. the Shambles – their views are needed too.
- Regular meetings with local councillors are needed, especially (but not only) with new councillors. The importance of the relationship with RAs should be included in new councillor induction programmes.