Executive   **16 March 2017**

Report of the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee

Ward Funding Scrutiny Review - Cover Report

Introduction

1. This cover report presents the final report from the Ward Funding Scrutiny Review and asks the Executive to approve the recommendations arising from the review.

Review Recommendations

2. In January 2017, the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee considered the review findings as presented in the Task Group final report at Appendix 1 and agreed to endorse the draft recommendations listed below:

    i)   Council be asked to consider introducing mandatory Member Training associated with the future introduction and delivery of any major changes to working practices such as the new neighbourhood working model, through a refresh of its Member Development Protocol

    ii) A set of standards be agreed to formalise the working arrangements between CET and other CYC teams e.g. Highways, in order to better manage the flow of information and manage Cllr expectations, and speed up the progression of ward funded schemes.

    iii) Appropriate changes are made to the internal processes to address the Veritau findings and scrutiny review findings, including

        •   Improving communication and publicity of ward committee meetings;

        •   Replacing the downloadable application form with an online application form, and providing guidance on the frequency that individual wards make their funding decisions, and how long it will take to receive the funding once an application has been approved etc.

- Introducing a form to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of ward funded projects;

- A 'live' system be introduced with the capability to detail successful applications, pending applications, and the balance of available funding

iv) All case studies, fact sheets and other training materials be stored in a central depository made accessible to all Cllrs

3. In addition, the Committee accepted the Task Group's view that some Members are struggling with their ward role and responsibilities, and therefore agreed to endorse the Task Group recommendations that:

v) An additional staff resource be provided in CET, in order to increase support to ward Cllrs, improve communication between ward Cllrs and council departments, and support the flow of information from the new working models being introduced across council services to Cllrs (see paragraph 23). Options for funding this should include funding this from the budget allocated to wards.

vi) CET continues to provide a range of support in a range of ways to suit individual Cllrs preferences and identify future improvements where feasible.

vii) Political Groups provide peer support to their ward members to enable them to progress schemes in their wards

viii) This committee receive a future update on implementation progress of the model in order to assess any outstanding issues.

Reason: To inform future improvements to the neighbourhood working model, and to conclude this review in line with scrutiny procedures & protocols

Implications

4. **Financial & HR** – In regard to Recommendation (v), the cost to the council of an additional staffing resource in CET would be £36,888 per annum per additional CET officer. If a decision were taken to fund this from the ward funding budget, the current year's funding budget would not be impacted as it is unlikely that any additional resource could be employed this financial year. How the additional resource would impact the ward funding budget of each ward will be dependent on whether the

cost was shared equally across all 21 wards at a cost of £1757 per ward, or allocated across the wards in proportion to their budget. This would result ion a range of contributions, from £730 (Bishopthorpe) to £2,560 (Guildhall). The implementation update information contained within Annex A shows that a number of wards are likely to spend their full ward funding budget for this financial year.   If an additional resource was funded from the ward funding budget, wards will have less money in future years thereby reducing their ability to achieve all of their ward priorities.

5.   In regard to Recommendation (ii), this would require a significant piece of work to be undertaken, involving officers from across a number of CYC departments. This would take time and would only be successful if there was appropriate buy-in across those teams. Future changes to structures which affect the operating model of those teams would also affect each team's ability to maintain the agreed standard.

6.   **IT** – CET are already in the process of drawing up a specification for the 'live system' proposed in Recommendation (iii). They would need to commission the work from CYC's IT team and the workstream would need to be priorities against other ongoing work and department requests. The costs associated with this piece of work would be identified as part of the specification design stage.

7.   There are no legal or other implications associated with the ward funding scrutiny review recommendations listed above.

Risk Management

8.   There is a risk that if funds are diverted from the ward funding pot to fund an additional staffing resource in CET (see recommendation v) it still may not guarantee an improvement in the flow of information and support from other CYC teams that Cllrs feel they need to effectively fulfil their ward role.   The alternative to this approach would be to agree and maintain a set of working standards across CYC teams (as per recommendation ii) which Cllrs can use to hold to account the support they receive.

9.   It is also too early to quantify the benefits to ward Cllrs of the new working models being introduced across other key council service areas, designed to empower communities to make informed choices (see paragraph 23). However, it is clear the introduction of local area teams

will enhance the membership of ward teams, which in turn will inform the setting of ward priorities and direct ward spending to those most in need.

Council Plan 2015-19

10. The findings from this scrutiny review and the arising recommendations will support Ward Councillors in applying the agreed changes to their ward committees, and the Council's new approach to community engagement through working with local neighbourhoods. This supports the council's priority to listen to residents, protect community facilities and focus on cost and efficiency to make the right decisions at a ward level in a challenging financial environment.

Options

11. Having considered the final report at Appendix 1 and its associated annexes, the Executive may choose to amend and/or approve, or reject the recommendations arising from the review

Recommendation

12. Having considered the final report and its annexes, the Executive is recommended to approve the recommendations as set out in paragraphs 2 & 3 above.

    Reason: To conclude the Scrutiny Review in line with CYC Scrutiny procedures and protocols.

Contact Details

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Financial & HR Implications:
Mike Barugh,
Principal Accountant,
ACE Finance

Wards Affected: **All** ☑

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Appendix 1 – Ward Funding Scrutiny Review Final Report