

Report of the Director of People and Improvement

Review report: a new approach to city management

Purpose of Report

1. Members have asked in the 'policy prospectus' (the 12-month agreement made in May 2007 between the four Group Leaders on political management arrangements for the Council) to look at a new approach to city management, involving extended public consultation arrangements, improved communications with residents (including the introduction of a monthly news-sheet), development of devolved decision making arrangements for local communities and capacity building for the voluntary sector.
2. This paper reports on the scope and progress of the four parts of this, which are being managed across a number of different directorates within the Council.

Extended public consultation arrangements

3. We aim to ensure that consultation across the council is coordinated, understood and acted upon corporately through a new consultation strategy in the spring, written by the Head of Marketing and Communications.
4. Included in this strategy would be new methods of consultation that are becoming available to the council such as on-line consultations and the increased opportunities to understand the aspirations of neighbourhoods through the Neighbourhood Action Plans. The strategy will also cover the way we capture, and respond to, the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and other 'hard to reach' groups.
5. The strategy will contain a protocol defining the quality and ethical standards required of all council consultation.

Improved communications

6. The key focus for improved communications is the production of a monthly publication to residents. Members gave approval in principle to a report on 24 July 2007 that concentrated on improving direct communications with the people of York by establishing a monthly council publication delivered to every household. On 25 September they said that to allow for financial and procurement issues to be resolved, and for a longer term approach to be taken to commissioning the civic newspaper, there should be a full Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) procurement, using either the open or restricted route. The financial and procurement issues are currently being taken forward.
7. The Head of Marketing and Communications will present a paper to Corporate Management Team (CMT) in January 2007, which will look at ways to ensure a greater understanding of the council's work, and thereby improve residents' perception of the council. This will feed into external and internal communications strategies as part of the Organisational Effectiveness Programme in the spring of 2008. These strategies will be designed to link explicitly the council's communications to the corporate strategy.

Development of devolved decision making arrangements for local communities

8. The Director of Neighbourhood Services is taking a report to the Executive on 29 January. This will deal with Neighbourhood Management within the council in light of the Local Government White Paper – Strong and Prosperous Communities, and will seek guidance from members on the future delivery of neighbourhood management in York, taking into account the range of opportunities that presents. A major part of this will be the development of devolved decision making and members will be given several different options how this might be done.

Capacity building for the voluntary sector

9. The council has worked in partnership with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to make sure that the VCS voice is heard and supported in key citywide planning processes, such as the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement (LAA). There is the significant yearly funding from the council to VCS organisations, linked to grants for one-off projects or activities, discretionary rate relief and service level agreements, although this funding has come under some budgetary pressure in recent years. Some directorates also contract with voluntary and community organisations for the provision of specific services. Engagement with the VCS is via the York Compact which aims to encourage good working relationships between the Council and VCS organisations for the benefit of all in York. It is based

on the national Compact between Central Government and VCO organisations.

10. Within the current LAA there is a commitment to support the growth of the sector and consider the proportion of services in selected public service areas delivered by the VCS. The council remains committed to the VCS and is interested to see what role it could take in encouraging the development of social enterprises in accordance with national governments drive to develop the growth of the 'Third Sector'.
11. A City Strategy review of the council's funding of the VCS will look at how to build capacity in the sector as matter of urgency. The review will be completed in the context of the Without Walls (the city's Local Strategic Partnership) and the ongoing refresh the Community Strategy. It will also examine whether funding is consistent across all aspects of the council.

Delivery of services at community level

12. Within the Group Leaders' policy prospectus there is a request for a report on the management of estates at a local level. This will examine options for a more joined-up approach at neighbourhood level so that members of the public can be sure of a co-ordinated response on issues relating to street scene problems, repairs, tackling anti-social behaviour and community safety. This is a complex network of crucial services and a report is currently scheduled to come to the Executive on 29th January subject to the agreement of the Group Leaders.

Consultation

13. CMT and officers from the directorates involved have discussed this issue.

Options

14. As this paper reports scope and progress, this section is not applicable.

Analysis

15. As this paper reports scope and progress, this section is not applicable.

Corporate strategy

16. The following elements of the corporate strategy are particularly relevant to this paper:
 - the corporate value 'delivering what our customers want'

- the direction statement 'our ambition is to be clear about what we will do to meet the needs of our communities, and then to deliver the best quality services we can afford'
- the direction statement 'we will listen to communities and ensure that people have a greater say in deciding local priorities'.

Implications

17. As this paper reports scope and progress, this section is not applicable.

Financial

18. As this paper reports scope and progress, this section is not applicable.

Human Resources (HR)

19. As this paper reports scope and progress, this section is not applicable.

Equalities

20. As this paper reports scope and progress, this section is not applicable.

Legal

21. There are no legal implications

Crime and Disorder

22. There are no crime and disorder implications

Information Technology (IT)

23. There are no IT implications

Other

24. There are no other implications

Risk Management

25. There are no risk management implications

Recommendations

26. To ask members if these four issues cover the entire scope of what is set out in the policy prospectus.

27. To note the status of each of the elements.

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