

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

Street Level Services and Area Based Working

Summary

1. This paper sets out a refreshed vision for street level services. It describes a new model for street level services and proposes Area based working in line with the More for York transformation proposals.

Background

2. Since 2003, a range of initiatives have been undertaken under the 'York Pride' umbrella. Progress has been made in cleaning York up - we have improved local environmental cleanliness as measured by BV199/NI195, made services more responsive to customers by developing the York Pride Action Line (which became a key part of the York Contact Centre), developed the Street Environment Service to solve street level environmental problems, and taken steps to encourage residents to take pride in the city and their communities through the use of campaigns, community engagement and devolved budgets.
3. In 2007, a number of environmental services in Neighbourhood Services (Waste, Street Cleansing, Street Environment, Pest Control, Drainage) became accessible via the York Contact Centre. Since mid-2008 Neighbourhood Services has been working with the Easy @ York team to review work processes in these areas to bring further benefits for customers through more efficient working. The outcome is a proposal to develop a more efficient and sophisticated system to manage the work and our responsiveness to customer demand in these service areas, and to move through a series of stages to area based management.
4. A number of further NS services (Highway Maintenance, Parking Services, Licensing) are to be reviewed in Phase 2 of the Easy @ York Programme.
5. Further analysis this spring suggests that the directorate should undertake a rebranding exercise to consolidate a range of practical operational services under a single strong brand. The branding exercise would encourage customer contact via the YCC.
6. York has a successful tradition of devolving budget and decision making to local areas – particularly through ward committees. Currently DCLG sees York's approach to participatory budgeting as best practice. Recent legislation has shown the government's aim of pushing localism further. The

Easy @ York refresh has been expanded to consider options for how stronger more consistent area management could overlay the set of more efficiently delivered street level services. The aim is to consolidate the benefits to the customer, while protecting the current strength of our local decision making.

7. NKA has adopted the Easy @ York refresh work in Neighbourhood Services, and their paper is consistent with the approach being taken here.

Reinvigorating York Pride: A new Vision for Street Level Services.

8. This paper asks members to agree a new vision for street level services that will build on the work done under the York Pride initiative. We believe that the proposals in this paper can reinvigorate the ideas behind York Pride, namely:
 - Efficient services that are easy to access, delivered right first time, working together for the good of residents. Delivering clean, green, safe and strong neighbourhoods.
 - Residents exercising control through local democratic frameworks.
 - Services that encourage local ownership and contribution.
9. Members are asked to support a 5 element vision
 - A more efficient end to end approach to delivering street level services. This will speed up response to customer demand, improve feedback to customers, deliver more efficient working, and build trust in the single point of contact (YCC) model among members. Members will get a quicker more responsive service through using the YCC.
 - A comprehensive rebranding of street level services to bring them all within a single brand, which will then be marketed strongly to encourage customer contact.
 - Stronger area management arrangements. Senior staff empowered to act on behalf of areas of the city, to sort out issues and problems, and to support residents and councillors to improve local conditions.
 - Once area management is in place, to use it to strengthen the approach to devolved budgeting and local decision making, and to reach out to empower local communities' with respect to local services.
10. The design of new systems, mobile technology solutions, redesign of YCC processes, and redesign of business process in current service areas will deliver an improved, more responsive set of services by the end of this year. Members are asked to agree the vision set out in this paper so that we can move to detailed design work around rebranding and area management. If members agree then we will continue to work up detailed proposals to show how the service can deliver the various elements of the vision.

Case Study – Rotherham ‘StreetPride’ Service

11. The Interim Director of Neighbourhood Services was previously Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration Services at Rotherham MBC (2002 – 2007), and was responsible for Rotherham MBC’s StreetPride initiative, which delivered on all of this agenda. Rotherham StreetPride was integral to delivering the council’s corporate plan priorities of safe, alive, achieving, proud and learning. The initiative had a number of elements. Most importantly a number of street level services were branded together under a single strong memorable ‘StreetPride’ brand. The following services were covered:

Abandoned vehicles, devolved budgets, dogs, environmental crime, fly posting, fly tipping, graffiti, grounds maintenance, highways, litter, parking, rights of way, road safety, street wardens, street lighting, street works, traffic management, trees and woodlands, waste management and recycling, winter maintenance.

12. All of these services were branded as one. Literature was common to them all – with service standards published together. Staff employed by the Council and by private sector contractors wore the same uniforms. Vehicles had the same livery. Banners were produced and placed around the borough. All literature, vehicles, banners and marketing carried a single contact point. The branding and marketing was aimed at encouraging contact from residents. Work was done to ensure that staff across the services shared a common vision for the borough (clean, green, safe, strong, customer focused, community oriented).
13. A second element was that Rotherham implemented an area management approach. This meant splitting the borough into 3 large areas, each with a senior Area Manager, whose role was to manage a devolved spend within the area (about £500k per area per year). This devolved spend came from within existing service area base budgets. The Area Managers were limited on how that money could be spent (ie they could spend from a controlled menu). This allowed for local flexibility in the delivery of service, and allowed the local community to influence technical design. The Area Managers managed some of the (larger) services in their area (as a larger authority – RMBC had three depots), while some (smaller) services continued to be managed across the Borough. Area Managers were accountable to area assemblies.
14. A third element was to encourage community participation. Individuals within the community were brought on board as Street Pride Champions and encouraged/trained to act as eyes and ears for the council within their community. They were trained to encourage customer contact, and they were empowered to sort minor issues out as well as just reporting those problems.
15. In the first two years, Rotherham achieved the following for its StreetPride initiative – all at nil/less cost:

- Investors in People, ISO9001, ISO14001.
- LGC Award for the Environment
- Customer satisfaction above 90%
- Near 100% Councillor satisfaction
- 46% reduction in the fear of crime
- Beacon award for Better Public Places after 3 years – leading to visits from over 35 councils.

Possible in York?

16. The government's localism agenda, and the new corporate strategy lend weight to an attempt to reinvigorate the local environmental agenda through introducing an initiative similar to Rotherham StreetPride in York. In York a similar initiative would support delivery of the safer city, sustainable city and inclusive city themes from the corporate strategy. The Easy @ York refresh (with NKA in clear support) provides a strong mechanism to deliver the system and organisational changes required.
17. We have strong foundations to build on. Performance across environmental services is stronger than it was a number of years ago. York has taken significant steps in the past towards a streetpride type initiative, but has not fully committed to this type of approach as a whole. Examples include:
 - Contact with environmental services has gone through the call centre since February 2007. We estimate that only about 40% of demand currently goes through that channel, the other 60% of contact is by way of other channels including direct to staff, website, letter etc. This results in fragmented delivery and limits our ability to record, track and monitor performance.
 - YorkPride and York Pride Action Lines brands have been used, but not particularly well defined, controlled or adopted consistently across services sufficiently to become a strong enough brand.
 - York has a history of devolved budgeting and community engagement through ward committees. Neighbourhood Action Plans have been developed for each ward committee area but they may have had limited impact and influence over service delivery.

Delivering the Vision

18. If Members support the 5-element vision at para 9, then the More for York and Easy @ York refresh project will deliver that change. The next sections of the report describe how the vision would be delivered.

19. The Easy @ York refresh project has been underway since mid 2008. The project has been reviewing how we deliver key street level services (waste management, neighbourhood pride, street environment, pest control and drainage). We have now got to the point of discussing a 'To-Be' design document that sets out a 3-stage system and organisational redesign.
- In Stage 1 the business is redesigned to ensure that customer demand can be dealt with as quickly as possible.
 - Stage 2 introduces a limited area management role.
 - Stage 3 is a major restructure to introduce a full area management delivery structure.

Delivering the Vision: Stage 1 of the NS Easy Refresh Project

20. The key principles behind the design of stage 1 are:
- To base our service delivery around set schedules that are owned by NS and managed through a scheduling system within CRM.
 - To operate YCC as the single point of entry for all customers (including, Councillors)
 - To send as much reactive work as possible from the YCC to as near to the front line operatives as possible – the aim is that 80% of contact goes direct to front line operatives.
 - To invest in the use of mobile devices for front line staff.
21. The scheduling software is key. It will allow the service to control the schedules (e.g. NS would own and control the CRM content about bin rounds, grass cutting schedules, new bin delivery schedules, street cleansing schedules etc). Operatives would update progress against their scheduled work as they complete it. YCC staff could then see in real time what work had been done and what was due to be done and when, and could inform the customer as appropriate. If the customer still needed a reactive service, that demand could be placed intelligently within the schedule. This will reduce the level of ad-hoc reactive work required. This approach will allow for more efficient working, speed up response times, improve the YCC's ability to provide a quality front end service, and improve feedback and reassurance to customers. Stage 1 is a significant change programme that will enhance the quality of service being delivered.
22. Other benefits are to:
- simplify and clarify policies.
 - where possible remove contradictory policies – for example where a policy drive one team to remove an environmental problem as quickly as possible, while another team needs it to remain while they investigate with a view to taking enforcement proceedings.

- introduce payment in advance for services such as bulky waste collection, reducing the level of invoicing and the need to take cash in the field.
- introduce call out charges in limited areas as appropriate.
- sort out weaknesses inherent in the initial end to end work processes – for example to ensure that call centre scripting is correct
- provide a work management system for the Street Environment and Enforcement Service.
- provide improved management information and reporting capacity.

Delivering the Vision: Rebranding

23. There are a plethora of brands within Neighbourhood Services – and even more across the council as a whole. The idea would be to rebrand waste management, street cleansing, street environment, drainage, pest control, commercial waste and highway maintenance into one group. Vehicles, staff uniforms, literature, publications would be revised to ensure a common thread. A set of service standards would be produced and published. All of these services would be contacted via one number – ie the York Call Centre. Over time, if and when further services are business process reengineered – they can then be added to the brand.
24. If members agree then firm proposals can be developed.

Delivering the Vision: Stages 2&3 of the Easy Refresh Project

25. The refresh suggests introducing area management in two stages. Stages 2 and 3 could be undertaken alongside the system and service redesign work at stage 1. Stage 3 does not depend on stage 2 being completed.
26. Stage 2 represents a reallocation of responsibility within the existing organisational structure to introduce 'Area Managers'. These managers would retain a primary responsibility for services that continue to operate across the city (e.g. Waste, Neighbourhood Pride, Civil Engineering etc). They would also take on a secondary responsibility for overseeing an area. Their area role would be to act as a trouble-shooter– somebody to bring together agencies and directorates and seek solutions to intractable or complex problems. They would be helped in their area role by the Street Environment and Enforcement Officers who would continue to monitor environmental condition, quality of work and deal with enforcement issues.
27. Stage 3 of the design is more radical. It gives Area Managers primary responsibility for ensuring the quality of the range of environmental services delivered in their area by the cross-city service teams. They would retain the oversight/troubleshooting role regarding longer terms strategic issues identified in stage 2. They would support ward committees and work closely with local Councillors. Responsibility for delivering the services across the city would be lodged elsewhere within the structure.

28. Stage 3 is a departure for Neighbourhood Services. While operational staff in the 'in scope' service areas would see little change, it would have implications for all managerial and supervisory staff within the 'in scope' service areas. It would also potentially have implications for the Neighbourhood Management Unit.
29. We are now examining how the services provided by the Neighbourhood Management Unit would fit within stages 2 and 3 of the new proposed model. There is potential to enhance the significance of Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs), by delivering variations to the standard level of services to meet the priorities and needs set out by the community in their NAP. This would place the NAP as a pivotal document in the community, and it would be essential to retain and enhance the strength of current devolved budgeting arrangements (over 8000 residents engaged each year, DCLG pathfinder on participatory budgeting).
30. One area of obvious and significant risk for the area management approach is the relationship between the Area Manager and the Ward Councillors in their area. The Area Manager could become the receptor for every Councillor issue or complaint within that zone – regardless of the content or seriousness. But the system would only work successfully if all Councillor issues and complaints were routed through the contact centre. The second potential problem is that the Area Manager would need to avoid being tasked by Councillors directly. As the scheduling system being built beds down to provide a quicker response and greater feedback, then direct tasking requests may go away over time.
31. The Easy @ York refresh project board is working to develop more detailed proposals for stages 2 and 3, and to decide whether to recommend to progress step by step and thus to allow staff to gain confidence in the scheduler/mobile working system, or whether to push forward to introduce area working alongside the service redesign. The relative risks and benefits of changing quickly or slowly are not yet adequately understood. However given the requirement within the More for York report to make change quicker, one option would be to move to stage 2 or stage 3 by April 2010.

Delivering the Vision – Stronger Area Management

32. York has a tradition of devolving budget and decision making to local areas – particularly through ward committees. 18 Ward committees cover 22 wards. Each ward committee has a Neighbourhood Action Plan (NAP) which sets out local priorities. At present the NAPs act as Ward Charters. Each ward committee has a devolved budget which can be spent at local discretion. Last year over 8000 people helped decide how to spend devolved budgets. Each ward committee also has a multi-agency ward planning team which runs the ward committee agenda, and acts as a forum for progressing issues in the local area. Stages 2 and 3 described above should strengthen this existing structure by importing additional senior management capacity.
33. A final step would be to extend devolved funding to turn the NAPs from Ward Charters into real ward service action plans. The strong Area Managers

envisaged at stage 3 could have larger devolved budgets comprising funding sliced from existing service base budgets. The Area Managers could then usefully start to vary local service standards, in line with locally stated priorities within the NAPs. This would bring advantages in terms of the localism agenda, but would be administratively difficult if budgets remained at the Ward Committee level. More work is needed to develop detailed proposals for this final step.

Geographical Analysis

34. Early analysis has been done to understand how we could group wards into zones. An initial analysis has used data around environmental performance, deprivation, level of demand for environmental issues, and taken into account the variable likely demand on the Area Managers' time from enquiries generated by Councillors and Parishes. Each ward committee area can then be scored. Then a range of options can be put forward based on these scores. This analysis is very basic at present – but it has adhered to some minimal principles, to ensure that areas were roughly equal in terms of likely demand. The analysis would need to be shared widely and, crucially, given a common sense check by operational managers.
35. As an example, we could decide to have five Area Managers (at either stage 2 or stage 3). The analysis suggests that we could group wards into five with a central area made up of either two or three wards, and the remaining words grouped into four areas.
36. If members agree the vision, then we would do more work to define the Area Manager role, and following that to decide how many areas were needed, what those areas should be, and whether those groupings would then be workable.

Costs and Timetable

37. The aim will be to deliver the vision on a cost-neutral basis.
38. Stage 1 of the vision will be delivered by the service and the Easy@york programme working together by the end of 2009 calendar year. Further work is needed to set out a detailed timetable for the other elements of the vision.
39. If members agree the vision in principle, we will develop a detailed implementation plan to show how much of the change could be completed by the ideal date of April 2010. If it is not feasible to complete all the change by that date, we would set out the elements of the change to come on stream at defined points after that date.

Corporate Priorities

40. The proposals discussed in this paper would allow a better contribution to delivering the sustainable city, safer city and inclusive city agendas. It will impact particularly on the cleanliness of the local environment. It also sets

out clarity on area based working in line with the More for York transformation programme.

Implications

41. Human Resources (HR). Implications for a range of staff within the relevant services in NS. The Easy NS Refresh project has a dedicated 'People' workstream that will undertake the necessary consultation.
42. Equalities: None
43. Legal: None
44. Crime and Disorder: None
45. Information Technology (IT): None
46. Property: None
47. Other: None

Risk Management

48. There are no risks associated with members agreeing a vision for the street level services in York. The risks associated with members agreeing to move towards that vision using a 5-stage delivery programme, and agreeing that officers would work up a detailed delivery programme have been assessed at a net level below 16 – the likelihood that a further report will not be brought back to members for agreement detailing the delivery programme to be used is considered 'remote'.

Recommendations

49. That members support the principle of area based working and the street level services proposed.

That a further report be submitted to members outlining the detail of areas and options for a new brand.

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Report Approved

Date 10/06/09

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report