

Feedback from Individual Cllrs

Generally the liaison with communities officers works well. However the response form other sections of the authority to them (and to me as a ward councillor) could be improved.

My belief is that the present system of distributing ward funding is unnecessarily complicated, and is causing Officers to undertake work on administration which is completely over the top! It is also causing difficulty in explaining the process to the end users and indeed to Councillors.

I acknowledge that every ward is different.

In the case of Rural West York, our Ward is spread over a significant area stretching from the A64 at Askham Bryan in the South West to beyond Skelton in the North. Within that area there are eight different villages, and seven Parish Councils, therefore what is right for one is perhaps not right for another. They each have their issues and Chris Steward and I attempt to visit every Parish Council Meeting between us. Whilst some share services such as bus routes, shops, health provision etc., others such as Skelton have no such sharing and have separate priorities. Conversely however, other Wards within the City Boundary have no Parish boundaries, but do have other institutions such as Planning Panels, Neighbourhood Committee's, and other organisations which work with and for communities. My point is that there is a difficulty defining a policy for City Centre, Suburban, Semi-Rural and Rural Wards.

I would suggest that we build on the distribution using the system we employed previously and improving it. I list below a potential way forward:

1. Establish a general policy framework within which funds can be allocated. i.e. Nothing commercial or personal, community based etc
2. Bids for funding accepted from appropriate organisations. Applications can be published in the Ward Newspaper once a year, and submitted.
3. Ward Councillors, in association with Parish Council representatives and Officers meet to discuss applications and accept or discard.
4. Ward Councillors as elected representative to take the final decision on grants, although this I would expect to be in line with the above, and fair to all parts of the Ward.
5. Ward Officers to administrate, audit, and provide the link between the Authority and applicants.
6. No differential between funding pots. Monies should not be in silos
7. All grants within the framework and Ward priorities.
8. Ability to carry money forward, and any substantial grants can be given equitably. (Past grants have provided lighting for Copmanthorpe and Askham Richard kerbing, but because of the sums they were allocated reduced money the following year).

Within my ward there are a number of community groups covering a range of interests and social contact along with of course two Parish Councils. The groups are more or less financially OK, however in the past year a couple of groups have received small grants and also posters have been displayed in the village advising groups of the availability of grants with very little response.

The issue of resident's priorities can be distilled into a number of areas as follows:-

1. Responsible parking especially on Race Days
2. The policing of "Dog Fouling" in other words more positive and visible enforcement.
3. General tidiness and appearance of the village
4. In the fullness of time no doubt Sunday bus service
5. In the summer months overgrown hedges adjacent to footpaths and at highways junctions
6. Road safety coupled with traffic density and size of lorries passing through the village.
7. Street lighting in Sim Balk Lane (Cost to install in excess of £1000,00)

As can be seen, resident's priorities are somewhat fragmented but these are issues which do come to light from time to time and in truth other than point 3 not a lot the ward funding can deal with.

I have set my target to spend money on improving the environment by using Brunswick Organic Nursery to place planters and hanging baskets. Which have been welcomed by residents. It is also intended to have a number of fruit trees planted around the ward.

Speed of dealing with grants needs to be simplified and speeded up so that grants are given closer to the application submission.

Finally the apparent bureaucracy around the ward highways part of Ward Funding is in my opinion cumbersome and long winded, schemes on which to spend the money could be directly dealt with by the various depts. of highways etc. Rather grind it's way through the system as suggested in the briefing note on such spend (Factsheet no 15)

Ward meetings are not generally well supported which is a disappointment, a few residents often turn up usually with a specific issue and of course two or three Parish Councillors turn up to criticise and try to help spend the "Money" when in fact they as a Parish Council have pretty large reserves.

Finally as a resident of the village I do keep my ear to the ground so to speak and also use social media to find out what the concerns of residents are.

The system probably needs a complete overhaul as the distribution of funding is quite complicated and, therefore, causes a considerably unnecessary workload for Officers and Councillors alike.

It must also be appreciated that every Ward is very different. I have four villages within my Ward, Deighton off the A19, Naburn by the Ouse, Wheldrake and Elvington. Each one has very different needs and challenges. I endeavour to attend every Parish Council meeting, but having three every month and one bi-monthly does make that very difficult, but not impossible, however, my attendance does mean that I am aware of issues as they arise.

With regards to the grants monies, I feel that the elected Ward member should make the final decision on grants as they are the ones abreast of problems at source with representatives from Parish Councils and Officers who could meet to approve or reject. The monies should be in 'one pot' and distributed according to need, not split into different categories.

Stage 1 Responses - Identifying Ward Priorities

Feedback

Frequent changes of Neighbourhood Officer allocation did not help build up local knowledge – hopefully this situation will now settle down

Our recent Neighbourhood Officers have been very responsive

The ward profile is readily available and could be used better to plan future work

This took time to ascertain and digest and added to the initial set up of this whole process. Staffing has changed and we are two new councillors out of 3 who needed to get familiar with our ward; which took time.

We have identified our ward priorities, but they don't easily relate to the available information.

Agree - New people in new roles (Cllrs & officers) so lack of local knowledge

This can be made to work but relies on officers' and members' understanding of what data is being provided and how it is updated e.g. ward profile info. How often is this updated and how arte Cllrs expected to know when this has happened - a simple email would be suffice. Officers need to be more pro-active in their wards and let Cllrs know when they are in the ward. Some worthwhile training would be really useful here – I'm talking about the running of a scrutiny operation at a practical level rather than some arcane discussion of the merits/demerits of scrutiny.

Officer/Member relationships and learning to work together (ie in a different way) need to be examined and reviewed if a constructive approach is to be achieved. Split wards bring their own set of problems - officers need training to facilitate those difficult relationships and to provide Cllrs a with the impetus to co-operate i.e. creating an atmosphere for co-operation. It takes time to agree ward priorities. We have had 4 officers in support in the last 15 months and there has been little of no handover each time. Officers also need training on communicating with the public.

Agree - New people in new

roles (Cllrs & officers) so lack of local knowledge

I have found it helpful to have the wider ward team involved in discussing priorities for the local area.

We have received excellent support from our Community Involvement Officers, who have anticipated issues and dealt with them professionally and punctually.

Our Ward Priorities were discussed and agreed by the Ward Team. We plan to review them at our next Ward Team meeting.

<p>It is some times difficult to assess without having the knowledge or past experience of what would be classed as a ward priority .</p> <p>Agree -</p> <p><i>Officer responses not always timely and helpful – need to keep chasing</i></p> <p>I don't feel confident that our ward priorities were discussed or set with any real sense of importance. It felt more of a 'tick box' exercise rather than any real consideration of what was urgent or needed for the people of the ward. The reasons behind could be:</p> <p>i) Sense of rush to implement changes to the system</p> <p>ii) Inconsistency on the approach from ward-to-ward – heard different community involvement officers worked in different ways</p> <p>iii) Changing goal-posts – some budgets were single year, then carried over suddenly – due to evolutionary nature of implementation</p> <p>iv) Ward profile simply a document – no deeper analysis available, offered or undertaken, or encouraged to be undertaken.</p> <p>Do we have access to deeper officer resource to ask for this?</p> <p>Agree - <i>Officer responses not always timely and helpful – need to keep chasing</i></p> <p>Agree - <i>Difficulty accessing and interpreting ward profile information</i></p>
<p>Not always aware of community activity or needs if it has not been drawn to our attention. Some groups/parts of ward have louder voices than others so tend to be noticed more.</p> <p>Agree - <i>New people in new roles (Cllrs & officers) so lack of local knowledge</i></p> <p>Agree - <i>Officer responses not always timely and helpful – need to keep chasing</i></p> <p>Agree - <i>Difficulty accessing and interpreting ward profile information</i></p>
<p>We have recently had a change of officer responsible for Guildhall Ward after our previous officer – Joe Ashton – left the council. It always takes time for a new person to catch up with things, and certainly get to know the ward.</p> <p>But I think we have a fast learner.</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>- <i>New people in new roles (Cllrs & officers) so lack of local knowledge</i></p>
<p>Ward profile info is ok but not necessarily helpful. Identified 3 themes with a number of possible priorities for each. Consulted on those priorities in order to narrow them down. 6 were agreed. Problem of consultees not really representative of ward - usual suspects and organised groups only. It has been difficult to manage the change in officer support staff and there were some handover issues. The team appears overstretched.</p>

Stage 2 Responses - Ward Committee Meetings

Feedback

Officers are very willing to attend meetings and very helpful when they do
We can usually all agree on dates for meetings if we look hard enough!
As ward councillors, we are in touch with each other regularly

A good variety of meeting formats and venues have been used in the past – the key seems to be having interesting topics of local relevance

We have suffered from occasional low attendance and under representation of certain sectors. On the whole we have been effective at this element probably because we are 3 Labour councillors in one ward and had few of the issues cited in the questionnaire.

Publicising Ward Committee meetings is difficult. Perhaps a budget for flyers could be agreed.

Publicity has in my experience been pathetic. It's no good putting a few leaflets up the week before a public Ward Committee meeting. Ward Cllrs need to be more involved in this – I'm sure others would be willing to join in. Working in a split ward brings its own problems and disadvantages which, in my experience, many officers totally fail to understand and address.

After some initial struggles, we as ward colleagues manage to discuss and agree on meeting dates and agendas, though a planned programme of dates and accompanying outline of agendas has yet to be achieved. Some clear standards for communications between officers and members need to be outlined, discussed and agreed. Logistical support needs improving - officers need training. Social media is not the answer to everything. We need to give more notice of events and longer lead in times. Setting the meeting agenda needs to be done in conjunction with officers not solely by Cllrs. Minutes of previous meetings need providing sooner not just a few days before the next meeting.

Ward Committee meetings need to be publicised in a variety of ways, and not just through social media.

The Community Involvement Officer supporting my meetings provides very useful support in facilitating meetings and has a good understanding of the local community. Some Councillors do promote their Ward Committees individually, but we need to ensure that this activity overlaps to other Council publications such as 'Our City'.

I think we need to determine the dividing line between 'logistical support' and the Ward cllrs' responsibility to decide when and where. I've asked for work to be undertaken into booking a ward committee but no action taken – is this because in fact – as a councillor - I'M supposed to suggest the exact date, time, format, or should it be a collaborative process?

Because this approach is informal, the impetus is lost in ensuring a regular cycle of setting meetings during the municipal year.

I think this approach may work well for single member wards where there are only two people to co-ordinate. Where wards have three cllrs with different styles and/or different political parties, it's a recipe for indecision. I think that rather than the officer responsibility being simply 'logistical', there should be a more managerial aspect in ensuring the councillors live up to their responsibilities and ensuring a regular cycle of meetings rather than waiting for us to make our minds up.

The 'early feedback' above seems to place a lot of initial 'blame' on the cllrs, but this appears to not understand the difficulties in co-ordinating three "leaders" – we are not a hive mind! That's why the officer should take lead. Even once we are at the ward committee meeting, I have felt a bit adrift in not fully having all the information necessary at hand to do the feedback, priorities and funding aspects.

Agree - Cllrs do not collectively agree a date for the meeting

Agree - Cllrs to not respond to emails or telephone calls

We have received excellent officer support.

We have publicised Ward Committee meetings via a number of routes – our newsletter, community noticeboards, websites, Facebook, Twitter. We support moves to improve communication with residents, eg through the new My Account functionality.

We have encountered no issues with agreeing meeting dates.

We have trialled some different formats for Ward Committee meetings, and have found that our residents prefer a more 'formal' structured meeting, where residents can hear others' views and contribute to discussions.

It is very difficult to collectively agree to be able to meet sometimes to arrange the format as to how a meeting should progress and in what style.

I believe for more residents to engage and attend Ward meetings they need to be updated ie venues changed from Church Halls to perhaps a local cafe or a room in a pub.

Agendas need to be more interesting and we need to try to update the way we contact residents emails as opposed to leaflets (if available)

Attending meetings is not usually a favourite activity for residents so attendance tends to be poor. Those that do attend tend to be the same faces with their own issues and priorities so the same subjects can be discussed every time. The idea of a Ward Committee meeting does not seem to be the best way of obtaining a representative sample of residents so can't be an effective way of learning about priorities. We do use social media to publicise but does not result in greatly increased attendance.

Agree - Specialist officers not attending ward meetings when required

Agree - Cllrs do not collectively agree a date for the meeting

Agree - Cllrs to not respond to emails or telephone calls

The only group who are often difficult to get to attend ward meetings are the police. They have much less flexibility with their shift patterns, and so unless the date of the meeting is built around their timetables they cant always be there.

Where the meeting is held influences the level of attendance - some venues in the ward have accessibility issues and some are not affordable. We have a rota for chairing. We have held committee stlye meetings and run workshops with differing results. Residents expectations are sometimes not realistic. We have also done walkabouts to gather casework. Range of officers and external reps invited e.g. Police but attendance has not always been good. To help address officer attendance issues, videos/presentations could be produced for use in multiple wards. Publicising meetings is also difficult

Stage 3 Responses - Ward Funding

Feedback

We have not tried cross ward funding any schemes but would be prepared to consider doing so. We have not had any badgering by city wide organisations

We have had no comments re the new process of applying for funding which seems to work well. We have had no problems with collectively agreeing on ward funding spend. There have been few delays

Councillors visit funded groups anyway in the course of their ward work

We have not had experience of trying to implement a complex scheme

Other than the changes to this by CYC staff we have managed our budgets relatively well and those seeking funds have had a relatively straight forward time of it. We have not had any issues with collective agreement or indecision but have as yet received limited information on accountability. Much of that is down to the fact that this has been slow to roll out due to changes to the process, late inception of the process and necessary time between meetings.

The new approach to asking city wide organisations to work in our ward will be very useful. We ask every grant recipient to confirm what they've done with the funding, and whether they've delivered their planned outcomes. The funding for highways work is so small in comparison with typical costs that it's almost not worth having!

I am ignoring the early feedback responses here – these are essentially negative. The system is perfectly workable but it needs competent management from an officer perspective – after all officers are the 'drivers' of this approach from an administrative point of view. I must say that the provision of effective management of the neighbourhood support team has appeared to be an incredibly intractable problem. This stage is haphazard at best. Communication is poor. Cllrs need to be kept informed so that they can respond to queries from applicants. We need to know when an application has been signed off and passed on for processing and we need to know when the funding has been released.

The system should be as simple as possible to give Councillors the flexibility to allocate grants, commission projects, and put forward ideas for Highways schemes. I like the idea of developing cross-ward funding solutions.

Highways Officers need the capacity to give costings and options for highways schemes.

Agree - *Information on costings for schemes - some schemes turn out to be so complex that they appear to break the system*

<p>There's something fundamentally missing in the division of responsibilities above: advertising the application process. Do groups know what's available? Are you relying 100% on councillors putting forward ideas? If so, then this is a recipe for vanity funding on what the cllr considers important. (or good for their voters) rather than what's right for the ward priorities.</p> <p>The result is that the ward funding becomes just a grant scheme for charitable groups to get extra funding. When the "devolution" of funding to ward was announced, the rationale was so that local people could decide how to spend money in their wards according to local priorities – NOT councillors' own vanity and NOT as a grants scheme. Again, I feel the officer list of responsibilities lets themselves down – I do feel that the officers have the opportunity to be much more than simply an admin assistant – they can, alongside the councillors, be the hub and heart of their areas.</p> <p><i>Agree - How to proceed when</i></p>	<p><i>there is no collective agreement on how to spend the ward money</i></p> <p><i>Agree - How do delays in the decision making process affect organisations</i></p> <p><i>Agree - How to Cllrs maintain contact with funded groups to ensure accountability / value for money</i></p> <p>As a Ward Team we have sought to provide the space for discussion and agreement on funding bids, going back to bidders to request more information where necessary. This has worked well in enabling us to build consensus. Local voluntary organisations seem happy with the way things are going. Where there have been time-critical bids for funding, we have circulated these by correspondence for review.</p> <p>Successful bidders attend Ward Team meetings, so there is a feedback loop there. We also ask bidders to present at Ward Committee meetings so that the wider community are kept informed.</p> <p>We recognise that there is a finite amount of officer capacity, and feel that the more streamlined approach to securing quotes should help.</p> <p><i>Information on costings for schemes - some schemes turn out to be so complex that they appear to break the system.</i></p>	<p><i>Agree -</i></p> <p>Too long a process from ideas to funds been processed.</p> <p>Organisations need a quicker response in case they need to seek alternative funding. Easier and quicker to get costings perhaps a network system between wards so things do not get duplicated.</p>
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Difficult to get genuine community groups to apply. Some city-wide organisations seem to think they have a right to large sums from various wards. Members seem to be expected to have the expertise and time to instigate and run projects when this is really a task that should be done by somebody with the appropriate professional skills. There seems to be no requirement for the spending to be accountable or any performance indicators to evaluate success or otherwise. It appears to be a case of handing the money over then no more questions asked by officers. Resources have to be being taken away from city wide schemes where need could be prioritised - resulting in wards desperately looking for ways of spending money which could better have been used where most needed.

Agree - *Cross Ward funding – how to make it work - Joint commissioning is great but huge resource & management issues*

Agree - *City wide organisations badgering wards* Agree -

How to proceed when there is no collective agreement on how to spend the ward money

Agree - *How do delays in the decision making process affect organisations* Agree -

How to Cllrs maintain contact with funded groups to ensure accountability / value for money

It has always seemed to me that many organisations do not work exclusively in one ward – even if tied to a local community these will often cross ward boundaries. So useful to in some cases to get an agreed policy with a neighbouring ward. Eg we had a useful meeting with Micklegate councillors about how to manage City Centre issues around cutting the grass on the city walls, and managing city centre flower beds. But I do think these are not always easy to arrange. I do find some of the tight criteria around what can and cannot be funded difficult to work within. It might be more sensible to have a system of making these funding applications to a central pot that could process them all regardless of limitations as to ward benefit.

Agree - *Cross Ward funding – how to make it work - Joint commissioning is great but huge resource & management issues*

Agree - *City wide organisations badgering wards although I would not call it “badgering”*

Agree - *How do voluntary organisations feel about the new process of applying for ward funding*

Application form for funding could be improved - it should ask which priority/ objective it aims to achieve. Form should also include targets so that providers know how to record their performance for reporting back. Cllrs would benefit from feedback form officers on what would be considered value for money and from officer recommendations. It would also be helpful if each ward page contained monthly funding spends. Group who have bid for funding need to be given regular updates on their applications.

Stage 4 Responses - Ward Action Plans

Feedback

Tracked progress is helpful as would the tracking of spend per ward if it could be regularly reported to ward councillors

Talking has been appropriate and productive

Time scales are sometimes unclear but this can usually be resolved

This is a large amount of work especially when considered against our many other responsibilities. I am so behind on it that I am not even sure if we are on track and do not have the time to check so rely heavily on our staff support.

We haven't as yet attempted an action plan!

We do not have an Ward Action Plan. If one is to be effectively maintained and delivered, this requires far more work than has so far been put into the project by officers. It also requires training in communication and co-operation for members in split wards (officers might find this useful too)

Some consistency in officer support would be welcome – our ward has had 5 neighbourhood officers in the past 3 years and of these only 1 has been with us for any length of time. This has been a significant factor in the poor level of progress to date. Better preparation is needed ahead of ward team meetings and better communication. Cllrs need to be given a heads up of whats on facebook etc. A split ward will bring its own problems in defining an action plan but again these can be overcome. Driving the Action Plan will only happen if having an Action Plan is one of the objectives.

We should look at how we communicate to all Councillors. If factsheets aren't getting through, how do we share best practice – for example by publicising good ward action plans around wards and Councillors.

I've never seen a copy of a ward action plan – in any format. I didn't even know this was a requirement.

We don't have ward team meetings often enough for any real, accurate tracking of progress. I don't really have anything further to say on this because I think this action plan is probably non-existent in my ward, so none of the responsibilities listed above are therefore fulfilled.

<p>If this experience is the same elsewhere then it probably means ward funding is being allocated on basis of councillors' personal vanity.</p> <p><i>Lack of tracked progress makes it difficult for Cllrs/officers to keep partners engaged</i></p> <p><i>Agree - Too much talking without any action (relevant to all stages of the process)</i></p> <p><i>Agree - Timescales for schemes are not always clear</i></p>	<p>Agree - We have Ward Priorities which inform our consideration of funding bids and the schemes that we commission. We do not have a formal 'Action Plan'.</p> <p>Again this is the timescale involved, the longer the process is the more time is taken up by officers and Cllrs - Communication is key .</p> <p><u>Highlight to other Cllrs good positive plans put into action in wards across the city.</u></p> <p>More bureaucracy endlessly repeated in every ward. Lack of team members with the time and motivation to be actively involved. Officers desperately over-stretched trying to manage multiple wards.</p> <p><i>Agree - Lack of tracked progress makes it difficult for Cllrs/officers to keep partners engaged</i></p> <p><i>Agree - Too much talking without any action (relevant to all stages of the process)</i></p> <p><i>Agree - Timescales for schemes are not always clear</i></p>
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Stage 5 Responses - Ward Team Meetings

Feedback

Finding mutually convenient dates has sometimes been a challenge but has always been achieved.

Councillors have always been engaged in the process which works well

As parish as well as city councillors, this has not been a problem

Ward team members sometimes fluctuate but are usually representative and it is always good to welcome new faces round the table

Occasional meetings are missed by a councillor due to another engagement, but very few.

Same response as for stage 2.

Sometimes people don't attend ward team meetings, particularly when we're trying to deal with procedural actions, such as reviewing budgets.

People also don't want to be involved in identifying savings / cuts.

All of these matters can be handled, with a little co-operation and some patience, between officers and members.

But this requires a consistent support person and probably attending some training together.

It would be helpful for split wards to agree which member is to chair the Ward Team for say a municipal year

(chairing of Ward Committee meetings can still be done on a rotating basis). The circulating of meeting dates is

happening too late and choosing dates for the meetings and inviting the appropriate ward team members should be a joint officer/Cllr responsibility.

Councillors and officers need to continually work to encourage attendance at ward teams and Committees.

Councillors can for example consider giving a theme to their meetings or inviting specific people to attend.

The Parish Councils in my area are very positive and engaged with the new system.

Once again, I feel the division of responsibilities is unfair – especially as the officer is based in their role full-time, whilst councillors are working part-time.

Again also, the 'early feedback' focuses too much on Cllrs being the problem.

I really would like to see the Community Involvement Officers being Community Involvement Managers.

Sometimes I feel the officers' approach to multi or mixed member wards appears to treat them as a hive mind rather than three individuals with varying responsibilities. In a three member ward, the agreement of two members for anything should be sufficient.

Agree - Cllrs struggle to identify mutually convenient meeting dates

Agree - Officers struggle to set meetings up due to lack of Cllr engagement

<p>Ward Team meetings are constructive and enjoyable. They provide a platform for sharing information and issues, and are very valuable for the councillors in particular. We don't have parish councils, so it is an important forum for us.</p> <p>There is a Ward Team e-mail circulation list which is used to keep everyone informed in between meetings.</p> <p>I think if regular fixed dates were organised ie 1st Tuesday every 2mths, it would encourage attendance with guest speakers, demonstrations etc.</p> <p>Partners are expected to attend ward teams yet they may have involvement across various wards – they're expected to attend various meetings and maybe duplicating the work. Not a good use of the time of very busy partners.</p> <p><i>Agree - Cllrs struggle to identify mutually convenient meeting dates</i></p> <p><i>Agree - officers struggle to set meetings up due to lack of Cllr engagement</i></p> <p><i>Ward Teams are not representative of the community</i></p>	<p><i>Agree -</i></p>
<p>I think the issue around Ward Teams is difficult to nail. We have some regulars from the community who do come quite regularly, but they are not representative of the whole ward. We try to identify specific issues that will interest specific people, but it is not always easy to anticipate correctly, And there are large parts of the ward that have no representation and whose voice is not heard.</p> <p><i>Ward Teams are not representative of the community</i></p>	<p><i>Agree -</i></p>
<p>We upload action plan onto ward page after every team meeting. Turnout is usually around 5-12. Each meeting is focussed on a particular objective and meeting dates are diarised</p>	

Stage 6 Responses - Feedback to Residents

<p>Feedback</p>
<p>Notifying residents of the dates of ward meetings and agendas via council published documentation could be reviewed and improved</p>
<p>No problems here in getting information out via notice boards and social media</p>
<p>We have managed this as effectively as possible. Reading the 'Cllr Responsibility' notes I believe this is a completely unrealistic expectation given our many other commitments. We have really only been able to achieve this via ward meetings to those who attended and via staff support and if applicants attended other events we manage in the ward.</p>
<p>We involve all grant recipients in our ward team, and provide opportunities for groups to publicise their activities at ward committee meetings.</p>
<p><i>Need to improve the way we communicate with residents</i></p>
<p>Of course, this is necessary – but there's not much evidence of it so far. Officers might find it difficult to entrust members to "visit recipients of funding to ensure constant support and monitoring" unless the present officer/member relationship is changed.</p>
<p>I agree that case studies and reports should be provided more frequently on ward pages.</p>
<p>I think the onus of responsibility on the councillor(s) here is far too much and should be more informal. Sure, councillors can do informal sharing of information, but as "community involvement" officers, I do feel the engagement with recipients of funding should lie with the officers.</p>
<p>The application process should also be more automated in making one condition of funding a requirement that the recipient provide a report back to the ward team/committee on how funding has been used – with evidence.</p>
<p>I don't really understand how you can expect councillors to undertake "constant" support.</p>
<p><i>Agree - Need to improve the way we communicate with residents</i></p>
<p><i>Agree - Lack of understanding of who can get information on notice boards and the internet etc</i></p>
<p>We keep residents informed through a number of channels:</p>
<p>1. Ward Team and Ward Committee written reports on the Ward News page of the CYC website, along with regular councillor update reports</p>
<p>2. Our local newsletters</p>
<p>3. Engagement with community groups in the course of our councillor duties</p>
<p>4. Community noticeboards</p>
<p>We need to continually evaluate how we feed back to residents and ask their views.</p>

Don't think the notice boards are used to their full advantage due to out of date information, lack of information . Insufficient keys to allow more access to notice boards. Many look old and tatty. Not inviting to read. Need to communicate through a variety of ways ie social media ,websites local shops and noticeboards.

Not reasonable to expect members to be visiting recipients of funding – the scheme should be monitored but by people with relevant skills, and members cannot always offer any more than any amateur volunteer as they are not experts. Communication is always a problem – the public are often disinterested unless it is their particular enthusiasm. People are not guaranteed to read either notice boards or websites so unless we can get free press coverage it is very difficult.

Agree - Lack

of understanding of who can get information on notice boards and the internet etc

Guildhall ward is increasingly getting more difficult to reach all residents, in part because a significant part of it is not available to reach by traditional means such as putting a letter or notice through a door. We have a number of “gated” communities. Even communicating ward surgeries can be difficult to manage and a regular council bulletin is much missed.

Agree - Need to improve

Agree - Lack of understanding of

the way we communicate with residents

who can get information on notice boards and the internet etc

Roles Responses

<p>Feedback</p>
<p>We have not had any problems with any of these areas</p>
<p>I believe our residents who are aware of this process would say we have done fairly well at achieving the goals outlined but it has not been possible to engage with the entire ward on this and therefore can only be true of the objectives and problems that have been outlined to us.</p>
<p>Sometimes it's difficult to avoid role reversal between councillors and officers</p>
<p>This again needs a very different approach from both sides of the equation. There is limited officer support and members need to understand how best to work with and engage officers, just as much as officers do with members. Again, we need to define and then understand the different terms introduced above – not entirely sure how the role of “custodian” fits in this context, while the words “SUPPORT” and “LEADER” need to be seen in a more interchangeable way. Officers need training to be able to better liaise with other council staff</p>
<p>This is the fundamentally weak area of the whole new ward committee process. Being frank, the whole system is biased to one or both of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Councillors who have the time to work as councillors nearly full-time (e.g. don't have full-time careers or carer responsibilities) - Parished areas or areas with a multitude of residents associations – these areas are far more able to bring in volunteer resource, ideas generation and where to allocate funding. The roles are defined as 'SUPPORT' and 'LEADER' but everything I've read in the above boxes seem to point to not 'LEADER' but 'MANAGER' and this is also where the system fails, when you're expecting the councillors not to be figureheads but to take on the lion's share of co-ordination, engagement, administration and direction.
<p>My definition of leader is simply someone who guides and inspires a group of hard-working individuals, but doesn't manage and dictate. Additionally for the role of councillor, it says 'person-with-the-plan' which means the original language is fundamentally biased towards single member wards. Councillors in multi/mixed member wards are not a hive mind, and so this language needs to reflect that.</p>
<p>We understand our roles and that of officers.</p>
<p>Not always sure from whom or where to get information from.</p>
<p>Both Cllrs and Officers both benefit from communication, its a two way working partnership</p>

When Linsay Cunningham was the cabinet member for communities, she was leading on work around neighbourhood models of working – and moving towards, I believe, ‘model five’ where the Ward Team LEADS the work and the councillors may be chairing this or being part of this, but the neighbourhood group collectively works towards this end. I felt so strongly that this far better encourages community working and engagement. The system now introduced seems to go all the way back, regressively, to ‘model one’ where the audience may be sat in a theatre style seating arrangement whilst the councillors sits behind a table and dictate everything. I feel sad that this appears to be happening.

Agree - Cllrs not understanding their role

Agree - Cllrs have not got the time to fulfil their role

Agree - Not all Cllrs have the necessary skills

Agree - Confusion of roles

Agree - Cllrs awareness of supporting information/documents and access arrangements

What is expected of councillors is overwhelming and confusing. Being a councillor is not a full-time job and these expectations to be a project manager and monitor is too much to expect.

Agree - Cllrs not understanding their role

Agree - Cllrs have not got the time to fulfil their role

Agree - Not all Cllrs have the necessary skills

Agree - Confusion of roles

Agree - Cllrs awareness of supporting information/documents and access arrangements

The Cllr role is understood, but sometimes it has to be balanced against the needs of the wider community and indeed the city, and the role has become more challenging over the years. One used to be able to do it and work full time. Now I think it is more difficult.

I wish there was more respect for the variety of skills Councillors bring to their role. Community engagement is a skilled role, and not everyone has the necessary skills or the time and desires to acquire them. But there are other very valuable skills which Councillors can bring to their role and all have an important place within the organisation. I am sure there is confusion of roles all the time and both sides should never promise more than they know they can give.

Time is an issue, the Cllr role takes up too much time - I would prefer a centralised system and in these financial times I don't think the current approach is the right one. This approach provides the opportunity for misrepresentation of funds by Cllrs seeking re-election.

General Responses

Feedback

We are parish as well as ward councillors so other funding sources are clear to us and can be aligned where appropriate.

We are used to getting updates in work planned within the ward and officers respond to our enquiries

We support the model and feel that the questions above paint a very negative picture of what is a good and effective system, with decisions being made by ward councillors and residents in a very positive way

We think some case studies or examples of what has worked well would be useful but we do not think a forum is needed – councillors have enough meetings to attend and the system is well established and understood.

I agree with all the above points but would add that the timescales involved in this were unrealistic especially as it took months to get off the ground. The expectations of the outcomes were unrealistic given the limited resources to engage the whole of our communities in terms of time and ability to reach them. I would say we are probably going to find that the perpetually active residents and groups have done well out of this and the disengaged and hard to reach have not. More time and more support will be needed to change this.

Agree - How do we align other council processes to enhance community projects e.g. 106 payments & play capital scheme

Agree - Poor joint working with other teams across the council

Agree - Unaware of other planned CYC work scheduled for wards

Agree - Delays in officer responses from council teams e.g. Highways Team

Agree - Not enough officer resource to support the system

Agree - Cllrs unsupportive of the model and processes

Agree - We need a forum for Cllrs to share good practice

We depend on a range of people providing information about what the council is doing or planning in our wards. That information on S106 or highways priorities is not always available at the point we need the information.

Agree - How do we align other council processes to enhance community projects e.g. 106 payments & play capital scheme

Unaware of other planned CYC work scheduled for wards

Agree - Delays in officer responses from other council teams e.g. Highways Team

My view is very firmly that we have a system which offers great potential for increased officer involvement and for member engagement. But the questions in this survey illustrate just how far we have to move from a persistently regulation-based and traditional officer/member division of roles if we are to meet the challenges posed by 21st century society. The questions also underline how much this authority needs to move away from silo-based thinking and management approaches if it is to find solutions by working with residents as opposed to doing things 'to' or 'for' them.

Agree - 'Some' Cllrs unsupportive of the model and processes

The new Ward Committee system with additional local funding is a welcome way to engage with residents and local community groups.

The system is bedding in and officers from across all areas of the Council need the capacity and the understanding to provide the necessary support.

We need to review how communication to Councillors, Ward Committees, and officers can continually be improved. I was delighted this year to have been able to use ward highways funding, a ward grant, and estate improvement funding on a project to significantly improve an area in my ward – something that has not been possible to bring together for years. This is just one example of how a pro-active ward Committee team can bring about improvements for local communities.

Agree - Delays in officer responses from other council teams e.g. Highways Team

The whole system was introduced in a scatty, barely-formed process, with bolt-ons added on halfway. It was declared a success (with no evidence) and further bolt-ons added to the ward funding process.

Councillors with the time and resource to slot into the determined managerial roles have prospered – particularly if they represent areas where there is a high level of engagement and local organisations/resources to assist with projects.

Other areas, where councillors work full-time and represent areas of low engagement, are being rapidly left behind and the system is failing them.

The Labour Group, in their budget amendment last year, budgeted for greater volunteer capacity building. This was because we recognised that if this system is to be a success across the WHOLE city, then we need to understand the best ways to galvanise volunteers, engage them, and bring them on board. I don't think the council has dedicated anywhere near enough resource to make a devolved system of funding a success, and therefore it's failing in many areas. The result of this is, inevitably, that councillors increasingly have the sole responsibility for where thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money are being spent – on their own whims and without a full evidence base of need. It's basically become a vanity grants scheme for local groups. Because funding is already being allocated to wards on a 'per capita' basis and not on basis of need, this further distorts the fairness of the system and drives funding away from essential need and towards vanity.

This is why I'm also hugely concerned about value for money. In a time when the council is facing massive budget cuts, by devolving funds to local areas without any stringent, robust process of determining proper need, I think we are letting the taxpayer down on delivering value for their money. In the meantime, the original aspiration: to offer local people the chance to allocate funding locally on local need has been completely side-lined.

I'm cynical about the whole process because I think it serves "full-time" councillors better than it serves the needs of residents.

working with other teams across the council

Agree - Unaware of other planned CYC work scheduled for wards

Agree - Delays in officer responses from other council teams e.g. Highways Team

Agree - Not enough officer resource to support the system

Agree - Cllrs unsupportive of the model and processes

Agree - We need a forum for Cllrs to share good practice

We feel that the new approach has energised local engagement and involvement, and in particular has helped to empower volunteer groups who we increasingly rely on to make things happen locally where the council has had to pull back. For the system to work, councillors need to be proactive and engaged. We feel that appropriate lessons have been learned from the first year, eg streamlining processes for obtaining bids. We can point to some really positive achievements that would not have happened without the ward funding system now in place.

Agree - Delays in officer responses from other council teams e.g. Highways Team

We need to be able to communicate where there has been good practice in a ward hence there could be savings to be made so as not to duplicate resources.
 Many Cllrs afraid of trying anything new. This new system permits each ward to spend on what they need in their own ward.

Agree - Poor joint working with other teams across the council

Agree - Unaware of other planned CYC work scheduled for wards

Agree - Delays in officer responses from other council teams e.g. Highways Team

Agree - Not enough officer resource to support the system

Agree - Cllrs unsupportive of the model and processes

I don't know. Do we know what particular benefits are likely to come about because of the focus on ward based working.

Council wards are artificial constructs – not necessarily reflecting true communities, and frequently change quite arbitrarily due to the machinations of the Electoral Commission. At a time of huge pressures on Council budgets, which are not going to go away any time soon, are we absolutely sure that this is the most effective use of Officers and Councillors time. Identifying priorities in your ward is one thing – then subsequently managing the budgets for that work is another.

Section 106 monies is an issue. Better briefings are required from officers on ward level issues for ward cllrs. Ward Cllrs are not always kept informed or consulted, particularly following an election when there may have been a change to the ward Cllrs i.e. new Cllrs need a heads up on ward schemes that have been consulted on previously but not yet implemented. In regard to this new process, there should have been better consultation and a trial before full implementation.