
Executive

20 July 2010

Report of the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods

Area Based Working Pilot

Summary

1. This report seeks approval for an area based working model to run as a pilot for a minimum of 6 months. The model will introduce enhanced neighbourhood management support arrangements dedicated to the area, and be designed to develop wider partnership working and more integrated service delivery through intelligence led decision making and enhanced neighbourhood action plans. The pilot will be evaluated throughout the period with a report back to the Executive in March 2011 in order for members to determine whether to continue the model and widen the scheme to the rest of the city.

Background

2. At a meeting of the Executive on 7 July 2009 (Agenda item 9), members received a report relating to the proposal to adopt a new model for street level services and to move to area based working.
3. Members resolved:
 - (i) *“That the principle of area based working be supported, and*
 - (ii) *“That a further report be received, outlining the details of areas ...”*

Area Working

4. Area working of street level services has been adopted by a number of councils across the country. This approach generally involves resources being deployed and managed on a geographic area basis, and it was this concept which was originally envisaged. This can prove effective for local authorities with the budgets, staff and physical resources to enable them to disaggregate services to an area level, particularly where the geographic area of the authority is so large that it creates efficiencies to do so. However, upon analysis, it was quickly established that it would not suit the needs of City of York Council for a number of key reasons:
 - The geographically compact nature of the city does not lend itself to an efficient disaggregation of services to area level. There would inevitably be a duplication of resources which would not be offset by increased efficiencies
 - Reduction in an ability to achieve any significant economies of scale within the current More for York neighbourhoods blueprint

- Potential for a dilution of current standards resulting in uneven service quality across neighbourhoods
 - Dilution of expertise and knowledge
 - Significant additional training implications
5. Since the 7 July 2009 Executive meeting, the organisational review has merged the Directorate of Neighbourhood Services with Leisure, Culture and Housing Services, including corporate responsibility for the managing the Equalities Unit and for voluntary sector liaison. The new Communities and Neighbourhoods Directorate now has 23 service areas and 2553 staff. The original concept of area based working was that it would involve all street level council services across a number of directorates. However, the new directorate has sufficient street level services within it to provide the opportunity to test any modification of delivery of these and other services which arise during the period of the pilot.
 6. It is therefore proposed that a new model of area working is adopted, based around an enhanced strategic co-ordination role at local level, led by a dedicated neighbourhood management team. This will maintain the existing methods of service delivery, without the need to disaggregate services into geographic areas, but will allow the opportunity for a range of services to be shaped and improved through more co-ordinated working with internal and external partners, and by enhanced voluntary sector and community engagement.

Proposed Area Working model

7. York has a long standing tradition of involving local communities in decision making through the ward committee system. New and enhanced neighbourhood management support arrangements would see a dedicated neighbourhood management team for the pilot area working closely with members, service providers, partners, and the voluntary sector. The team will draw on the best practice from ward committees and ward planning meetings and develop the engagement of a wider range of partners within the area to provide a more cohesive, and efficient approach to service delivery. They will give service providers greater understanding of local communities needs, aspirations and expectations, and through closer working identify efficiencies and reduce duplication.
8. The dedicated neighbourhood management team within the pilot area will consist of a neighbourhood manager, two neighbourhood management officers, an engagement officer and a support officer. They will essentially be an interface between the community and the services delivered within the wards from a wide variety of providers. As well as continuing to administer ward committees, monitor the progress of local schemes and maintain the existing local democracy arrangements, the team will have a number of additional roles:
 - To undertake ward audits and identify the extent of local provision such as the number of voluntary and community groups, local activities and physical assets:
 - To develop ward profiles using intelligence from the ward audits which will contain data and information that will provide much needed information to wards on which to identify community need and build customer choice.

This information will be supplemented by the results of the neighbourhood action plan refresh which will provide insight into the aspirations of local communities and help develop new ward level priorities.

- To liaise with elected members, the community, internal departments and partners and use the ward audits and local intelligence to determine what services are being provided by whom, and to identify and address gaps.
 - To liaise with service providers be a 'broker' of activity across a ward to maximise or provide new service delivery and improve efficiency.
 - To expand the engagement of local partners at a ward level to work with and support communities. The City Partnership Conference 20 May 2010 resulted in a commitment to this model from a wide range of partners and we expect to realise that commitment, shaping the membership of each partnership in line with the needs and aspirations of the local community, and led by the locally elected member for the ward. Closer links to the Local Strategic Partnership team will be established to ensure that community need and aspirations informs and shapes the development of new strategies for York.
9. The management and staffing arrangements to support area working will be drawn from experienced officers within the current Neighbourhood Management Unit (NMU). The associated backfilling and support costs can be borne from within existing NMU base budgets.
10. Examples of the nature and type of activity that the team may be involved in, and the outputs that might be anticipated are provided at **Annex One**.

Ward Members

11. The existing ward committee structure and ward team planning meetings would continue, as would the current devolved budget and decision making process. A key role of the dedicated neighbourhood management team within the pilot area would be to enhance the ability of members to make more informed choices and to engage with a wider sector of their community. The officers would assist members to do this by encouraging partners and voluntary bodies to attend ward planning meetings, and to identify how they can work together, so members can have an enhanced role in targeting services to meet local need and local choice.
12. If the pilot scheme is approved, officers from the neighbourhood management unit would hold a series of briefing sessions for the members within the pilot area prior to the launch, to ensure thorough consultation has taken place and there is a full understanding of how the model will operate.

Length of pilot

13. It is proposed to implement the area working model as a pilot for a minimum of 6 months. If the arrangements are approved, the pilot would commence during September 2010. A report would be brought back to the Executive in March 2011, in order to determine whether to continue with the arrangements and expand it to other areas of the city.

Evaluation

14. The pilot would be evaluated throughout the trial period. The evaluation criteria would be discussed with, and agreed by members in the pilot wards, as the nature of evaluation might differ in particular wards, but as a minimum it would measure the following outcomes:
 - Service delivery more accurately reflecting the needs of local communities. The pilot will improve service delivery and create both quantitative and qualitative efficiencies.
 - Partnership working within the wards has increased, and that partnership membership is appropriate to the activity that is required to deliver the priorities within the neighbourhood action plans.
 - New, more informed and focussed neighbourhood action plans are driving service delivery at a ward level and partnership members are working together to deliver outcomes related to the neighbourhood action plans.
 - The number of residents engaging with the local decision making process and informing local service delivery is increasing.
 - Voluntary sector engagement is increased and involved in delivering local activities.
 - Any financial savings as a result of closer partnership working.
 - Any 'non-cashable' added value activities arising from enhanced partnership and voluntary sector engagement.
15. Members would be a key part of the ongoing evaluation process and play a crucial role in the evaluation of the pilot prior to the final report being submitted to the Executive.

Governance

16. The project will be managed from within the Neighbourhood management Unit. However a project board will be established to oversee progress and it is anticipated this will contain representatives from key organisations within the Partnership.

Which Areas?

17. York is made up of twenty-two wards and there are eighteen ward committees in total, as eight wards have joint ward committees.
18. Wards which might form the pilot area were identified based on a number of criteria:
 - Those that contain areas of deprivation and perhaps lend themselves to drawing down external funding and those wards which do not.
 - Their adjacency to each other in order to provide a geographic focus for all service deliverers across the wards to more easily work together on a regular basis to ensure that day to day delivery is improved.

- An area that covered both rural and urban communities.
19. It is therefore proposed that the wards which will comprise the pilot area are: Acomb, Dringhouses and Woodthorpe; Holgate; Micklegate; Rural West and Westfield. A map showing the extent of the area is attached at **Annex Two**.
 20. During the pilot period service providers will be encouraged to use Acomb Explore (Library) as a hub which will provide facilities for hot desking, and space for meetings and networking to discuss ward issues and explore the potential for influencing day to day service delivery.

Remainder of City

21. The NMU will continue to support the wards within the remainder of the city. The posts vacated by officers seconded into the area working pilot would be backfilled such that there will be no adverse impact of existing service provision.

More for York

22. The area working concept supports the Communities and Neighbourhoods blueprint vision within the More for York programme. The More for York business case within the blueprint refers to a cross partnership approach and supporting communities to achieve their ambitions set out in the neighbourhood action plans. Area working responds to the blueprint vision, which states that:

“...It will deliver services at a neighbourhood level to meet the needs of individual communities and areas, by encouraging local ownership and contribution of resources by allowing residents to exercise control through local democratic frameworks”.

23. It goes on to say that the development and transformation of the service will be underpinned by a number of principles which include the development of:

“...Customer and member centric services, use of management information to develop schedules, area based management and service provision, partnership working and generic roles”.

24. The concept is also supported from experience gained through the Kingsway West Area Action project. The evaluation of this project stated that, ‘*Multi agency co-operation*’, was seen as a driving factor behind this success and goes on to recommend ‘*engagement with residents from the outset so that they are empowered to define areas of need and prioritise issues*’.
25. The additional costs associated with the pilot to provide backfilling and necessary support costs will be met from the CAN base budget. The directorate finance manager will work closely with the Head of Neighbourhood Management to identify and track any efficiency savings. The pilot will also identify any ‘non-cashable’ added value activities arising from enhanced partner and voluntary sector engagement. Regular reports will be submitted to the More for York Board on progress.

Consultation

26. Members whose wards would lie within the proposed area working model were formally consulted on 1st July 2010, and comments were requested by 7th July 2010. No comments were submitted at the time of the report. Should any comments be received before the executive, meeting, these will be given verbally

Options

27. **Option A.**
To approve the operation of an area based pilot model to run for a period of approximately 6 months, in the wards identified at para 19.
28. **Option B.**
To approve the operation of an area based pilot model to run for approx 6 months, in a different configuration of wards than those identified at para 19.
29. **Option C.**
Not to approve the operation of an area based pilot.

Analysis

30. Option A would enable area working to be piloted in a cluster of wards with adjacent boundaries that consisted of urban and rural communities and differing economic profiles.
31. Option B would require a differing cluster of wards with adjacent boundaries to be selected.
32. Option C would cease the concept of examining area working.

Corporate Priorities

33. The concept of area working supports the 'Effective Organisation' element of the Council's corporate priorities by promoting efficiencies through greater partnership working and more effective targeting of resources with greater customer influence.

Implications

- (a) **Financial:** The pilot will be funded from within the CAN base budget and the More for York efficiency programme
- (b) **Human Resources:** The management arrangements will require temporary secondments and some backfilling of posts within NMU. Staff have been consulted and the secondments and staffing arrangements will be undertaken within existing HR policies and procedures.
- (c) **Equalities:** None
- (d) **Legal:** None

- (e) **Crime and Disorder:** None
- (f) **Information Technology (IT):** None
- (g) **Property:** None
- (h) **Other:** None

Risk Management

34. There are no perceived risks in operating the pilot area working proposals.

Recommendations

34. The Executive is requested to approve the implementation of the area working pilot comprising the wards identified at paragraph 19 from September 2010 for a minimum of 6 months, and for an evaluation report to be brought back to the Executive in March 2011 in order for members to determine whether to continue the model and widen the scheme to the rest of the City.

Reason: To provide the scope for delivering improved services at a neighbourhood level by introducing enhanced neighbourhood support arrangements and working closely with a wider range of partners and the voluntary sector.

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**Report
Approved**



Date 07/07/2010

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

'Street Level Services and Area based Working' report to Executive 7 July 2009.

Annexes

Annex One: Examples of activities and outcomes.

Annex Two: Map showing geographic area of the pilot.