



**Notice of a public meeting of
Ward Funding Scrutiny Review Task Group**

To: Councillors Funnell (Chair), Hunter and Richardson
Date: Wednesday, 4 January 2017
Time: 4.30 pm
Venue: The Auden Room - Ground Floor, West Offices (G047)

AGENDA

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point, Members are asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests
- any prejudicial interests
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of the business on this agenda.

2. Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve and sign the minutes of the last Ward Funding Scrutiny Review Task Group meeting held on 27 July 2016.

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered their wish to under the Council's Public Participation Scheme may do so. The deadline for registering is **5.00pm** on **Tuesday 3 January 2017**.

Members of the public may register to speak on:

- An item on the agenda
- An issue within the remit of the task group

Residents are welcome to photograph, film or record Councillors and Officers at all meetings open to the press and public. This includes the use of social media reporting, i.e. tweeting. Anyone wishing to film, record or take photos at any public meeting should contact the Democracy Officer (contact details are at the foot of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

The Council's protocol on Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Meetings ensures that these practices are carried out in a manner both respectful to the conduct of the meeting and all those present. It can be viewed at http://www.york.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11406/protocol_for_webcasting_filming_and_recording_of_council_meetings_20160809.pdf

- 4. Ward Funding Scrutiny Review** (Pages 5 - 78)
This interim report provides an update on the Ward Funding Scrutiny Review for the Task Group's consideration ahead of its presentation to the full Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2017.
- 5. Urgent Business**
Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officer:

Name: Laura Clark

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For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

 (01904) 551550

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

| | |
|---------|--|
| Meeting | Commissioning Through Ward Budgets Scrutiny Review Task Group |
| Date | 27 July 2016 |
| Present | Councillors Funnell, Hunter and Richardson |

1. Appointment of Chair

Resolved: To appoint Councillor Funnell as Chair of the Scrutiny Review Task Group.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda. No additional interests were declared.

3. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

4. Commissioning through Ward Budgets Scrutiny Review Scoping Report

Consideration was given to a scoping report which provided introductory information in relation to the Council's new approach to community engagement through working with local neighbourhoods and revised ward committees and commissioning through Ward Budgets. The report followed a request by the Communities and Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee for a Task Group to undertake a review to assess achievements to date in this area and ambitions for the future.

In order to support Members' consideration of a suitable remit for the review and to enable the Task Group to focus on a way forward, the Head of Communities and Equalities with the assistance of a Student Intern presented details of the present Neighbourhood Working Model and the differing responsibilities of both Officers and Members in the following areas:

- Ward Priorities
- Ward Committees
- Ward Funding
- Ward Action Plans (optional)
- Ward Team Meetings
- Feedback to Residents
- Different Roles

In answer to Members questions, it was confirmed that, in an effort to embed the new Ward Committee process, following a number of Executive reports, the Communities and Equalities team had met with all Members to explain the new arrangements, held a number of Member briefings, and produced fact sheets outlining the process in more detail. Articles had also been included in the Members' Newsletter.

An exercise with the Task Group was then carried out to identify barriers and issues within the process. The Head of Communities and Equalities provided feedback from Officers supporting the process:

- New Members and staff changes in the Communities and Equalities team
- Increase in ward budgets from £75k to £1m
- Introduction of new system
- The options of allocating ward budgets through local grants or the commissioning of services
- Individual Members responsibility to understand the process
- Generally poor feedback/responses from Members/Officers
- No collective agreement on how Ward monies were spent
- Confusion of roles
- Accountability – monitoring the spend of ward budgets
- Ward meetings were not always representative of the community
- Need for resident meetings or activities designed to be more responsive to local needs

- The same style of engagement did not always work
- Members often missed ward team meetings
- Difficulties in agreeing meeting dates
- Members unsupportive of process

Members highlighted their issues and concerns:

- There had been no requirement for Members to attend any of the meetings/briefings
- Mixed ward issues
- Each ward had different issues
- Need for all Members to understand each stage of the process
- Level of staff support (each Officer now covered four wards)
- Loss of local knowledge when supporting Officers change
- Need to build on learning e.g. organisational memory, good practice
- Need for audit trail
- How the process has worked and is working for local groups
- Assistance when applications do not suit ward grant process
- Structures to deal with joint commissioning
- Useful to obtain the views and experiences of bodies seeking funding, those already in receipt of funding and those who have been refused funding

Members requested further information in relation to the Highway Wards Programme and the highway improvements processes to include Ward examples.

Officers questioned the barriers that prevented success and the parts of the process which Members found more challenging. They also circulated three case study fact sheets prepared by the Communities and Equalities Team to illustrate good practice in the different stages of the process undertaken across various Wards. Officers suggested the use of these fact sheets or similar to share information and learning between Members and Ward Committees.

Following further discussion it was

- Resolved:
- (i) That the Scrutiny Review's remit be based on an assessment of the achievements to date and ambitions for the future in the following areas:
 - Process for allocating ward funding;
 - Project generation by community groups;
 - Matching spend to residents' priorities;
 - Assessing 'value for money' in terms of outcomes.

 - (ii) That, in order to inform the review, Officers prepare a hard copy questionnaire, for agreement by the Task Group, for circulation to all Members, based on the presentation made at the meeting, to include a description of the commissioning process and requesting Members experiences in each of the areas. Questionnaires to be returned by mid September 2016.

 - (iii) That the next Task Group meeting be arranged following receipt and analysis of the Ward questionnaire returns.

Reason: To progress this scrutiny review in line with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

Cllr T Funnell, Chair

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.30 pm].



Ward Funding Scrutiny Review Task Group

4 January 2017

Ward Funding Scrutiny Review Update**Summary**

1. This interim report provides an update on the Ward Funding Scrutiny Review for the Task Group's consideration ahead of its presentation to the full Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2017.

Introduction

2. On 30 July 2015 Executive approved the Council's new approach to community engagement. This new approach involved the re-establishment of ward committees to enable the Council to work in closer partnership with residents, in order to tackle local issues and increase community capacity. Amongst other responsibilities, ward committees are charged with drawing up ward priorities based on engagement with residents, agreeing expenditure and services and stimulating community schemes that meet local needs.

Background to Review

3. In June 2016 the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee received a detailed report on the Council's new approach to community engagement through the establishment of revised ward committees, and the progress to date in embedding them in working practices. This highlighted some areas of operation where there were issues, so it was suggested it would be helpful if the Scrutiny Committee were to undertake a review to assess achievements to date and ambitions for the future for a number of areas which still needed refining e.g.:
 - Process for spending ward funding;
 - Project generation by community groups;
 - Matching spend to residents' priorities;
 - Assessing 'value for money' in terms of outcomes;
 - Commissioning of local schemes.

4. With the aim of increasing the allocation of ward budgets and identifying improvements to the process, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to proceed with a review, and formed this Task Group to carry out the review on its behalf, with support from the Head of Communities & Equalities.

Information Gathered to Date

5. In July 2016 this Task Group met for the first time to receive introductory information in support of this review. This included a progress update on the implementation of the new approach to ward funding – see Annex A, and examples of national and regional good practice.
6. To add to this, the Task Group also received a detailed presentation on the Neighbourhood Working Model, which examined each stage of the process and the differing responsibilities of both officers and ward councillors at each stage – see Annex B. The Head of Communities & Equalities confirmed that in an effort to embed the new arrangements, a number of Member briefings had been held, factsheets outlining the different stages had been shared, and articles had been included in the Members' Newsletter.
7. At the meeting, the Task Group took part in an exercise to identify and examine barriers and issues within the process. This included considering some initial feedback from the Communities & Equalities team (CET) on their experiences to date of implementing each stage, examples of progress in local wards and the barriers that some wards have experienced to date, to which the individual Task Group members added the own feedback on their experiences in their wards. Finally, consideration was given to three case study factsheets prepared by CET to illustrate good practice across the different stages of the process.
8. Having considered all the information provided the Task Group agreed that the remit for this review should be based on an assessment of the achievements to date and ambitions for the future in the following areas:
 - Process for allocating ward funding;
 - Project generation by community groups;
 - Matching spend to residents' priorities;
 - Assessing 'value for money' in terms of outcomes;
9. In an effort to achieve the above remit, the Task Group agreed it would be worthwhile consulting with all Councillors (Cllrs) on their experiences to date, and agreed to share with them the Task Group's initial feedback

and seek their views on the different stages of the process via a consultation document issued to all Cllrs.

10. In October 2016 the Task Group met to consider Cllrs feedback (shown at Annex C). They gave considered a written response from CET to the Cllr feedback – see Annex D, together with a number of local good practice case studies which CET had produced in response to the feedback from Cllrs.
11. At the same meeting, the Task Group learnt that Veritau had recently completed an internal audit to provide assurance to Council management that procedures and controls within the system were appropriate to ensure that:
 - Expenditure addresses ward priorities and/or is supported by full and effective engagement with ward residents
 - The quality of information available to ward committees (and the extent to which this information is being used) is sufficient to enable effective decision making
 - The effectiveness of spending decisions is measured
12. The Task Group noted that a sample of ward councillors had been consulted as part of the audit, to examine the basis on which their spending decisions had been made and how residents had been engaged in those decisions. The Task Group considered the Audit report (see Annex E) and noted that their scrutiny review findings were to be used by CET to inform the actions necessary to address the issues identified by the audit.
13. Finally, the Task Group learnt that the Corporate Management Team were due to receive an update report on the Neighbourhood Working Model, looking at implementation progress and barriers, and a Cross Party Working Group was in place as a conduit for ensuring all Groups/Cllrs participate in embedding the model across the city.
14. Having noted all of the information provided at their October meeting, the Task Group agreed it would be beneficial to meet with some of the local community groups etc who had been through the process of applying for ward funding during the last year to gather their feedback.
15. A consultation session was held in November 2016, attended by a range of previously successful applicants, a number of current applicants and a

number of applicants seeking funding for the provision of a service across a number of wards – see list of invitees at Annex F. The following issues were raised by the consultees:

16. In regard to communications:

- Loss of individual ward newsletters makes it more difficult to communicate the availability of ward funding
- Communication in wards needs improving – not evident that all community groups are aware that ward funding is available, particularly new groups and small groups who are not already in the loop
- Parish Councils and Residents Associations could be encouraged to spread the word
- There needs to be consistency in communication across all wards
- Available funding should be advertised regularly
- Better awareness raising of ward priorities with Residents/Community Groups

17. In regard to the application process:

- General consensus amongst consultees that process fairly straight forward – a majority of those present had applied for funding previously and were therefore not new to it
- Some issues around pagination and numbering of sections
- The council website does not allow the application form to be completed online - applicants would welcome an improved online form
- Some information requested in the form is a little repetitive in places
- Community Involvement Officers proved very helpful at this stage and applicants received guidance on how to complete the form and how much to apply for
- Provision of hard copies of applicants constitution not always feasible due the size of the document
- Examples of previous difficulties for organisations working across the city who wished to supply a service in more than one ward where they had identified a local need – clarification was given at the consultation session about how the process had been recently revised to enable citywide organisations to submit one application covering a number of wards where they were able to demonstrate that they met a priority of those wards.

18. In regard to Ward Committee meetings & Ward Team meetings:

- Meetings could be advertised in Parish Council newsletters and other local communication could be tapped into

- Need to identify a clear route by which to cascade information throughout each ward e.g. From Council to Ward to Parish Council/Residents Associations, to Community Groups
19. In regard to Ward Funding Decisions:
- The ward letters issued confirming successful applications include a date by which an implementation update is required.
 - Each ward needs to provide clear guidance on the frequency of when decisions are due to be made.
20. Other Issues:
- Examples were given of where local organisations may have identified needs that did not match the aims of the funding (the ward priorities).
 - Clarification was given on what would happen if this year's funding was not spent.
 - There was no evidence to suggest that officers were spending excessive time supporting applicants with their applications
21. Finally, the Task Group queried what role York Centre for Voluntary Service (CVS) may be playing in supporting local charities, voluntary organisations, social enterprises and community groups etc to apply for ward funding. CVS have confirmed they:
- Review a group or organisation's needs and suggest appropriate funding application options, this may direct them to ward funding, right the way through to Big Lottery applications.
 - Offer a free funding advice service - they have sign posted 351 service users to online funding but are unable to confirm how many were referred to ward funding or how many went on to apply for ward funding.
 - Provide a free advice service on governance, which has so far signposted one organisation to successfully apply for ward funding.
22. A representative of CVS will be attending this meeting to further discuss the broader package of support they provide and to give their feedback on the ward funding application process and how they might best support it.

Analysis

23. Having considered the consultation feedback from Cllrs, the Task Group noted two emerging themes e.g.:

i) Communication & Relationships

The Task Group agreed that improving communication between CET officers and Ward Cllrs, and between Cllrs within an individual ward, would benefit everyone involved, which in turn could lead to improved engagement from others. They agreed it would be particularly helpful in split wards where there was evidence to suggest that some Cllrs were struggling to work cooperatively.

ii) Managing Expectations

It was clear from the feedback that the officer role and Cllr role was often not as clearly defined as the consultation document suggested. The Task Group therefore agreed it would be helpful to explore it in more detail. In doing so, they acknowledged that as all Cllrs were able to choose their own approach and not all employed the same styles of leadership, it was crucial that they formed a good working relationship with their support officers, so that they could work together as a team. To do this successfully, Cllrs needed to give clarity on their expectations and agree their support requirements, to enable officers to effectively support the process. Cllrs could also be more pro-active and perhaps participate in the induction of new officers to the support team as they are the most knowledgeable on their wards etc.

Council Plan 2015-19

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

Implications & Risks

25. Any identified implications and risks associated with the findings from this review will be included in the draft final report arising from this review.

Interim Report Recommendations

26. The Task Group is recommended to:
 - i) Confirm their views on the information received from all Consultees and the findings from the internal Audit, so that they may inform the review recommendations

- ii) Agree any further amendments required to this interim report prior to its presentation to the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2017

Reason: To progress this review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

Contact Details

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Report Approved



Date

20 Dec 2016

Specialist Implications Officer(s) N/A

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes:

Annex A – Progress Update on the Implementation of the New Ward Funding Model

Annex B – Copy of Neighbourhood Working Model Presentation July 2016

Annex C – Cllr Feedback (anonimised)

Annex D – CET Response to Cllr Feedback

Annex E – Veritau Internal Audit Report

Annex F – List of Consultation Invitees

Abbreviations:

Cllr – Councillor

CET – Communities & Equalities Team

CVS – Centre for Voluntary Service

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Ward Funding Scrutiny Review

Progress Update on Implementation of New Approach to Ward Funding

1. Under the Council's new approach to ward committees, additional budgets were devolved to wards in 2015/16 to create a single pot that wards can use flexibly to help address their priorities and to develop community initiatives which benefit local residents and reduce reliance on Council services. A total of £925k was devolved.
2. For 2016/17 a further £100k was added, specifically to assist wards with local environmental schemes. The ward pots are made up of:
 - The general 'Ward Budget'.
 - The 'Pride in York Fund' - made up of both one-off and recurring elements, for the purpose of supporting environmental initiatives.
 - The 'Community Care Fund'- aimed at supporting the prevention or delay of people needing to access formal care packages and statutory support.
3. The ward pot can be spent as wards see fit within Council policies and procedures. The budgets may be used to give grants or to buy services.
4. In addition, a Ward Highways Programme was instituted partly localising the process for allocating highway improvements through the ward committees, and grounds maintenance and cleansing activities in each ward were devolved to the ward.
5. Spend to Date
In 2015/16 only £90k was spent from a budget of £475k, i.e. 19%. £385k was carried forward. As of 10 June 2016, only £61k has been committed from the 2016/17 budget, including the carry forward of £910k, i.e. 6.7%.
6. Feedback from ward councillors has suggested that they are finding aspects of spending ward funding challenging, despite early changes to make it easier, e.g. dropping the grounds maintenance spreadsheet.
7. Publicising Available Budgets
Wards have been made aware of the budgets available and how people can get involved in discussions via a number of routes i.e. social media, residents' email distribution lists, parish council websites, posters in the community, presentations at parish council meetings, and ward web pages. In addition, information was provided to residents via an insert in

'Our City' and the budget commitments to date have been listed on the council website at: <https://www.york.gov.uk/wardfundingdecisions>;

8. Effective Use of Ward Budgets

To date targeted preventative projects have been undertaken for older and vulnerable residents, events and activities for children and young people, and grants to locally based community groups to make improvements to community facilities and the local environment.

However, the majority of these have focussed on capital purchases, things where the expenditure is clearly visible. Commissioning projects e.g. a service for a particular group has been much less common.

9. Evidence of Impact (Outcomes & Benefits)

As yet there is insufficient evidence to suggest whether or not value for money through ward spending is being achieved or whether it is making a difference and addressing ward priorities. However in the future, grant recipients will be expected to provide grant monitoring reports to help ward councillors to assess the impact and outcomes, and an annual review sheet has been developed which can be offered to wards.

10. Devolved Grounds Maintenance & Cleansing Activities

Wards have now submitted their recommendations for Grounds maintenance budget for 2016/17, which show that a variety of approaches have been taken to meeting the savings targets. For example, community groups have taken on planting schemes. However there is still a question over whether wards are able to commission sufficient local schemes to meet their maintenance needs.

11. It is planned that maps will be provided at forthcoming ward meetings to show current cleansing arrangements in the ward. Using these, Ward members will be able to re-prioritise activity based on their local knowledge or priorities, or supplement cleansing activity from their ward budgets where they wish to (subject to deliverability).

12. Ward Highways Programme

Originally, each ward received the highways priority list for footways and carriageway works in 2016/17, in order to assist them in identifying locations for potential schemes subject to feasibility, legality and budget availability. To further assist them, improved information is now to be provided to wards to show the schemes in the main highways programme proposed for their wards. Further information will also be developed to assist wards in having an idea about the likely scale of cost for various types of maintenance initiatives and a further member briefing

will be arranged. The list of schemes for 17/18 will be available in late summer.

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Neighbourhood Working Model

Ward priorities



Jack the Council officer

Responsibility:

- **Provide Members** with ward statistics through Ward Profile
- **Contribute local knowledge** along with the rest of the ward team



Adam the Politician

Responsibility:

- **Bring their own local knowledge** and use the information provided by Community and Equalities Team (CET) and partners to **identify ward priorities** for the ward team to focus on over a specified period

Ward Committee



Jack the Council officer

Responsibility:

- **Logistical support**
- **Publicise event** in the Ward and social media
- **Organise for minutes** to be taken, written up and published.



Adam the Politician

Responsibility:

- **Decide** when and where to hold their meeting, and style and format
- **Set meeting agenda**
- **Feedback to residents** the previous year's progress, launch their Ward Committee and ward priorities, outline ward funding arrangements for the year ahead.
- **Publicise meeting** through blogs, surgeries and word-of-mouth

Ward Funding



Jack the Council officer

Responsibility:

- **Provide** grant application/commissioning forms and guidance documents for ward funding process
- **Process paperwork, payment of funds and monitoring information** to be fed back to ward team meetings (Director sign-off)
- **Suggest ideas for projects** that could address ward priorities and groups that could deliver them.



Adam the Politician

Responsibility:

- **Decide and announce** how they want to allocate their ward funding
- **Discuss within their ward team** who to issue grants to/ commission projects to
- **Consider inviting recipients** to become ward team members

Ward Action Plan

Annex B

(optional)



Jack the Council officer

Responsibility:

- **Provide relevant information** at ward team meetings
- **Contribute to the discussion** with members and the wider ward team to develop an action plan.
- **Regularly update the plan and circulate** virtually and at ward team meetings
- **Feedback progress to residents** through Your Ward online, Facebook, Twitter etc



Adam the Politician

Responsibility:

- **Lead the discussion** with ward team members to develop a ward action plan.
- **Allocate tasks to ward team members** that will progress the plan
- **Feedback regularly to residents** about progress through residents' forums, surgeries, blogs, partner newsletters and other opportunities

Ward Team Meeting

Annex B



Jack the Council officer

Responsibility:

- **Circulate meeting dates** to ward team partners with up to date ward action plan and other relevant information
- **Book meeting room / venue**



Adam the Politician

Responsibility:

- **Choose regular dates for the meetings** and liaise with CET to organise
- **Invite appropriate ward team members** and liaise with CET
- **Drive the Ward Action Plan** by ensuring all tasks have a dedicated ward team member and encouraging contributions from all ward team members and regular feedback on progress

Feedback to residents

Annex B



Jack the Council officer

Responsibility:

- **Provide feedback on the Ward Action Plans** in the form of case studies on Your Ward Online and in Your Ward
- **Provide updates** on Facebook, Twitter, community notice boards and any other local opportunities



Adam the Politician

Responsibility:

- **Feedback to residents** through Ward Committees, surgeries, blogs, word of mouth, twitter, newsletters, community notice boards etc
- **Visit recipients of funding** to ensure constant support and monitoring



Jack the Council officer

Qualities:

- **Guidance and support**
- **Ability to liaise with Council staff**
- **Logistical support for ward team and committee meetings**
- **Custodian of local community information**
- **SUPPORT**



Adam the Politician

Qualities:

- **Community champion**
- **Custodian of local community challenges**
- **Person-with-the-plan to address community priorities**
- **LEADER**

Ward Funding Scrutiny Review

Feedback from Consultation with Ward Councillors

Total Responses Received = 19 (40%)

- 9 New Members
- 4 Executive Members
- 3 Group Leaders
- 1 Member of the Scrutiny Task Group

Responses by Group:

- 6 Labour Responses = 40%
- 4 Conservative Responses = 28%
- 9 Lib Dem Responses = 75%
- 0 Green Responses
- 0 Independent Responses

Responses from 13 Wards = 62%

- 4 Single Cllr Wards
- 7 Wards with 3 Cllrs of same group
- 1 Ward with 2 Cllrs of same group
- 2 Wards with 3 Cllrs split between 2 groups

Stage 1 Responses - 'Identifying Ward Priorities' = 19

In response to the early feedback:

- 4 Cllrs Agreed - New people in new roles (Cllrs & officers) so lack of local knowledge
- 3 Cllrs Agreed - Officer responses not always timely and helpful – need to keep chasing
- 1 Cllr Agreed - Difficulty accessing and interpreting ward profile information

Stage 2 Responses 'Ward Committee Meetings' = 19

In response to the early feedback:

- 1 Cllr Agreed - Specialist officers not attending ward meetings when required
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs do not collectively agree a date the meeting
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs do not respond to emails or telephone calls
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs habitually choose the same style of engagement resulting in low attendance from residents

Stage 3 Responses 'Ward Funding' = 19

In response to the early feedback:

- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Cross Ward funding – how to make it work - Joint commissioning is great but huge resource & management issues
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - City wide organisations badgering wards
- 1 Cllr Agreed - How do voluntary organisations feel about the new process of applying for ward funding
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - How to proceed when there is no collective agreement on how to spend the ward money
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - How to Cllrs maintain contact with funded groups to ensure accountability / value for money
- 4 Cllrs Agreed - Information on costings for schemes - some schemes turn out to be so complex that they appear to break the system

Stage 4 Responses 'Ward Action Plans' = 19

In response to the early feedback:

- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Lack of tracked progress makes it difficult for Cllrs/officers to keep partners engaged
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Too much talking without any action (relevant to all stages of the process)
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Timescales for schemes are not always clear

Stage 5 Responses 'Ward Team Meetings' = 19

In response to the early feedback:

- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs struggle to identify mutually convenient meeting dates
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Officers struggle to set meetings up due to lack of Cllr engagement
- 0 Cllrs Agreed - Difficulties working with Parish/Town Council
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Ward Teams are not representative of the community
- 0 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs regularly miss their ward team meetings

Stage 6 Responses 'Feedback top Residents' = 18

In response to the early feedback:

- 3 Cllrs Agreed - Need to improve the way we communicate with residents
- 3 Cllrs Agreed - Lack of understanding of who can get information on notice boards and the internet etc

Responses to 'Roles' Section = 19

In response to the early feedback:

- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs not understanding their role
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs have not got the time to fulfil their role
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Not all Cllrs have the necessary skills
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Confusion of roles
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs awareness of supporting information/documents and access arrangements

Responses to General Section = 19

In response to the early feedback:

- 1 Cllrs Agreed - How do we align other council processes to enhance community projects e.g. 106 payments & play capital scheme
- 3 Cllrs Agreed - Poor joint working with other teams across the council
- 4 Cllrs Agreed - Unaware of other planned CYC work scheduled for wards
- 8 Cllrs Agreed - Delays in officer responses from other council teams e.g. Highways Team
- 3 Cllrs Agreed - Not enough officer resource to support the system
- 4 Cllrs Agreed - Cllrs unsupportive of the model and processes
- 2 Cllrs Agreed - We need a forum for Cllrs to share good practice

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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

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| <p><u>Feedback</u></p> | <p>Frequent changes of Neighbourhood Officer allocation did not help build up local knowledge – hopefully this situation will now settle down</p> <p>Our recent Neighbourhood Officers have been very responsive</p> <p>The ward profile is readily available and could be used better to plan future work</p> <p>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.</p> <p>We have identified our ward priorities, but they don't easily relate to the available information.</p> <p><i>Agree - New people in new roles (Cllrs & officers) so lack of local knowledge</i></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>Agree - New people in new roles (Cllrs & officers) so lack of local knowledge</i></p> <p>I have found it helpful to have the wider ward team involved in discussing priorities for the local area.</p> <p>We have received excellent support from our Community Involvement Officers, who have anticipated issues and dealt with them professionally and punctually.</p> <p>Our Ward Priorities were discussed and agreed by the Ward Team. We plan to review them at our next Ward Team meeting.</p> |
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| <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*

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

We recognise that there is a finite amount of officer capacity, and feel that the more streamlined approach to securing quotes should help.

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

Too long a process from ideas to funds been processed.

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.

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.

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| <p>If this experience is the same elsewhere then it probably means ward funding is being allocated on basis of councillors' personal vanity. <i>Lack of tracked progress makes it difficult for Cllrs/officers to keep partners engaged</i> <i>Agree - Too much talking without any action (relevant to all stages of the process)</i> <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'. Again this is the timescale involved, the longer the process is the more time is taken up by officers and Cllrs - Communication is key . Highlight to other Cllrs good positive plans put into action in wards across the city. 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. <i>Agree - Lack of tracked progress makes it difficult for Cllrs/officers to keep partners engaged</i> <i>Agree - Too much talking without any action (relevant to all stages of the process)</i> <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

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| <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>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> | <p><i>Agree -</i></p> |

Stage 6 Responses - Feedback to Residents

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| <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. 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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ward Team and Ward Committee written reports on the Ward News page of the CYC website, along with regular councillor update reports 2. Our local newsletters 3. Engagement with community groups in the course of our councillor duties 4. Community noticeboards <p>We need to continually evaluate how we feed back to residents and ask their views.</p> |
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| <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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>Agree - Lack of understanding of who can get information on notice boards and the internet etc</i></p> | <p>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.</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> |
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Roles Responses

Feedback

We have not had any problems with any of these areas

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.

Sometimes it's difficult to avoid role reversal between councillors and officers

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

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:

- 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.

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.

We understand our roles and that of officers.

Not always sure from whom or where to get information from.

Both Cllrs and Officers both benefit from communication, its a two way working partnership

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

Agree -

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.

| Feedback on | Issued Raised | CET Response |
|--|--|--|
| Identifying Ward Priorities | Frequent changes of Neighbourhood Officer allocation does not help build up local knowledge | This is achieved through Officer Handover and Ward Cllr Support |
| | 4 officers in support in the last 15 months and there has been little of no handover each time | |
| | The ward profile is readily available and could be used better to plan future work | Profiles are updated on a quarterly basis and uploaded on the council website. A Member Briefing has been arranged for 22 Nov 2016 to assist Cllrs in interpreting the data. |
| | We have identified our ward priorities, but they don't easily relate to the available information | |
| | How often is ward profile info updated and how are Cllrs expected to know when this has happened | |
| | Ward profile simply a document – no deeper analysis available, offered or undertaken, or encouraged to be undertaken. Do we have access to deeper officer resource to ask for this | |
| | Ward profile info is ok but not necessarily helpful | |
| | Split wards bring their own set of problems - Officer/Member relationships and learning to work together | Discussion Point - Communication |
| | Officers also need training on communicating with the public. | Part of job specification |
| | Different community involvement officers worked in different ways | All officers receive the same training and information and are expected to adapt their style of working to suit the needs of the ward |
| New Cllrs may need assistance in defining Ward Priorities | Case Study A - Identifying Ward Priorities (Guildhall) | |
| Officers need to be more pro-active in their wards and let Cllrs know when they are in the ward. | Discussion Point - Managing | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Not always aware of community activity or needs if it has not been drawn to our attention. | Expectations |
| Feedback on: | Issued Raised | CET Response |
| Ward Committee Meetings | We have suffered from occasional low attendance and under representation of certain sectors. | Case Study B - Publicising Meetings (Heworth Without). NB: 'Our City' no longer exists |
| | Publicising Ward Committee meetings is difficult. Perhaps a budget for flyers could be agreed | |
| | Publicity has in my experience been pathetic | |
| | Ward meetings are not well attended | |
| | 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'. | |
| | Social media is not the answer to everything - Ward Committee meetings need to be publicised in a variety of ways, and not just through social media. | |
| | We need to give more notice of events and longer lead in times. | Case Study C - Alternatives to Meetings (Fishergate & Strensall? Walkabouts) |
| | 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. | |
| To help address officer attendance issues, videos/presentations could be produced for use in multiple wards. | This may be possible for some issues - needs further consideration to understand the resources required | |
| Working in a split ward brings its own problems and disadvantages which, in my experience, many officers totally fail to understand and address. | Discussion Point - Communication | |

Minutes of previous meetings need providing sooner not just a few days before the next meeting.

Only one formal meeting and the Minutes go on the council website

| Feedback on: | Issued Raised | CET Response |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Ward Committee Meetings | Some clear standards for communications between officers and members need to be outlined, discussed and agreed. | Discussion Point - Managing Expectations |
| | Logistical support needs improving - officers need training. | |
| | Setting the meeting agenda needs doing in conjunction with officers not solely by Cllrs | |
| | 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. | |
| Ward Funding | We have not tried cross ward funding any schemes but would be prepared to consider doing so. | Case Study D - Cross Ward Funding (Clifton & Clifton Without & Rawcliffe) |
| | 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. | |
| | Joint commissioning is great but huge resource & management issues | |
| | The bureaucracy around the ward highways part of ward funding is cumbersome and long winded | Highways Fact Sheet & 2 Briefings have already been provided. Officers have also introduced a process to manage the highways scheme requests. |
| | The funding for highways work is so small in comparison with typical costs that it's almost not worth having! | |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Discussion Point - Managing Expectations</p> |
|---|---|

| Feedback on: | Issued Raised | CET Response |
|--------------|--|--|
| Ward Funding | Need to speed up the process of processing grants so that funding is made available sooner | There is an Veritau audit ongoing of the mechanics of the process from start to finish, which will identify areas for improvement.CET will review their processes in light of Cllrs feedback from this review and the Veritau findings. Officers will also review the way successful funded ward schemes are reported. |
| | 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 | |
| | Keeping end user informed of when the funding will be made available | |
| | 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. | |
| | Tracked progress is helpful as would the tracking of spend per ward if it could be regularly reported to ward councillors | |
| | Too long a process from ideas to funds been processed - 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. | Working Group |
| | Form should include targets so that providers know how to record their performance for reporting back. | Additional question could be added to the form asking applicants to indicate how they will measure success and report back. |
| | There seems to be no requirement for the spending to be accountable or any performance indicators to evaluate success or other wise. It appears to be a case of handing the money over then no more questions asked by officers | |

| Feedback on: | Issued Raised | CET Response |
|--|--|--|
| Ward Funding | There's something fundamentally missing in the division of responsibilities above: advertising the application process. Do groups know what's available? 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. | Case Study E - Engaging Residents in Funding Decisions (Westfield & ??) |
| Ward Action Plans | 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. | Discussion Point - Working Together |
| | 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. | Case Study F - Action Plans (Dringhouse & Woodthorpe) Plus Application Form & Guidance. In addition, an annual letter and review form is sent out to all those in receipt of ward funding. In the future, this information will be shared with wards annually to promote good practice |
| | 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 | |
| | I've never seen a copy of a ward action plan – in any format. I didn't even know this was a requirement. | |
| Highlight to other Cllrs good positive plans put into action in wards across the city. | | |

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'.

| Feedback on: | Issued Raised | CET Response |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Ward Team meetings | It requires training in communication and co-operation for members in split wards (officers might find this useful too) | Discussion Point - Communication |
| | Better preparation is needed ahead of ward team meetings and better communication. | Discussion Point - Managing Expectations |
| | 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. | |
| | In a three member ward, the agreement of two members for anything should be sufficient. | Discussion Point - Working Together |
| | Cllrs need to be given a heads up of whats on facebook etc | Each ward has a web page and a twitter account |
| | Sometimes people don't attend ward team meetings, particularly when we're trying to deal with procedural actions, such as reviewing budgets. | Case Study G - Partner Engagement (Guildhall) |
| | 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. | |
| Feedback to Residents | 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. | Discussion Point - Managing Expectations |
| | 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. | Case Study H - Use of Noticeboards (Wards?) |

| Feedback on: | Issued Raised | CET Response |
|--|--|--|
| Feedback to Residents | 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. | An additional question could be added to the form asking applicants to indicate how they will measure success and report back. |
| Roles | Not always sure from whom or where to get information from. | CET officer first point of contact |
| | CET Officers need training to be able to better liaise with other council staff | Update Paper to CMT re neighbourhood model highlighting implementation and barriers |
| | Sometimes it's difficult to avoid role reversal between councillors and officers | Discussion Point - Working Together |
| | 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. | |
| 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. | | |
| General | Need to review how communication to Councillors, Ward Committees, and officers can continually be improved. | Discussion Point - Communication |
| | 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. | |

| | | |
|---------------------|---|---|
| | Information on S106 or highways priorities is not always available at the point we need the information. | Factsheet & Briefing |
| | Section 106 monies is an issue. | |
| Feedback on: | Issued Raised | CET Response |
| General | Improve response times from service delivery officers in Directorates | Update Paper to CMT re neighbourhood model highlighting implementation and barriers |
| | New Cllrs need a heads up on ward schemes that have been consulted on previously but not yet implemented. | New & Improved Ward Cllr Induction |

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Ward Committee Budget Decision Making

City of York Council

Internal Audit Report 2016/17

Business Unit: Communities and Neighbourhood Services
 Responsible Officer: Assistant Director – Communities, Culture and Public Realm
 Service Manager: Head of Communities and Equalities
 Date Issued: 28 November 2016
 Status: Revised Draft

| | P1 | P2 | P3 |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Actions | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Overall Audit Opinion | Reasonable Assurance | | |

Reference: 10980/003



Summary and Overall Conclusions

Introduction

On 30 July 2015 Executive considered and approved the council's new approach to community engagement. This new approach involved the re-establishment of ward committees to enable the council to work in closer partnership with residents in order to tackle local issues and increase community capacity. Amongst other responsibilities, ward committees are charged with drawing up ward priorities based on engagement with residents, agreeing expenditure and services and stimulating community schemes that meet local needs.

To support this effort the council invested significant resource in the form of a £925K funding pot allocated between wards. For 2016/17 a further £100K has been added specifically to assist wards with local environmental schemes, taking total spending power to over £1M. The devolved budgets available to ward committees comprise of a one-off and three recurring annual funding streams which can be used flexibly to address ward priorities and to support and develop community initiatives which benefit local residents and may reduce reliance on council services.

Objectives and Scope of the Audit

The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that procedures and controls within the system ensure that:

- Expenditure addresses ward priorities and/or is supported by full and effective engagement with ward residents
- The quality of information available to ward committees (and the extent to which this information is being used) is sufficient to enable effective decision making
- The effectiveness of spending decisions is measured

The audit reviewed the procedures underpinning the approach rather than assessing the validity of the approach itself. It also involved holding discussions with a sample of ward councillors in order to establish the basis on which spending decisions have been made and the approaches that have been taken to engage residents in these decisions. While anecdotal evidence was heard, all findings presented are those which could be readily substantiated. Additional informal feedback has been provided to the service ahead of the publication of this report.

Key Findings

Overall a sound framework for the administration of ward funding was found to be in place but it was observed that the level of resident engagement across wards is not always satisfactory. Although it is not expected that wards operate identically, engagement is fundamental to the neighbourhood working approach and, without it, the system is at risk of breaking down.

A number of wards were selected as part of the audit to be reviewed in detail. Their selection was determined by a stratified random sample that grouped wards based on their total ward budget. The sample was discussed with the service prior to undertaking the audit to ensure that the sample would prove representative of the range of city centre, suburban, rural, single-member, parished, unparished, affluent and relatively impoverished wards that exist across the city.

Not all of the wards selected for review had formally agreed priorities or allowed sufficient opportunity for engagement in their formulation. Similarly, while some ward teams were found to have been making use of ward committee meetings to involve residents in proposed projects and schemes, this is not being done consistently. However, review of the grant application process revealed that all approved applications were justified and could be related back to ward priorities where possible. Spending decisions have also been routinely recorded on the register of ward committee funding decisions, providing a good level of transparency (although its presentation could be improved to allow for greater ease of searching and for the development of a lessons learned approach across wards).

It is clear that the council has put significant effort into publicising ward committee meetings but that this is mainly limited to the council website and to social media which may be excluding a significant proportion of ward residents.

In the main, it appears that ward profiles (documents produced by the council's Business Intelligence Hub containing important social and demographic indicators) have been helpful in the initial setting of ward priorities but that their use on an ongoing basis is limited. The primary use of the document has been to reassure ward teams that significant socio-demographic issues have not been overlooked when setting the priorities. Testing conducted to compare ward priorities to ward profiles provided support for the fact that these documents are used in priority setting and that the priorities being set are appropriate for the wards. Ward councillor experience of data provided by council departments and by ward partners varied markedly and, as such, it is not clear how important this information is to decision making.

At the time of testing only three of 10 grant recipients had returned final reports in support of their applications. The three available reports differed significantly in content and level of detail owing in part to the fact that there is not a template for the report, although expenditure had always been accounted for in this way. Some wards have chosen to use ward committee meetings as a forum for receiving information on the outcome of projects and this acts as a compensating control to an extent. However, as this is not a mandatory element or applied consistently across wards it is not effective enough on its own to negate the requirement for formal reporting.

Overall Conclusions

The arrangements for managing risk were satisfactory with a number of weaknesses identified. An acceptable control environment is in operation but there are a number of improvements that could be made. Our overall opinion of the controls within the system at the time of the audit was that they provided Reasonable Assurance.

1 Resident engagement

Issue/Control Weakness

Lack of engagement in ward priority setting and in spending decisions.

Risk

Inappropriate expenditure.

Reputational damage.

Findings

Overall, it is apparent that the level of engagement in ward priority setting and spending decisions is not satisfactory across wards. While it is not expected that wards should operate identically, engagement is the cornerstone of the neighbourhood working approach and so minimum standards in respect of this must be achieved.

Based on the evidence gathered from ward councillors and ward web pages, it is clear that not all wards have set priorities in consultation with residents and also that not all wards have set priorities. Without consultation, it may be that the priorities set are not appropriate for the residents and, without formally agreeing ward priorities, it is difficult to see how consistent and informed decisions can be made on spending proposals. In respect of spending decisions, while some ward teams have used the ward committee correctly as a forum for involving residents in spending proposals, others have not. The ability for wards to take decisions at ward team meetings, although entirely allowable under the neighbourhood working approach, has had the effect of reducing the opportunity for engagement where wards have not made efforts to consult residents at ward committee meetings or through other engagement channels.

There is some limited evidence of other methods being used to engage residents in spending decisions but it is not clear how effective these have been or how often they are employed.

Agreed Action 1.1

Recommendations from the ward funding scrutiny review that is currently in progress will form the basis of future actions in this area.

Priority

2

Responsible Officer

Head of Communities and Equalities

Timescale

March 2017

2 Register of ward committee decisions on funding

Issue/Control Weakness

The register of ward committee decisions on funding is not readily accessible.

Risk

Residents are not able to effectively scrutinise spending decisions.

The benefits and efficiencies that could be derived from a lessons learned approach are not realised.

Findings

All approved schemes recorded on the master spreadsheet were found to have been published on the council website as part of the register of ward committee decisions on funding. However, the presentation of this register as monthly scanned PDFs does not provide for easy searching either within or between documents. As a result, it can be difficult to find particular approved spending decisions or spending decisions by ward. The Communities and Equalities Team produces an Excel decision log and, if this were to be adapted for online publication, it would not only enable easier searching and hence greater transparency but could also facilitate a lessons learned approach by allowing ward teams to draw on the outcomes of projects from across wards.

Agreed Action 2.1

A refinement to the current system will be made, allowing the public easier access to the monthly decision log which will include the facility to search by ward. At the end of the current financial year the new system will be used to report on the activity across the whole of 2016/17. This will demonstrate the ability of the new system with a view to formally introducing it at the start of 2017/18.

Priority

3

Responsible Officer

Head of Communities and Equalities

Timescale

March 2017

3 Communication

| Issue/Control Weakness | Risk |
|---|--|
| Communication media used to publicise ward committee meetings has limited exposure. | Ward residents are not aware of ward committee meetings and thus do not have the opportunity to engage in ward priority setting or spending decisions. |

Findings

While there was evidence available to support the fact that the council has made efforts to communicate ward committee meetings to residents and that it has done so consistently, these efforts appear limited to internet and social media platforms and thus may exclude a significant proportion of ward residents. Communication to remaining residents is, therefore, reliant on the efforts of ward councillors which testing showed not to be consistent across wards.

Based on ward committee attendance figures alone it is not possible to establish whether or not the low attendance is the result of poor communication, a lack of interest on the part of ward residents or a combination of both. However, when considered alongside discussions with ward councillors, it appears that communication is not as effective as it could be and that this is at the very least a contributing factor in the poor attendance at ward committees.

Agreed Action 3.1

The council’s Your Ward publication (which is delivered to every household in the city) will next be issued in January 2017. Community Involvement Officers are already working with ward councillors to set dates for meetings and events in advance so that, as far as possible, the publication can be used to publicise this to residents.

The publication will also feature a number of stories from across all wards, reporting on the projects and schemes that have been funded through the ward budgets. There will also be a feature promoting the ward funding process with details of how to apply and who is eligible.

In addition, any recommendations from the ward funding scrutiny review that is currently in progress will also form the basis of further actions in this area.

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Priority | 3 |
| Responsible Officer | Head of Communities and Equalities |
| Timescale | January 2017 |

4 Monitoring of scheme outcomes

Issue/Control Weakness

Final reports are not always produced.

Risk

Expenditure is not accounted for.

The effectiveness of spending decisions is not known.

Findings

Only three of 10 grant recipients sampled as part of the audit returned a final report. All but one of the applications for which there was no final report were made in the 15/16 financial year. Therefore, it is highly probable that the projects or initiatives have been concluded for a period of time greater than three months and thus a final report would be expected (even taking into account delays in their receiving funding). The reports received varied in content and level of detail. It was found that, although the council outlines the required content of the final report, there is not a report template.

A compensating control is the fact that three of the five wards tested were found to have used ward committee meetings as a forum for grant recipients to feed back on the outcomes of their respective projects or initiatives. In this way, councillors are able to establish whether or not ward priorities have been addressed as expected and if the project has been a success. This approach seems an appropriate method of accounting for project delivery but is not mandatory and thus the effectiveness of all spending decisions cannot be measured in this way.

Agreed Action 4.1

The Communities & Equalities team is currently designing a monitoring form that will be trialled with projects and schemes that are now complete. The design and content of the form will take into consideration the questions asked in the application stage of the ward funding process. Following feedback from this trial, a final form will be introduced at the start of the 2017/18 financial year so that applicants will not only complete the application form but will also have clear expectations as to what is required by way of monitoring.

Priority

3

Responsible Officer

Head of Communities and Equalities

Timescale

April 2017

In addition, any recommendations from the ward funding scrutiny review that is currently in progress will also form the basis of further actions in this area.

Audit Opinions and Priorities for Actions

| Audit Opinions | |
|--|---|
| <p>Audit work is based on sampling transactions to test the operation of systems. It cannot guarantee the elimination of fraud or error. Our opinion is based on the risks we identify at the time of the audit.</p> <p>Our overall audit opinion is based on 5 grades of opinion, as set out below.</p> | |
| Opinion | Assessment of internal control |
| High Assurance | Overall, very good management of risk. An effective control environment appears to be in operation. |
| Substantial Assurance | Overall, good management of risk with few weaknesses identified. An effective control environment is in operation but there is scope for further improvement in the areas identified. |
| Reasonable Assurance | Overall, satisfactory management of risk with a number of weaknesses identified. An acceptable control environment is in operation but there are a number of improvements that could be made. |
| Limited Assurance | Overall, poor management of risk with significant control weaknesses in key areas and major improvements required before an effective control environment will be in operation. |
| No Assurance | Overall, there is a fundamental failure in control and risks are not being effectively managed. A number of key areas require substantial improvement to protect the system from error and abuse. |

| Priorities for Actions | |
|------------------------|--|
| Priority 1 | A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management. |
| Priority 2 | A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management. |
| Priority 3 | The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management. |

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Ward Funding Scrutiny Review

List of Ward Funding Applicants - Scrutiny Review Consultees

| Previously Successful Applicants |
|---|
| Arts Barge |
| Barstow House - Musical Connections |
| Catalyst@ Bishopthorpe |
| Community Sparks at Door 84 |
| Deighton Parish Council |
| Dunnington Playing Fields Association |
| Elvington Parish Council |
| Elvington Under 5's Pre School |
| Explore Clifton Library |
| Explore Strensall Library |
| Friends of Chapmans Pond |
| Friends of Danesmead Wood |
| Friends of Dringhouses Library |
| Friends of Glen Gardens |
| Friends of Guildhall Gardens |
| Friends of Hob Moor |
| Fulford Parish Council |
| Fulford Show |
| Fulford Tennis Club |
| Hamilton Panthers FC |
| Heslington Scout Group |
| Heslington Village Meeting Room Committee |
| Heworth Abundance Group |
| Heworth Scout Group |
| Heworth Without Parish Council |
| Junction Cafe |
| Low Moor Allotment Association |
| Mayfields Community Trust |
| Mosaic Community Gardens, Heworth/Friends of Glen Gardens |
| Musical Connections |
| Osballdwick Parish Council |
| Poppleton Road Monday Club |
| SCYSA |
| Skelton Village Hall Committee |
| St Chad's Greys Scout Group |
| St Edward the Confessor Church |
| Summer Holiday Childcare Club (Poppy Road Kids Club) |
| The Groves Association |
| The Obscura Project |
| The Occasion Choir |
| The Wonder Years Childcare Charity |
| West Thorpe Scout Group |
| Wheldrake Youth Club |
| York Flourish |
| Youth Café at St Mark's Rawcliffe |

| Citywide Applicants |
|---|
| Arts Barge Musical Connections St Nicholas Fields York City FC York Flourish |
| Current Applicants |
| Accessible Arts & Media Skelton Parish Council The Old School Wigginton Upper Poppleton Parish Council Wigginton Sports & Playing Fields York City Football Club |