Issues 'A' and 'B'

Issue A – A refreshed Neighbourhood Model

1. In order to review neighbourhood management and take into account the Local Government White Paper, it is suggested that there needs to be a refreshed strategy or model of delivery.

2. There are potentially 2 models of delivery that could work in York.

    o **Model 1 – increased democracy and participation**

        This model increases democracy, participation and involvement and would fulfil the national policy maker's drive for improvements in this area. National research currently shows that people feel they have little ability to influence public bodies. More than 6 in 10 (63%) of citizens feel nationally that they have no influence over decisions affecting their local area. [1]

        This model would also compliment the role of elected members as champions in their community. Sir Simon Milton, Chair of the LGA, states that:

            'Community empowerment and participatory democracy are an essential complement to direct representative democracy, not an alternative[2].'

        There is an argument that to enhance our services and deliver in line with the ethos of the Local Government White Paper, a corporate commitment to increase democracy and the public's involvement and influence in the decision-making process should be firmly established. This would then support and provide strategic importance to the new duty to be placed on local authorities from April 2009 to inform, consult and involve local people in local decisions, services and policies.

        This model would need to go wider than the current NMU work of ward committees, tenant engagement, working with parish councils and delivery within Democratic Services, and would need to corporately pull together the many engagement and involvement areas of work across the council. More power would need to be given to frontline members to give them the ability to influence decision making, enhancing their role as champions of their locality. For example, by giving them the ability to challenge the use of, and influence the allocation of mainstream revenue and capital budgets.

---

[1] The Citizenship Survey April / June 2007 England and Wales
[2] LGA and DCLG Action Plan for Community Empowerment. Building on Success. October 2007

This could be realised through service involvement in the development of NAP's and /or associated devolution of mainstream budgets to tackle locally identified priorities or ambitions utilising a budget matrix[3].

Under this model the work of Democratic Services, ward committees, tenant engagement and the NAP's would need to continue to form an integral part of delivery. However, this would need to be enhanced through corporate support to deliver increased engagement opportunities for the public. Further development of the NAP's would be required to place them as the lead mechanism to delivering local improvements, which have been identified through public consultation.[4] Better engagement mechanisms with hard to reach groups or excluded groups, older people and younger people, amongst others, would also need to be developed and corporately co-ordinated to place York as an exemplar in this field. Information gained from these sources could then be fed into existing decision making forums such as ward committees, thus enabling a more representative view from the public in shaping decisions made by the council. To demonstrate this model the potentially excluded group of young people has been explored. Their ability to influence decision making is of importance to tenant engagement, ward committee processes, youth services etc. Some aspects of increased engagement and involvement is already been delivered within the NMU. For example:

- o In the October round of ward committees, one ward committee focussed it's meeting around young people to secure their greater involvement.
- o Officers have worked with the universities during 'freshers week' to secure better communication with the university and more involvement with young people.
- o Officers are piloting an approach at a local primary school to give the pupils an opportunity to feedback their perspective on the ambitions and visions contained within their NAP. (Namely, opportunities for children and young people, crime and disorder and environmental issues). Information gained from this forum will be fed back into the ward committee process.
- o Young people involvement is being secured through the Tenant Federation and Residents Association's to ensure that they have a voice in these groups.
- o Officers are working across authority and interagency to investigate the methods used to engage young people in

---

[3] This concept is discussed in more detail within the section below entitled 'Narrowing the gap of deprivation and in Annex 5.
[4] This is discussed in detail within the section entitled ' the future corporate role of neighbourhood action plans' Annex 2.

decision making and influencing forums. As well as proposing better mechanisms, it is hoped that this will enable young people to have a voice about services commissioned for them.

To have a large impact on the level of engagement within the authority this and other engagement strategies with young people would need to be rolled out citywide, with local emphasis. Engagement strategies would also need to be developed for the other 'hard to reach' or excluded groups in conjunction with officers around the council, including those of the Equalities Team, thus ensuring a coordinated and consistent approach.

In addition to looking at engagement and involvement of such groups, the authority also needs to ensure that the methods of informing, involving and consulting the public utilise different modes of contact, thus capturing as many members of the public as possible. Some of this could be realised through electronic engagement. Improvements in this field are currently being discussed with the easy@York programme.

For example, Democratic Services would like to increase engagement through having on-line registering of speakers for meetings, completion of their public participation survey on-line and to consult residents on their views relating to scrutiny reviews and recommendations. This last issue may greatly support public involvement in Councillor Call for Actions (CCfA) that are referred to the Overview and Scrutiny team. (This is discussed in more detail in Annex 7). Within the NMU work, is planned to develop and overhaul the web information around ward committees and tenant engagement, to ensure better quality of information. Improvements are also being discussed with the easy@York programme about making the site interactive in terms of grant applications for ward committee funding, scheme suggestions on-line, voting for schemes and consultation with the public about NAP's and the setting of local priorities. It is envisaged that utilising different modes of engagement will increase engagement by the public in local authority decision making. Other mechanisms of contact supporting engagement would also need to be developed in key areas of the council.

With the adoption of this model the council would need to review the areas of the council currently providing community engagement and either restructure (as part of an enhanced NMU) or greatly improve co-ordination across the council to deliver this under an overall framework. This model does offer great potential council wide and would place the authority in a

strong position in terms of the engagement and involvement agenda.

It should be noted that under this model some services may continue to be delivered on a geographic basis, such as Children's Centres. The model will not preclude this level of flexibility for services within the council or partners.

o **Model 2 – increased localised services and neighbourhood management**

This second model could take Model One a step further, into delivering localised services and neighbourhood management, on a geographic area basis. In developing an area-based model CYC would need to consider the findings of the 35 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders, concerning empowering communities, shaping places and Neighbourhood Management and Social capital. [5] One of the major findings of these pathfinders was that it is not only about promoting safe and cleaner neighbourhoods but also about services well beyond the 'crime and grime' issues.

The Pathfinders were established to enable deprived communities and local services to improve local outcomes, by improving and joining up local services and making them more responsive to local needs. In the Pathfinders Neighbourhood Management was seen as relatively inexpensive to deliver. However, no local authority is using or proposing to use its own mainstream funds to fund their core neighbourhood management functions. They did find however, that they were successful in coordinating services and joining up services, whilst also engaging local residents in ways that increased the responsiveness of providers.

Bearing in mind the findings of the Pathfinders it is clear that many council (and potentially partner services) should be included in an area-based model. This could include, but not be restricted to many of the service delivery areas of Neighbourhood Services, including street cleaning, grounds maintenance, along with other areas of the council concerning estate management, tenancy enforcement, early years youth services, etc.

Currently CYC has one model that fits this localised approach - the Bell Farm Agreement, which is currently being reviewed and relaunched in December 2007. Developed a number of years

---

[5] Kevin Harris (1/10/2007), Neighbourhood Management; empowerment, place shaping and social capital (LGiU and STEER) reference PB 1599/07L

ago this provides a contract between the service providers and customers to ensure that a 'good service' is delivered. It covers service providers such as leisure, housing, dog wardens, police, health, education, street cleaning etc. The development of this was very time intensive. This model could be used as part of the further development of NAP's to draw council and partner service providers into delivering services set through publicly determined ambitions and visions of the wards. Under this model the content of NAP's would be closer to the governments vision of Neighbourhood Charters referred to in the Local Government White Paper.

The model would provide elected members with greater ability to influence mainstream services and the priorities of the council at a local level. With corporate commitment to such a model, the ethos of improving services at a local level targeted at local needs could become encapsulated into other areas of the council and it's partners.

Should the council wish to see such an approach further investigated and delivered the council would need to consider the resources, both in terms of staffing and revenue, and structural alternatives across the council to facilitate its delivery.

3. In summary Members have 3 options. Firstly members could continue with the existing ad-hoc neighbourhood management arrangements. Second members could adopt Model 1 and third, Members could adopt Model 2, as detailed above. Members are recommended to consider these options, in light of the remaining content of this report, and identify their preferred model for delivery of neighbourhood management.

Indicative Financial Impacts

Model One

This model builds on the existing engagement arrangements. There is potential to deliver this model within the existing management and resource allocations i.e. cost neutral. The staffing resources within the NMU may need to be reconfigured to deliver this model effectively. This can be done in budget. However, should additional contact methods be investigated and implemented these may have additional resource implications.

Model Two

This model is likely to require additional financial resources, the level of which would need to be determined following the review of which services would be best delivered within a geographic model area basis.

Issue B - Ward Committees or Area Forums – Options for Devolution

1. The NMU supports 18 ward committees, and in many ways the Neighbourhood Management officers are merely providing an administrative service, where they are unable to embrace the opportunities of wider engagement and community development for the ward committees. Whilst servicing this heavy demand, they are not able to proactively undertake any work within the community. The workload around ward committee business is substantial within the NMU, from the production of Your Ward and NAP's, to booking venues, taking notes at meetings and arranging the management of the Local Improvement Schemes budget. With the introduction of the ethos of the Local Government White Paper, the workload will continue to increase. If the NMU is to respond to this ethos, then options will need to be investigated in terms of either increasing the staffing establishment of the NMU to enable the necessary level of support to these 18 ward committees to continue, or review the devolution methods used in the city.

2. One option would be the introduction of 5 or 6 Area Forums based on amalgamated ward boundaries (which could for example be based on the Neighbourhood Pride zones formed during the Street Scene Review). These Area Forums would be supported at an officer level across the city and take the place of the 18 ward committees, thereby reducing the administrative burden within the team. The ward boundaries would continue to remain the same, enabling ward members to still meet with the public and work within their wards as Champions in the Community as the elected representative. However, this would not be supported by officers of the council. The ward committee decision making body would cease to exist and be replaced with the Area Forums. This would require a constitutional review to reflect the new arrangements and provide for delegation and decision making at this level.

3. Other than resources this change to the devolution arrangements would potentially enable better strategic links between the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy and local decision making. This would be achieved due to reducing the number of NAP's to 5 or 6 from 18. It may also provide an opportunity to deliver more focussed services on an area basis, delivering services which meet the needs and demands of the local population. Under this proposal each Director could act as a Champion for an Area Forum to ensure that corporate links are made with the local issues, thus also providing for better co-ordination and senior officer representation at the Area Forums.

4. There are however, a number of issues with this method of devolution. Firstly frontline councillors may feel less in touch with their locality. The public may also find it difficult to identify with a geographic area as large as an Area Forum and may not see this as their 'community' or 'neighbourhood' when identifying local priorities and issues. (Currently this problem can be identified within some existing ward committee areas which contain a number of villages or distinct and different areas of wards). As a result of feeling less in touch with the neighbourhood the public may also feel less in touch with elected members, the council and therefore feel that they have less ability to influence decision making within the council. This may result in a reduced ability to drive local priorities from the public into the council mainstream decisions.

5. Verbal advice from the LGiU was that York should continue to work with the smallest population areas of the city that it could afford, to enable effective engagement to continue. Should members wish to see an Area Forum model investigated further the LGiU could be commissioned to investigate how this devolution model would work in York in the context of the refreshed neighbourhood model and requirements on the local authority to effectively inform, engage and involve the public in local decisions. By appointing independent consultants, such as LGiU, a review would benefit from the ability to compare the York model of delivery with that of other local authorities and would provide independency to the process.

Deliberately left blank

6. In summary Members have 2 options. Firstly to continue with the existing ward committee devolution structure. However, it should be noted that additional resources may be necessary within the NMU to provide this level of support and enable the authority to adequately respond to the government agenda on neighbourhoods. The second option is to consider a devolution model around Area Forums. Should Members wish for this devolution model to be investigated further it is recommended that consultants, such as LGiU, are commissioned to shape this in the context of the refreshed neighbourhood management

model and the government agenda. Members are recommended to consider these devolution models in light of the content of this report and identify their preferred option.

Indicative Financial Impacts

Ward Committees

To continue to deliver within the existing ward committee devolution structure would be cost neutral.

Area Forums

Delivery under an Area Forum model will reduce resource demands around servicing of meetings, within the NMU. However, under this model local improvement schemes, YourWard and NAP's would still be delivered on a larger geographic area to the same population . Member interaction would still occur on a ward basis and coordination of members within Area Forums will be required.

It is therefore likely that this model be cost neutral or to realise a saving of minimal resources within the NMU. However, this resource may be required on the coordination of members within Area Forums.