

Executive

26th February 2008

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

Neighbourhood Management Review

Summary

- 1. On the 15th January 2008 the Executive considered a report of the Director of People and Improvement entitled *Review Report: a new approach to city management.* The report provides an update on progress against a number of issues raised in the Members Policy Prospectus which was agreed by Group Leaders on the 23/05/07. This requested that officers looked at finding a consensus on the way forward for the city, including extended public consultation arrangements, improved communications with residents (including the introduction of a monthly news-sheet), development of devolved decision making arrangements for local communities and capacity building for the public sector.
- 2. The 15th January 2008 Executive also considered a report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services entitled *Community Leadership and Neighbourhood Management*. A notice of motion had been received on this issue which required a formal officer response. At the meeting of 15th January the Executive determined to defer the referring of the motion back to council until after the Executive had considered the issues raised. The detail of the motion, and the issues raised are detailed at paras. 22 to 24 below.
- 3. This *Neighbourhood Management Review* report considers the role of Neighbourhood Management within the council in response to the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities,' and The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The report deals with the issue raised within the members policy prospectus concerning devolved decision making against this government policy framework.
- 4. The report makes recommendations for the future delivery of neighbourhood management in York, taking into account the range of

opportunities that the White Paper presents. Members are asked to select options for:

- future development concerning a refreshed model of neighbourhood management
- o ward committee and Area Forums options for devolution
- o the future corporate role of Neighbourhood Action Plan's (NAP's);
- o participatory budgeting and 'community kitty's'
- o narrowing the gap of deprivation
- the transfer of community assets and support to community groups and facilities
- Councillor Call for Action (CCfA).
- The role of Parish Councils

Background

- 5. A Neighbourhood Pride Unit (NPU) was formed in December 2004 and stemmed from a review of the neighbourhood management arrangements undertaken by *Meridien Pure*, an independent consultancy appointed by the Chief Executives directorate. *Meridian Pure* were commissioned to examine the future role of neighbourhood management to support the new developments in the implementation of York Pride at a community and neighbourhood level. *Meridian Pure* found that in York there were numerous elements of good practice including neighbourhood planning, community development actions, the provision of the street environment service, the work of Safer York Partnership, the work of ward committees and the delivery of local improvement schemes at a ward level.
- 6. However, they identified that Neighbourhood Coordinators (now known as Neighbourhood Management Officers), were pulled in many different directions, creating a workload that was not manageable. The *Meridian Pure* review also highlighted a number of gaps that needed to be addressed if York was to fulfil it's potential. These were
 - Credibility gap an issue around the status, clarity and profile of neighbourhood management. That not everyone understands what it is about.
 - A responsibility gap in terms of who was going to drive forward neighbourhood issues.
 - There was no mechanism for joined up planning at a neighbourhood level, to produce a plan for ward based improvements that all service providers would sign up to.
 - There was no neighbourhood dimension to the work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

7. Meridian Pure made recommendations including proposed structural alterations which they considered were needed to enable delivery in a more cohesive and comprehensive manner. These recommendations were achieved in part through the formation of the NPU, although some of the gaps and issues identified by Meridian Pure in 2004 are still valid now, (more critically around credibility and resources). In 2007 as part of the Neighbourhood Services restructure the NPU were renamed the Neighbourhood Management Unit (NMU).

Current Role and Successes of the NMU

- 8. Since 2004 the Neighbourhood Management Unit (NMU) have delivered a successful diversity of engagement with a wide and varied customer base. The routine support to ward committees has been sustained and the service has continued to develop and deliver innovative solutions. For example, the extent and quality of tenant engagement, and the development and production of Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs). The NAP's provide a local based vision for all wards and also presents a future opportunity (if embraced), to form the strategic and fundamental link with the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement (LAA). The NAP's can also be developed to incorporate local performance data, for example, the number of missed bins, fly tips, time taken to fix street lights etc.
- 9. When compared with other unitary authorities across the country, the NMU have delivered excellent and innovative services. They have a diverse role which includes:-
 - Ward committee administration and development
 - Development of Neighbourhood Action Plans and working in partnership with others
 - Housing tenant involvement service, delivered via a Mature Partnership Agreement and funded via Housing Revenue Account for Housing Services
 - o Liaison with Parish Councils
 - Community centre management and support
 - Community development
- 10. The work of the NMU is at the forefront of the Government Agenda. Recent exchanges of information between Authorities has led to visits by other Authorities to York to learn from York's approach. A representative from the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) recently spent 3 days examining the role of the NMU in engaging the community, and the concept of ward committee funding (participatory budgeting). The Head of the LGIU Centre for Local Democracy has confirmed since the visit that

they have been 'very impressed by York's programme' that it 'demonstrates community empowerment but also empowerment of frontline councillors'. 'They would like to continue to hold York up as an example for other authorities as to how, with commitment, communities can be empowered and that local democracy benefits from such activity. A copy of the letter from the LGiU can be found in Supplementary Information Sheet A.

11. Full details of service delivery and successes in these areas are detailed within Supplementary Information Sheet A.

Why the need for a review

- 12. There are a number of reasons to grasp the opportunity to consider a review of neighbourhood management which covers both the NMU structure and the council's approach to neighbourhood management. National policy makers are placing a much greater emphasis on involving and empowering local communities in all areas of public service activity. There is an expectation that councils and partners will take a more strategic and systematic approach to placing community involvement at the heart of everything they do.
- 13. The successful delivery within the NMU has provided a more advanced engagement and involvement platform than seen prior to the *Meridian Pure* review and the formation of the Unit in 2004. Set alongside this are the changing and increased priorities brought through the Local Government White paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities', The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007² (LGPIH Act 2007) and the Department for Communities and Local Government Action Plan for Community Empowerment³. Combined, these provide an opportunity for a review of the council's ethos, and the strategic position of neighbourhood management within the Council delivery structure.
- 14. There is also the need to proactively demonstrate that corporate importance is being placed on empowering York's citizens to influence decision-making and in effect provide a clear 'bottom-up link' of the local needs and vision to the strategic requirements of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) 'Without Walls' and it's vision for the city the Sustainable Community Strategy and associated 3 year delivery plan contained within the LAA. This direct link or 'golden thread' must be strengthened to place the authority in a stronger position in terms of the Comprehensive Area Assessment and demonstrating compliance with our

² Secretary of State for Department of Communities and Local Government, (30 October 2007) The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (chapter 28).

¹ DCLG (26 October 2006) Strong and Prosperous Communities

³ DCLG and LGA Action Plan for Community Empowerment. Building on Success October 2007.

duties around engagement. In the new suite of National Performance Indicators (PI's), LA's will be under a new duty to demonstrate meaningful interaction with the community and the fact that the public can influence the decisions which affect their local neighbourhoods. The PI's relating to the Safer and Stronger outcome of the inspection regime are detailed in Supplementary Information Sheet B.

The White paper and other key documents

- 15. Neighbourhood management has also been changing over the last 3 years. *The Local Government White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities*, is proposing a new regime that will impact greatly on neighbourhood management issues⁴. These include:
 - Empowering citizens and communities
 - Devolving more power locally
 - o Enabling more choice
 - Giving greater redress to the public
 - Giving greater opportunities for communities to own and run local services
 - Supporting Councillors in their role as democratic champions
 - Placing local authorities at the heart of strengthening local decision making
 - A desire for the development of Neighbourhood Charters.
 - Advocating a stronger role for local authorities as leaders and place shapers.
 - Enabling the formation of Parish Councils via a simplified process and providing them with an extension to the powers of well-being subject to them satisfying 'Quality Parish' criteria.
- 16. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, which received Royal Assent on the 30th October 2007, is legislating some of the proposals contained within the White Paper. Although the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (LGPIH Act 2007) has been published there are still no explanatory notes available, which will be a useful aid in grasping the intention of the legislation, and does amend a number of earlier Acts of Parliament. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is proposing that they will publish guidance to accompany the LGPIH Act 2007 in draft for public consultation in Winter 2007, and publish the final guidance in Spring 2008. The LGPIH Act 2007 includes the requirement for local authorities to provide mechanisms for Community Calls for Action (now referred to as Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)); makes provisions for structural

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⁴ The Local Government White Paper covers a range of other areas not included in this report. This report only picks up areas which impact on the neighbourhood management agenda.

boundary change; alters electoral and executive arrangements; extends the powers of well-being to Parish councils; extends the powers of overview and scrutiny committees to review the actions of key local public service providers including the Environment Agency, and Learning and Skills Council; makes provision for LAA and community strategies amongst many other issues.

- 17. From April 2009 the LGPIH Act 2007, (under Part 7 Best Value) will also place a new duty on local authorities to inform, consult and involve local people in local decisions, services and policies. This represents a step change in engagement with local people involved in the design and delivery of services.
- 18. A further key document published in October 2007 concerning the empowerment of people is the *Action Plan for Community Empowerment*. *Building on Success*, produced by DCLG in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA). This further sets out the government's plans around greater devolution and empowerment of communities. It has 3 key outcomes
 - Greater participation, collective achievement and engagement in democracy
 - o Changes in attitudes towards community empowerment
 - Improved performance of public services
- 19. It includes issues around community kitty's and participatory budgeting, the role of empowerment champions, involvement of the public in decision-making, community assets and petitions.
- 20. The Community Kitty and participating budgeting concept is where mainstream budget is allocated to a community and local people determine how it is spent. Again, CYC could be regarded as at the forefront of Government thinking. York has had devolved Ward Committee budgets for many years and, more recently, the addition of the 'York Pride' budget, targeted at delivering tangible street level improvements in each Ward, and a 'target hardening' budget designed to facilitate local safety initiatives. All are examples of where York is meeting the current Government Agenda, and the 'Community Kitty' concept is merely a variation on current CYC practice.
- 21. Likewise, the Executive has recently allocated £50k to tackle deprivation, in super-output areas of York, and has asked the director of City Strategy to produce a report which outlines how this funding can be targeted. As such, the Council is demonstrating a commitment to tackle inequalities.

Resources and Capacity of the NMU

22. The successes of the NMU have been achieved utilising fewer resources, when compared to those of other unitary authorities. The current structure for Neighbourhood Management is shown in Supplementary Information Sheet C. (NMU officers are shown in Red, with officers based at Burton Stone Community Centre shown in Yellow). A number of experienced officers have recently left the NMU, and the unit is currently staffed with new, relatively inexperienced operational officers. For example 3 Neighbourhood Management Officers have been in the team for less than 6 months and a number of experienced officers have left the authority or are currently seconded to other areas of the council. The current financial resources of the NMU are also detailed within Supplementary Information Sheet D. Any change in emphasis or enhanced role of neighbourhood management will necessitate a review of the current structure of the NMU and skills levels of officers and potentially a further report to Members relating to resources required to deliver the new ambitions.

Issues for the future

- 23. A number of key issues are discussed in detail within annexes to this report, namely:-
 - Issue A A refreshed model of Neighbourhood Management, contained within Annex 1.
 - Issue B Options for Devolution ward committees and area forums, contained within **Annex 1**.
 - Issue C- The future corporate role of Neighbourhood Action Plans, contained within Annex 2.
 - Issue D Consultation and Engagement Strategy, contained within Annex 3.
 - Issue E Participatory Budgeting and Community Kitty's, contained within Annex 4.
 - Issue F Narrowing the gap of deprivation, contained within **Annex 5**.
 - Issue G Transfer of Community Assets and support to community groups and facilities, within Annex 6.
 - o Issue H Councillor Call for Action, contained within **Annex 7**.
 - o Issue I The role of Parish Councils, contained within **Annex 8**.
- 24. A number of these issues are interlinked and mutually supportive whereas others can be seen as stand alone. The key interlinked issues are those of the refreshed neighbourhood model (Issue A at Annex 1) and the options for devolution (Issue B at Annex 1). There is a natural flow from the refreshed model of increased engagement and participation to the current devolution via ward committee areas. However, should the

neighbourhood model of Neighbourhood Management and localised services be the preferred option then Area Forums would be a more logical devolution method.

Notice of Motion - Community Leadership and Neighbourhood Management

25. The 15th January 2008 Executive considered a report entitled *Community Leadership and Neighbourhood Management*. A notice of motion had been received, which under standing orders required an officer response in the form of an Executive report on the implications of the notice of motion.

26. The notice of motion stated:

"Council believes that residents should have the ability to influence the local provision of services. It recognises the importance of Neighbourhood Management and the need to link the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement to neighbourhood initiatives rather than imposing decisions from the top. By listening to the local community, services are made more responsive whilst at the same time promoting democracy and participation.

Council proposes approach to community leadership an neighbourhood management that recognises the key role that local councillors have to play in leading and inspiring communities to take pride in improvements that are driven by residents themselves. Current thinking demands that local councils step back from the traditional role of service provider and instead provide increasingly localised services that don't assume ownership by the Council but whose development has been shaped by local residents. It recognises that one size doesn't necessarily fit all. We believe that this Council must drive service improvement by empowering, building confidence and supporting residents. This will increase democratic participation.

Council requests the Executive to report back to Council on:

- i) The possibilities for increasing localisation and devolvement of services to the community level:
- ii) progress with Neighbourhood Charters or Action Plans;
- iii) citywide consultation at household level, engagement and reporting provisions needed to ensure ward level delivery meets local expectations, and:
- iv) the extension of participatory budgeting and partnership delivery models."

- 27. The issues raised within the notice of motion have been addressed in a number of ways:
 - a) (i) above is addressed in detail within paragraph 28 below and in Annex One Issue A A refreshed Neighbourhood Model (Model Two localised services and neighbourhood management) and Annex A Issue B (options for devolution).
 - b) (ii) above is addressed in detail within paragraph 28 below, Annex Two Issue C (the future corporate role of Neighbourhood Action Plan's) and within the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services Executive Member and Advisory Panel entitled *Update on Neighbourhood Action Planning* being considered on the 21st January 2008.
 - c) (iii) above is addressed in detail within paragraph 28 below and in Annex 3 Issue D (Consultation and Engagement Strategy) and within the sections of this report concerning the process of neighbourhood action planning as detailed within (b) above.
 - d) (iv) above is addressed in detail within paragraph 28 below and in Annex Four Issue E (Participatory budgeting and Community Kitty's).

Options and Analysis

28. The content of this report provides members with a number of options for change, to enhance the council's approach to neighbourhood management and engagement.

Annex One - Issue A - A refreshed model of Neighbourhood management

Model One - a model developed around increasing the democratic platform of the council and participation and involvement in the decision making process. This model provides the greatest opportunity on CYC to embrace the current government ethos and place this in a central role corporately across the council. This would support the work of the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy and clearly make links between the strategic direction of the authority and the local visions of local people.

Model Two – a model developed around increased localised services and neighbourhood management. This model would be the most difficult to implement and may require structural alterations to the councils directorate structures. But if applied in a structured manner this model would offer better delivery of cross cutting services within neighbourhoods and the potential for the community to be involved in the shaping of these. This model may not address all of the engagement and participation principals set out in key government policy reviews.

Table One below analyses the 2 proposed models and their effect on devolution.

	Permits influence on services and provision by ward members	Addresses the issues of poor engagement	Devolution method	Easy to achieve	Meets govt. agenda	Structural review necessary
Model One	Through NAP's	Yes	Ward committees	Yes	Yes	Only within the NMU not council wide
Model Two	To a greater degree than Model One	In part	Area Forums	No	In Part	Council wide

<u>Annex One - Issue B– Options for devolution ward committees and Area Forums</u>

Option One is to continue with the current arrangements for devolution via ward committees.

Option Two – The NMU would transfer support from Ward Committees to Area Forums. This model may result in less local engagement with the public and a feeling of detachment from the decision making process. However, by not servicing the 18 ward committees the NMU officers would have more capacity to target engagement to hard to reach groups and support elected members.

Interlinking Issues A and B

Issue A and B are interlinked. Should members choose Model One as the refreshed model of neighbourhood management then ward committees (Option One) would form the devolution mechanism. Under these combined arrangements there is potential to deliver elements of this model through a reprioritisation of work and a restructure of the NMU, which would be cost neutral. However, depending upon the extent of the support that members may wish to see, then some additional resources may be required.

<u>Annex Two - Issue C - The Future Corporate role of Neighbourhood</u> Action Plans

NAP's should be placed as a central vehicle for delivering the adopted neighbourhood model and tying together the strategic and corporate vision of the city developed by the Local Strategic Partnership and CYC with the local vision and needs. This option supports the engagement and involvement drive from central government policy makers. It could be utilised to underpin the links to provide a more robust framework for the setting of local priorities and facilitating services and partner responses to this. In addition this option supports and enhances the ward members role as champions in their community.

<u>Annex Three - Issue D – Consultation and Engagement Strategy</u>

With the new statutory requirement, to consult, engage and involve the public in local decisions, services and policies and the new National Indicators, CYC should develop a clear Consultation and Engagement Strategy. This approach would ensure a consistency in the approach of engagement council wide; ensure that consultations, which did not meet the required corporate standard, would not be issued; can be developed in a way as to support the neighbourhoods model and support NAP's as the main mechanism of communicating with local residents and enabling their voice in local decision making.

Annex Four - Issue E – Participatory budgeting and community kitty's

York has a proven and longstanding approach to PB within the ward committee arena. Members have the option to continue with the existing framework or to enhance this to include a pilot of residents panels allocating small amounts of revenue budget. Such an approach may well fulfil the governments agenda concerning 'Community Kitty's' and their aim to ensure they are offered countrywide by 2012.

Annex Five - Issue F – Narrowing the gap of deprivation

Option one - to continue with the current method of budget allocation. However, this takes no account of deprivation and does not target resources in the geographic areas of the city in most need.

Option Two – to apply a budget matrix, alongside a baseline allocation of funding, thereby accounting for deprivation and to develop and publish a Social Inclusion Strategy.

Option Three – to ask the NMU to work with the Economic Development Unit (City Strategy) on other options for tackling deprivation in ward based communities.

Annex Six - Issue G - Transfer of community assets and support to community groups and facilities

As no additional resources are available in the NMU the current level of support to existing community facilities could not be enhanced. The level of resource does not account for the decisions of the Executive of 23rd October which considered the implications of the Quirk Review.

Annex Seven - Issues H – Councillor Call for Action

CYC has no option in implementing CCfA as this is a statutory requirement from April 2008. However, its implementation may necessitate additional support to ward members in resolving constituents complaints and issues. Further work may be needed on this when guidance on implementation is produced and implementation occurs.

<u>Annex Eight - Issue I – The Role of Parish Councils</u>

Option One - Members could continue the existing arrangements with Parish Councils.

Option Two - to review the working relationships with Parish Councils to achieve better coordination at a neighbourhood level, with NAP's and Ward Planning Teams.

Option Three - to instigate a formal review of parish arrangements in the city, under the provisions of the LGPIH Act 2007.

Option Four – to investigate devolution to parish councils including the passporting the ward committee local improvement schemes budget. This option would require an extensive review to consider the legal, constitutional, resource, financial and double taxation impacts. This option would also impact on the devolution mechanism in the city and the refreshed neighbourhood management model.

29. Should members resolve to further investigate or implement models and options contained within this report then a future report on resources required to effect the changes and resources will need to be developed.

Corporate Priorities

- 30. The content of the report supports the Council's Corporate Strategy Values of:
 - Delivering what our customers want
 - Providing strong leadership at a community level through the support of ward members as champions of their community.
 - o Encourages improvements in everything we do.
 - Supporting and developing people in the community and voluntary sector and public as a whole in enabling them to shape and influence decisions.
- 31. The report also supports the key direction statements of the Corporate Strategy of being clear about what we will do to meet the needs of our communities, listening to communities, ensuring that people have a greater say in deciding local priorities and promoting a cohesive and inclusive communities.

Implications

Financial implications

32. The financial implications are dependent upon the models and options chosen. Further reports to Executive may be necessary dependent on the options chosen for neighbourhood management. Indicative financial impacts are included within each relevant annex to this report.

Legal implications

33. There are no additional legal implications contained within this report. The purpose of the report was to respond to the recent government White Paper and The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It should be noted that a review of the devolution arrangements to create Area Forums or enhance parish councils would result in the need of a constitutional review

HR

34. Once a number of these strategic issues are discussed and resolved the potential role of the NMU and also other areas of the council may change. If this is the case the staffing resources of the NMU would need to be examined and reported back to a later date.

Equalities

35. Equalities issues have been considered in this report. Should Members approve a refreshed model of neighbourhood management in line with Model 1 (**Annex 1**) then the Equalities Team will be involved in developing

consultation and engagement mechanisms to ensure that the opinions of hard to reach and excluded groups are captured.

Crime and Disorder

36. Issues concerning crime and disorder have been discussed in the relevant sections of this report.

ΙT

37. There are no additional IT implications of this report.

Property

38. All property implications are contained within this report in the section entitled 'Transfer of Community Assets and Support of Community Groups and facilities.' (**Annex 6**).

Risk Management

39. This report is in compliance with the councils risk management strategy. There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

- 40. Members are asked to:
 - Note the content of this report, in particular the potential opportunities available to strengthen neighbourhood delivery and communications, consultant and involvement of local people in local decisions.
 - ii) Approve a refreshed model of neighbourhood management in line with Model One increased democracy and participation (As discussed in **Annex 1** and paragraph 25 above).
 - iii) Approve the continuation of a devolution model around delivery via ward committees, as existing, to support and facilitate engagement at a local level. (As discussed in **Annex 1** and paragraph 25 above)
 - iv) Approve the development of NAP's as a more central vehicle for delivering the adopted neighbourhood model and tying together the strategic vision of the city and the local vision. (As discussed in **Annex 2** and paragraph 25 above)
 - v) Approve the production of a citywide Consultation and Engagement Strategy to support the refreshed

- neighbourhood model and consistent consultation across the council.
- vi) To note the success of delivery of ward committee local improvement schemes via a PB process and recognise that continuation of this approach will assist the local authority against the requirement to inform, consult and involve the local public in local decisions.
- vii) To request the NMU to work with the Economic Development Unit on options for tackling deprivation in ward based communities.
- viii) To note that additional support for community facilities cannot be resourced within the NMU with existing staffing establishment levels.
- ix) To note that the CCfA will be implemented from April 2008 and that it's implementation may require addition resources in the support of elected members as Champions in their wards.
- x) To approve a review of working arrangements with Parish Councils in line with Option Two detailed in **Annex 8** that will be cost neutral.
- xi) To note that additional resources or a restructure of the NMU, may be required dependant on the options chosen within this report. These will need to be reported at a later date to Executive.
- xii) The notice of motion referred to in paragraph 2 be referred back to Council, together with the recommendations of the Executive, on this report.

Reason:

To respond to the issues raised within the notice of motion, to respond to the issues raised within the members policy prospects on 23/5/07, and to seek guidance on the options for the future delivery at Neighbourhood Management.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

Wards Affected: All ✓

Background Papers

- 1. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (26th October 2006. Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper.
- 2. Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government, (30th October 2007), The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (chapter 28).
- 3. DCLG and Local Government Association (October 2007) Action Plan for Community Empowerment. Building on Success.
- 4. 15th January 2008 Executive report entitled *Community Leadership and Neighbourhood Management.*
- 5. Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services and Advisory Panel 21st January 2008 report entitled *Update on Neighbourhood Action Planning*.
- 6. Notice of Motion

Annexes

Annexes One to Eight. Supplementary Information sheets A, B, C, D, E.