



Transformation Programme - Community Hubs
City of York Council
Internal Audit Memo

1.0 Introduction and scope

- 1.1 One of the Council's priorities is 'Building Strong Communities' with the emphasis on helping communities to become more independent and make decisions about the services they need. In order to ensure that this can be achieved the Re-wiring Public Services Programme was introduced in October 2013. As part of this programme the Council wants to encourage communities to come together through a network of community hubs. The main objective of the project is to reduce the pressure on Council services and budgets by encouraging local residents to organise services themselves.
- 1.2 The Community Hubs project is part of the Community and Resident Engagement which is one of four strands to the Re-wiring Public Services Programme project. The other elements to this project are Business Efficiency Projects, Place Based Services and Public Realm and Children's and Adults Social Care and Public Health.

2.0 Initial findings/conclusions

Project Brief

- 2.1 The Project Brief was reviewed to confirm that it evolved in a consistent manner with clear guidance from the outset as to the definition of a community hubs and how the project should develop. The audit reviewed changes made to the brief to confirm these did not deviate from the overall agreed objectives of the project.
- 2.2 Verbal advice was given on the definition of a project hub at the outset with the initial draft version of the project brief written on this basis. The initial draft was in line with the overall direction of the project and was consistent with the final approved version.
- 2.3 Two changes were incorporated into the project brief. Firstly the idea of developing pilot hubs was introduced early in the development of the project brief. This concept was included in the project because at the time it was thought that the experience gained in developing a small number of pilot hubs could then be used when community hubs are created across the City. However, this approach was rejected by the Corporate Management Team who did not want some communities to have hubs whilst others did not. The project brief was not changed significantly to reflect the introduction and then deletion of pilot hubs and no work has been undertaken to develop pilot hubs before other hubs were developed.
- 2.4 The second change to the project brief was the introduction of the Burton Stone Community Hub halfway through the development of the brief. It was always intended that this hub would be included in the community hubs project but was not included in the brief at the outset because it had been developed as a separate project to that point. The inclusion of the Burton Stone Community Hub into the project didn't change the overall direction of the project but did incorporate a community hub into the scheme that had been developed more than other hubs.
- 2.5 Overall the development of the project brief was done in a consistent manner with no significant deviations from the overall objectives of the project. The Corporate Management Team had also given input at appropriate times to ensure the project was developed in line with the council's expectations.

Costs

- 2.6 The audit reviewed the process for recording the project costs to date as well as budgeting for costs that would be incurred in future. This showed that the staffing costs incurred on the project to date have not been recorded so it was not possible to confirm the amount of money that has been spent on the project to date. However, this was because the costs incurred to date were being met from the budget for the transformation project as a whole which was not currently being divided between the individual projects.
- 2.7 At this stage no overall budget has been set for the budget and no allocation model has been developed to allocate money to individual hubs, however, until community hubs have been identified it would not be realistic to undertake these tasks.

Timescales

- 2.8 The process for setting the timescales for the project was reviewed to confirm that the project whether the project is likely to be finished on time. Individual tasks within the project have been given start and end dates which were calculated based on the knowledge of staff working on the project. A Gantt chart has been produced for the project which needs to be monitored as the project complexity increases with the development of hubs across the city.

Risk Management

- 2.9 The risks for the project that have been identified were reviewed. The risks that have been assessed to date relate to the project as a whole and not for individual community hubs because these have not been created yet. The risk management process will need to be developed further once community hubs have been set up because the risks associated with each hub might be different. The risks identified with each project could then be used as a basis for allocating resources to hubs based on requirement.

Governance

- 2.10 Detailed testing of the overall governance of the Transformation Programme was covered as part of a separate audit. A review of the decision making process for this part of the project showed that reports were being produced on a regular basis. These reports are now done in a consistent manner from the Verto project management system with no issues being noted.

3.0 Recommendations and further work

- 3.1 Once community hubs have been identified individual project briefs need to be developed for each hub. The project brief for each hub should include a risk management exercise to identify the risks associated with developing the hub so if necessary the Council can be provide support to local communities in order to manage these risks. The individual project briefs should also set down the timescales and costs for developing and maintaining each hub.
- 3.2 Additional audit work could be done next year once the individual project briefs have been produced to ensure they contain the necessary details to ensure that hubs are developed on time and within the required budget.