FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Cabinet	**29th October 2007**
Council	**22nd November 2007**

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Community Meetings: Phase One
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Report of Corporate Director of Resources

1   Purpose of Report

This report proposes arrangements for phase one of a new Community Meetings Programme. There are 3 strands to the work in phase one:

- The establishment of community meetings in each ward
- Increasing the responsiveness of services to local need, beginning with environmental services
- Community meeting arrangements.

2   Summary

2.1   In May 2007, Cabinet Members asked that options be brought forward to enable the establishment of community meetings to improve engagement with communities and responsiveness of services to local issues.   The community meetings would replace the current area committees set up in 2005. A move to community meetings would correspond with central government's local agenda, with its focus on community empowerment and responsive services. This report considers one possible way forward, developed in consultation with the Cabinet Lead.

2.2   The proposal is to set up 22 new committees, known as community meetings, eg Aylestone Community Meeting. Community meetings would form a key element of a Neighbourhood Strategy. Phase one would address the set up of the community meetings, whilst phases two and three would consider further development around new ways of working within the wards. The phases are outlined in summary below:

2.3   Phase One:
- Set up community meetings
- Identify ward priorities and produce action plans
- Allocate the budget against the plan
- Increasing responsiveness of services to local issues

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- Introduce new ways of working with community meetings by Environmental Services.

2.4   Phase Two:
- Extend new ways of working to more services
- Develop community meetings within a ward community engagement network
- Consider participatory budgeting, planning activities e.g. Planning for Real.

2.5   Phase Three
- Extend new ways of working to more services
- Consider other developments identified as good practice.

3   Recommendations

3.1   Cabinet is asked to:

a) Recommend to Council:

 i. The establishment of 22 community meetings with effect from 1st April 2008 on the basis and terms of reference set out in this report and appendices;

 ii. That the current area committee arrangements to cease on 29th February 2008 to allow time to plan for the new community meetings and to set up the new arrangements;

b) Approve that each community meeting be allocated an annual budget of £10,000 for 2008/09, increasing to £15,000 for 2009/10 and 10/11, to be used as set out in the report and appendices;

c) Approve the start up and communication costs identified in section 9 of the report;

d) Approve that an appropriate level of staffing support be determined through the budget process;

e) Agree that Area Committees must spend within their current year allocation of £25,000, except as already agreed by Cabinet.

4   Report

4.1   Background

Leicester has long recognised the importance of neighbourhood working throughout the city. This is both in terms of responding to the needs of different communities and also in relation to central government's increasing emphasis on neighbourhood management and locality based working.

4.2   Prior to 2003, the council developed a strategy entitled Revitalising Neighbourhoods. Part of the strategy was to set up neighbourhood forums

across the city. The forums were to consist of and be led by local residents, with Councillors and service managers providing a supporting and facilitator role.

4.3 The emphasis of the neighbourhood forums was to be on empowering residents, and developing the role of councillors as community leaders exercising participatory democracy. In addition, it was intended to set up a city centre forum to bring together the interests of city centre residents with those of other stakeholders such as businesses and people who use the city centre for work, leisure or shopping.

4.4 However, after May 2003 the emphasis changed. Area Committees were set up, centred on Councillors as decision making members and engagement with residents through more traditional mechanisms such as public question time. Over the 4 years, 8 out of the 10 proposed area committees were set up and are currently still in operation.

4.5 Over the years, the council has moved increasingly to neighbourhood working. The new Strategy for Leicester and the emerging vision for the city council emphasise the role of neighbourhood working in the city. Neighbourhood management now operates in areas of the city. All of this is consistent with the government's White Paper, "Strong and Prosperous Communities (2006)" which presented a vision of "Responsive Services and Empowered Communities". This will give people more say in running local services and enable them to get more involved through neighbourhood management. The community meetings will build on the existing neighbourhood arrangements and are considered to be a key element in delivering this agenda in Leicester. Over time it is anticipation that they will:

- Empower local communities by involving them in setting the priorities for action in the wards and neighbourhoods where they live, and as a result in the longer term, make the city more sustainable;

- Improve services through being more responsive to local needs. By recognising the diversity of the city we will be able to provide local solutions to reflect local communities.

4.6 This report proposes the replacement of existing Area Committees with 22 new community meetings.

5. Community meetings – Principles

5.1 The main purpose of the community meetings is to bring people together to take action to improve the quality of life for people living in the ward.

5.2 There are many examples of neighbourhood working arrangements throughout the country, all working in different ways. These have been used to inform the proposals for Leicester.

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5.3 Community meetings would be accessible to people living in the ward because they are local. They would deal with issues locally, in the ward and within neighbourhoods in the ward. The meetings would be held within the ward and in ways that encourage local people to participate in designing solutions to local issues. They would encourage the involvement of all sections of the community, particularly those whose voices are often not heard.

5.4 The community meetings would act as a catalyst for improving the responsiveness of services to local needs. This would be achieved through:

- establishing an annual programme of work to address local priorities. This would inform service planning and be a framework for allocation of the ward budget.

- working with services and partners on a local basis to improve the response to local concerns. This would be implemented in phases, beginning with Environmental Services. Other services areas would be considered in phase 2.

5.5 It is proposed that the first cycle of community meetings would be held from April to June 2008.

5.6 The full terms of reference and how the community meetings will operate is at Appendix One. Proposals for Environmental Services are attached at Appendix Two.

6.   Outcomes

6.1 Ultimately it is anticipated that a number of outcomes would be achieved:-

- People will have opportunities to influence and be involved in decision-making on issues that have a direct impact on their lives within their neighbourhoods;

- Places will be cleaner and safer;

- People will more satisfied with their neighbourhoods.

6.2 Community meetings would be a key element in a toolkit of community engagement; and will contribute to community regeneration, the reinvigoration of democracy, community safety and community cohesion. In terms of community cohesion, the council is already committed to assessing the level of cohesion within wards using the Boeck model. This will involve a survey carried out by local people looking at indicators of cohesion within their ward. The results will then feed into the ward's annual programme of work and could be used to help define priorities.

7.   How the Community Meetings Would Work

7.1 It is envisaged the each community meeting would work in slightly different ways, recognising that one size doesn't fit all. One main guiding principle

would be that of "managed informality". It is proposed that there are a number of common factors across all of the community meetings as outlined below:-

a) There would be 22 committees. Some wards may decide to work jointly on issues that cross ward boundaries, or in exceptional cases work jointly.

b) Ward councillors would be the committee members. Residents would be encouraged to attend. Partners, services and representatives of consultative groups (e.g. tenants groups) and community groups will be invited to attend.

c) The Cabinet would allocate a budget of £10,000 to the committee to implement ward priorities. Up to one third would be allocated to a community chest and two-thirds to ward action plan priorities. Some would be allocated to one-off spending. Guidelines will be drawn up to give clear direction on how the money can be allocated. Other funding options will also be explored eg, government, lottery and other partners possibly as match funding.

d) Meetings would take place in three monthly cycles, stating in April 2008. The programme for the first year would be:-

- First cycle: identify priorities for the ward to produce a Ward Action Plan.

- Second cycle: introduce new Environmental Services arrangements. Agree Ward Action Plan

- Third cycle: implementation of Ward Action Plan.

- Fourth cycle: Monitoring and review of Ward Action Plan

e) Meetings would be in two parts. Part 1 would encourage the engagement of local people and partner organisations on local issues, in an informal setting such as discussion tables on specific issues, and roadshow type information stands. Other options include visits, fact finding sessions and patchwalks. These meetings could take place whether or not a quorum of ward members was present, provided that the status of such meetings was clear. Part 2 would be a formal business meeting, for example agreeing priorities for ward plans, but would only be necessary where there was a formal decision to be made.

f) Members will be sent a questionnaire to get views on venues, dates and other issues as part of the planning process prior to implementation. To engage as many citizens as possible, it is anticipated that meetings will often be in the evenings.

g) The community meetings would be used by the council to consult on the council's budget. This will provide an effective means to focus public consultation and deliver a representative view from the public.

h) Services would work with community meetings to improve their knowledge of local issues and their responsiveness to local concerns. This would be a phased approach, beginning with Environmental Services. Further development of community meetings would need to consider the changing needs of the 24-hour society in making services more responsive to local needs, particularly within the city centre area.

i) Partners are an important component in the success of community meetings. Work to engage partners is already underway and informal discussions have taken place. The Police have recently re-organised their boundaries to fit the area committee boundaries and as a result it is anticipated that there would be joint working between community meetings to fit in with these arrangements and work effectively across the partners. It is envisaged that the community meeting would nominate representatives to attend the Police Joint Action Groups. The current operational boundaries for health partners would also be accommodated in terms of joining up community meetings on specific issues. Links will also be made to existing neighbourhood forums.

8. Issues for further consideration

8.1 A number of issues require detailed consideration and these will be reported back to Cabinet as appropriate. These are outlined in the following paragraphs.

8.2 Success Criteria

Allocation of resources will impact on the scope of the ward committee. The success criteria will be developed following the decisions about the arrangements.

8.3 Neighbourhood Management

Neighbourhood Management is in place in the five most deprived areas in the city. It focuses on addressing the deprivation in those areas and closing the gap. Two areas have support from full time managers whilst the housing manager in each area supports the remaining three. In addition, the Braunstone Community Association is developing a neighbourhood management approach as part of its plans to sustain New Deal work when the New Deal for communities funding finishes. A Neighbourhood Board, where the majority of members are residents is the decision making group. Work on both community meetings and neighbourhood management needs to dovetail together.

8.4 Building ward capacity

Consultation with officers working at ward level needs to take place. There is already a good working link between environmental area teams and housing. We will build on current good practice in order to achieve the desired outcomes for community meetings.

8.5   Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a method of giving people a direct voice where money is spent. It claims to enhance participation in local democracy and improve delivery and cost-effectiveness of local services. It is a participatory and deliberative process with communities and contributes to understanding and cohesiveness. It can be applied at different levels, from a percentage of a council-wide budget to allocation of grants.

Levels of officer support for this has yet to be determined and thus has not been factored into the resource options in section 10. Further work is being carried out to assess how it could work in Leicester and the additional financial implications.

8.6   Links to Scrutiny and Cabinet

Community meetings would play a significant role linking to the Council's scrutiny processes and thus ultimately feed into the Cabinet. They would have the local knowledge and expertise to feed on-the-ground evidence to Task Group Reviews as required. They would also be able to suggest topics for scrutiny reviews to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would act as the scrutiny body for work of the community meetings.

8.7   Joint working – City Centre

Castle Ward Committee covers the city centre. This could run parallel to the ongoing City Centre Management involving developers and retailers etc. There could be the possibility of joint working on matters and on occasions the need for specialist groups looking at different issues. Further work is required to resolve the practicalities of this issue.

8.8   Voluntary Sector

Leicester Partnership's engagement, supported by the Community Empowerment Network, with neighbourhood based voluntary and community sector organisations is currently aligned to the Area Committees which this reports recommends are disbanded. Consideration will need to be given by the Leicester Partnership and the council, as the LAA Accountable Body, to this engagement within the new community meetings and the appropriate support required.

9.   Communication

Marketing and communication are essential to build awareness, provide information and encourage attendance at committee meetings and other community engagement event. The communication schedule is attached at appendix three.

Key communication activities identified to date include:

- Information event for potential invitees in February 2008 (venue to be confirmed).

- Website, core publicity material (e.g. poster and leaflet) templates for each ward.

- Use of media, LINK and FACE

In addition, a member development workshop is proposed.

10. Resources

10.1 Start up costs

There are a number of cost implications for setting up community meetings, including promotion, ward budgets, support staffing costs. These are detailed below:-

Start up costs	£	£
Information event, including room hire	2,000	
Member workshop (minimum)	1,500	
Communications	4,000	**£7,500**

Recurrent costs Ward budget Each ward to have an allocation of £10,000	220,000	**£220,000***
Costs required for year 1 excluding officer support		**£227,500**

*Currently there is £250,000 allocated to area committees. Under the proposed model there would be an underspend of £30,000.

10.2 Ward Committee Support

Committee Services Officers and Member Support Officers currently provide support to the Area Committees. This involves support to councillors in providing creative solutions to problems in the areas, dealing with problems raised at the Area Committees, research, agenda preparation, clerking of the meetings and any follow up work required. The proposed community meeting programme involves significantly more meetings, higher expectations, new ward plans, additional support for community engagement and dedicated support to service the new ways of working with Environmental Services. Having regard to this it is felt that additional officer support will be necessary to ensure the success of the community meeting arrangements. The level of support will be further considered and the cost determined as part of the budget setting process and options will be presented at that time. For

planning purposes an additional figure of £200,000 has been assumed. No allowance has yet been made for the cost of any extra support from Environmental Services (Appendix 2).

11.   Financial Implications

11.1 It is proposed that budgets for community meetings, to be used for one off spending, should be £10,000 in 2008/09, rising to £15,000 in 2009/10 and 2010/11. This will be funded by current revenue budgets for area committees and the existing capital programme provisions of £300,000 as follows:-

	08/09	09/10	10/11
Revenue Budgets	176k	220k	220k
Capital Programme	44k	128k	128k
	220k	**348k**	**348k**

The level of annual budget from 2011/12 onwards will be reviewed once the community meetings have become established.

11.2 Guidelines on how the above sums are to be spent will be required. The present annual level of funding to Area Committees is £250,000 (£25,000 for 10 committees), which is met from a revenue budget in the Resources Department.

11.3 The budget for the support to Area Committees is £140k pa. The development of 22 community meetings would require a greater level of secretarial and administrative support. Options are being prepared, but an indicative additional cost is likely to be in the region of £200k. The precise figure, when confirmed, will be included as a growth item in the Resources Department's revenue budget strategy for 2008/09 to 2010/11. It is, however, highly unlikely that the additional cost could be funded from savings elsewhere within the Resources Department, so an addition to the Department's revenue budget planning target would need to be approved.

11.4 The Area Committees have not spent all of the money allocated to them over the last 2 years, but the money has been carried forward as an earmarked reserve. This reserve currently stands to £501k. Some of this reserve could be used, with the approval of Cabinet, to fund the one off set up costs of £7,500 and any in-year additional staffing resources identified in the report. As things stand the current area committees have an expectation that their share of unspent monies will still be available to them with the introduction of community meetings. It should also be noted that the amount of money spent and committed by each Area Committee differs considerably. Two areas have spent and committed nothing, while one has spent £55k. One area has already spent/committed £35k in the current year – ie it has drawn on the earmarked reserve.

Andy Morley, Chief Accountant, ext 297404/

Mark Noble, Chief Financial Officer, 297401

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11.5 Legal Implications

Legal services have contributed to the terms of reference and how the committee operates (Appendix One). There are no further legal implications.

Peter Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services ext 296302

12. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	yes	Section 6
Policy	yes	Whole report
Sustainable and Environmental	yes	Section 5 Appendix two
Crime and Disorder	yes	Section 5
Human Rights Act	no	
Elderly/People on Low Income	no	

13. Risk Assessment Matrix

The impact of community meetings on the desired outcomes will be dependent on the choice of budget options.

14. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

Strong and Prosperous Communities, DCLG, October 2006
Labour Manifesto, May 2007

15. Consultations
Councillor Bhatti, Cabinet Member, Community Safety and Housing
Councillor Wann, Cabinet Member, Environment and Sustainability
Adrian Russell, Service Director, Environment Services
Charles Poole, Service Director, Democratic Services
Peter Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Andy Morley, Chief Accountant

16. Report Author   Margaret Frith, Policy Officer, Ext 297121
Liz Reid Jones, Head of Democratic Services. Ext 398899

Key Decision	Yes
Reason	Is significant in terms of i effect on communities living working in an area comprisir more than one ward
Appeared in Forward Plan	Yes
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

1.   Terms of Reference

1.1   The Purpose of a Community Meetings is:

To bring people together to take action to improve the quality of life for people living in the ward.

1.2   Roles of the Community Meeting

a) Involve residents in local decision-making.

b) Work with residents to find solutions to local issues.

c) Work with local partners.

d) Express views when consulted by the council and partners.

e) Develop, monitor and review plans affecting the neighbourhood.

f) Recommend the allocation of the neighbourhood budget in accordance with plans for the neighbourhood.

g) Monitor quality and performance of services in the neighbourhood provided by the council and its partners.

h) Assist the council's scrutiny committees with the development of policy and scrutiny of Cabinet decisions.

i) Refer issues to the Council.

j) Exercise functions, powers and duties delegated to the Community Meeting by the Council or Council Cabinet.

2   How the Community Meeting Operates

2.1   Number of Committees

a) There will be 22 community meetings, one in each ward.

b) Community meetings may agree to form joint committees or hold joint community meetings with other wards as appropriate.

c) Cabinet members may attend community meetings without invitation.

d) The community meeting may set up working groups to identify and achieve the priorities within the ward.

2.2   Membership

Community meeting members will be the councillors for the ward.

2.3 Invitees

a) Individuals and groups will be encouraged to attend and participate in the meetings, including:
b) Local residents
c) Housing Associations
d) Primary Care Trusts
e) Police
f) Fire and Rescue Services
g) Tenant and Residents forum
h) Young Peoples Network
i) Older Peoples Network
j) Community Groups
k) Others as decided by the Committee

People attend should work or live in the ward.

A community meeting can co-opt a number of non-voting members. One of their roles would be to constitute and run informal meetings when there is not a quorum for a formal meeting. (Additional guidance will be developed on this issue).

2.4 Budget

a) A community meeting within a ward will have a budget allocated to it by Cabinet

b) The principle for allocating resources would be to implement priorities within the ward as set out in the ward action plans

c) Up to one third will be allocated to a community chest to fund projects to be run by voluntary and community groups.

d) Two thirds will be allocated to service improvements, as identified in the ward action plan

e) Additional funding may be attracted from other sources.

2.5 Working with Services

In phase one Environmental Services will work with community meetings by:

a) Responding to local issues raised at community meetings.

b) Proactive dissemination of ward based information.

c) Service Planning and prioritisation.

This will be extended to other services in subsequent phases.

2.6 Voting and Decision-Making

a) As far as possible, community meetings should seek to reach agreement by consensus rather than vote.

b) It is for the chair of the meeting to decide whether a matter should be decided by a vote. Each councillor shall have one vote. Issues put to the vote shall be decided by a majority of the councillors present at a quorate meeting of the community meeting. In the case of equal votes, the chair of the meeting shall have the second or casting vote.

c) Budget expenditure decisions must be in accordance with Council's Budget and Policy Framework, Contract and Finance Procedure rules. Legal and financial implications must be considered and taken into account.

d) Expenditure must be authorised a Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Lead based on recommendations by the community meeting. No action or expenditure should be incurred contrary to officer advice without referral to Cabinet. Cabinet will receive regular reports on expenditure.

2.7 Quorums

Two councillors from the ward constitute a quorum. Both must be present to hold a formal meeting. Where there is no quorum a co-opted non-voting member could be elected as chair (see 2.3 above), however no formal decisions could be taken in the meeting (additional guidance will be developed on this issue).

2.8 Meetings

a) All community meetings will meet between April and June 2008

b) Meetings will take place in three monthly cycles.

c) At least one meeting should be held per cycle.

d) In the first year (from April 2008) the community meetings will operate in the following cycles:

e) First cycle: identify priorities for the ward to produce a Ward Action Plan.

f) Second cycle: Introduce new Environmental Services arrangements. Agree Ward Action Plan

g) Third cycle: Implementation of Ward Action Plan.

h) Fourth cycle: Monitoring and review of Ward Action Plan

i) Where the community meeting needs to meet to conduct formal business, the Council's committee procedure rules will apply including those relating to access to information, notice of meetings etc.

2.9 Agendas

a) The community meeting must set an agenda for each meeting by agreement between the ward councillors where possible, otherwise at the discretion of the person chairing the meeting.

b) The meeting will be in 2 parts.

c) The format of part 1 will encourage the engagement of local people and partner organisations on local issues. The style of the meeting will facilitate the expression of views of local people.

d) Part 2 will operate in a more structured way in accord with the Council's committee procedure rules and deal with business items, for example allocation of the ward neighbourhood budget.

2.10 Chairing

The Committee will elect a Chair on an annual basis. Arrangements for chairing will be confirmed at each agenda meeting. If the Chair is not present at a community meeting, another councillor for the ward shall chair. In the absence of a councillor for the ward, a co-opted member may be appointed as a chair for the meeting by all of the co-opted members. In this case the meeting will be able to work informally and not make any decisions.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The Service Director, Environmental Services is keen to champion new ways of working:

- Creating more responsive services at a local level
- Working with community meetings

The following services are suggested as being linked to key matters of local concern, which could provide an initial focus for the new community meetings

- Refuse collection issues, including bins on pavements and side waste
- Waste recycling (particularly promoting participation amongst local communities
- Street Cleaning
- Litter and litter bins
- Graffiti and flyposting inc. removal services
- Flytipping and accumulations of rubbish and litter on public & private land
- Vacant & derelict premises, unsightly buildings and land
- Dog fouling
- Pest control issues (e.g. rats & pigeons)
- Parks and green spaces (inc. verges, landscaped areas and play areas)
- Trees (especially new tree planting initiatives)
- Local air quality, pollution and noise issues
- Relevant antisocial behaviour and other issues raised through 101 service

There are three main strands to the proposed new approach:

1. **Responding to Local Issues Raised at Committee Meetings**

The service areas identified above encompass the majority of issues raised by the public at Area Committees. Whilst officers and members present at these meetings would endeavour to provide a response at the meeting, in most instances this was limited to a "we'll look into this" type of response. This often tended to be a source of frustration for those people who had taken the trouble to come along and raise an issue of concern in the expectation that they would receive an immediate answer. Subsequently, each Area Committee meeting would generate a series of written questions that would be forwarded on to the relevant service area, where a response would be drafted, checked, forwarded on for inclusion in the next meeting's papers, which would then be referenced at the next meeting. This could be viewed as a relatively bureaucratic and ineffective process.

It is therefore proposed that this type of issue should be dealt with more effectively and speedily under the new community meeting arrangements. In particular, every effort will be made to provide an immediate response at the meeting. This could necessitate having an officer from each of the key service areas attend each meeting, though due to the unpredictability over matters likely to be raised, this might necessitate something like 6 officers attending each meeting. In order that they

would have the necessary local knowledge, these officers would probably need to be "grass-roots" officers, but officers at this level do not always have the necessary skills to deal effectively with difficult or sensitive issues in a public meeting. Similarly, they are unlikely to be able to commit resources without reference to their line manager(s).

It is therefore proposed, as an alternative, that an Environmental Services Link Officer post (at manager level) is created. This officer would work closely with all relevant Council services and would have a good working knowledge of all these services and would have detailed knowledge on relevant policies, procedures and current issues/initiatives within the area. The postholder would need to have a high level of communications skills to ensure that an appropriate response is given at the meeting (particularly where someone is very unhappy/aggrieved about an issue or it is a politically contentious matter). This person would then be responsible for ensuring that matters are properly referred back to the relevant service area, that matters are actioned and that the person who raised the issue and ward councillors are directly informed of the outcome/progress. Verbal feedback could then be provided at the next meeting or a written report could be provided in relation to more substantive issues. In effect, this officer would act as the primary interface between services and the community meetings.

2. Pro-active Dissemination of Ward-based Service Information

Whilst it is important that community meetings respond to matters of local concern raised by those attending meetings, it could be argued that this gives an overall impression of "unresolved problems" rather than reflecting positive work being undertaken by council services on a regular basis. It is therefore also proposed that the new Link Officer post would regularly liaise with services and prepare a summary of recent, current and forthcoming issues, initiatives and "successes" within the ward. For example, summary details of:

- complaints/service requests and being dealt with (e.g. noise investigations, grot-spots cleaned-up, etc.)
- enforcement initiatives (e.g. a flytipping surveillance exercise, number litter fixed penalty notices issued, test purchasing exercises, etc.);
- local initiatives and projects (e.g. parks project, tree plantings, etc.)
- ward-based local environmental data (air quality, missed bins, recycling rates, abandoned cars removed, street cleanliness data, etc.) with appropriate comparator data (e.g. previous quarter/year, city-wide average, etc.).

This information would be presented in an effective, concise and professional manner, e.g. a short summary verbal, written or Powerpoint report (presented by the Link Officer or the Chair), supported by high quality, pictorially-based display boards, leaflets, etc. The key objective will be to make attending a ward committee an interesting and informative experience!

All of this information could also be presented on ward information pages of the Council's website and this would provide a means of disseminating this information on a much wider basis, as well as enabling updates to be made available between meetings. Whilst service-related statistics and performance data can currently be provided at a ward level in some instances, in others it will involve the modification of systems. However, regularly extracting, analysing and presenting ward-based data represents

a significant workload that would require the establishment of a new post of Data Analyst/Information Officer.

3. Service Planning & Prioritisation

Whilst in certain areas it may be appropriate for formal service plans to be presented to Community meetings for consultation and/or endorsement, in most instances there is relatively little detail at a ward basis. However, if the interactivity between service areas and community meetings can be improved through such a new approach, it will naturally help to ensure that (citywide) service plans will better reflect local ward neighbourhood priorities. Obviously, this can similarly help with the future development of neighbourhood plans.

However, there are many practical instances where the delivery of local environmental services can involve an element of choice. For example, the resources currently available for enviro-crime enforcement work cannot tackle every issue in the city at once and community meetings can be used to influence, if not decide, on local priorities for action. Officers could summarise the issues that the Council is aware of (e.g. litter in area A, dog fouling in street B, graffiti in area C, bins on road D, etc.), seek other suggestions from the meeting and then ask the Committee which of these issues should be the main focus of attention over the coming three or six months. This could then be the subject of a follow-up report on what was achieved. Similarly, there are other situations that can involve an element of local discretion that could be brought to the meeting for a decision and services could be encouraged to do this, wherever appropriate, so as to help support the role of community meetings.

Resource Implications

Initial/Indicative estimates:

Environmental Services Link Officer, inc. associated & on-costs	£40,000
Data Analyst/Information Officer, inc. associated IT costs	£35,000
Display materials & printing costs	£5,000
Website costs?	not included
Approx. Total Cost	**£80,000 p.a.**

Additionally, there are likely to be some initial set-up costs, e.g. to undertake development work needed to enable ward-based data and statistics to be established. A provisional sum of £20,000 could be earmarked for such work.

There are likely to be significant additional costs as the role of community meetings develops, particularly in relation to the development and implementation of neighbourhood plans, any disaggregation of service budgets and re-alignment and/or management of services at a ward level, etc; these have not been included at the present stage.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

DRAFT COMMUNICATION PLAN

<u>Purpose</u>: To increase participation in identifying and resolving local issues through community meetings.

Phase One
<u>Objective:</u> To inform stakeholders of the arrangements for community meetings from April 2008.

Stakeholders
Area Committees, attendees and support staff
Councillors
Partners
All Staff
Residents
Local groups/forums

Suggested Activities – subject to resources

Method	Audience	Venue/Channel	Date
Information Event	Area Committees	Leicester Tigers	February 2008
Workshop/training	Councillors Support Staff Partners	Town Hall	To be agreed
Public Reports	Councillors Staff Public Partnership	Cabinet Full Council Partnership Exec Partnership	29th October 22nd November 17th November
LINK	Residents		March/April
Media	Residents	Press/Radio	January – April
Reports	Directors		February
FACE	Staff		March
Team Briefings	Senior Management Team Staff		Jan – April

Phase Two
Objective: To encourage attendance at community meetings

Stakeholders
Residents
Councillors
Partners
Neighbourhood Boards
Local Groups
Consultative Groups

Suggested Activities – subject to resources

Method	Audience	Date
LINK	Residents	March/April
Leaflets	Residents	April – June
Invitations	Partners Neighbourhood Boards Local Groups Consultative Groups	March – June
Website	Residents	March – June
Posters	Residents	March - June

Phase Three
Objectives:
To inform residents of activities of community meetings
To inform appropriate services of issues arising in community meetings
To keep residents informed of progress of issues from community meetings

Stakeholders
Committee attendees
Service staff
Residents
Local Groups

Suggested Activities – subject to resources

Method	Audience	*Notes*
Committee Notes	Attendees/Service Staff/Residents	
Action Plans	Attendees/Service Staff/Residents	
Ward Bulletins	Residents/Local Groups	
Websites	ALL	leicester.gov.uk
Letters	Appropriate individuals/groups	