Leicester City Council

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS

CABINET	**1 SEPTEMBER 2003**
FINANCE, RESOURCES AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	**4 SEPTEMBER 2003**
PROCEDURES WORKING PARTY	**(TBA) SEPTEMBER 2003**

REVITALISING NEIGHBOURHOODS

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL SERVICES
AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL**

1.   Purpose of the Report

1.1   This report presents a range of options for consideration by Members on those aspects of Revitalising Neighbourhoods selected for review. The Procedures Working Party has asked for the views of the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee.

2.   Summary

2.1   At the June meeting of the Procedures Working Party, Members agreed the scope of the review of Revitalising Neighbourhoods.   The elements of the project included within this scoping were:

- Area Committees as an option for local decision making and community engagement

- Boundaries as defined by the project

- Neighbourhood co-ordinator responsibilities

- Resource issues, including

- Financial aspects of customer services.

2.2   Area Committees will have a significant impact on both the other areas of the review and the work of the Council. These are explored in some depth in section 3 of the supporting information and in appendices 1,2,3 and 4.

2.3   Members will be aware that many aspects of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project are now reflected in Council plans (e.g. Best Value Improvement Plans, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan and the Community Cohesion Action Plan) and those of other agencies and partnerships (e.g. Leicester Partnership's Neighbourhood

Renewal Strategy and Community Engagement Strategy). The report highlights aspects of the review that might impact on these mainstreamed elements.

2.4 Although the principles behind the project are bedded into many plans and strategies, the project is in the early stages of delivery. The options presented in this report could allow for a significant reshaping of the project if Members so wish.

2.5 The process of implementing Revitalising Neighbourhoods has always been seen as evolutionary, with opportunities for the Members to take stock at various stages to decide how far they want to go in localising services.

3. Recommendations

The Cabinet is asked to note the options presented in the report and to seek the views of the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee.

4. Headline Financial and Legal Implications

4.1 The financial implications were set out in the original proposals, and revised in the Cabinet paper of 25th February 2002 to incorporate revisions for project management costs. Funding is in place for the current structure of Revitalising Neighbourhoods in 2003/04, and work is ongoing to address issues beyond that, as outlined in this report. Key financial implications are expanded in paragraph 8 of the supporting information. From the outset it was always envisaged that ongoing financial implications would be met by reshaping and changing what we do, rather than by making new monies available (except to finance transition). The evolutionary nature of the project, however, provides opportunities for Members to consider additional funding at different stages as the need arises. Thus, further financial implications are likely to arise once decisions have been taken in the light of this report and subsequent review, and will be brought to Members' attention as they become apparent.

Mark Noble, Chief Finance Officer/Andy Morley, Chief Accountant
August 2003

4.2 All of the key legal implications are covered in the report, however, Legal Services will need to be fully involved as options are further considered and developed.
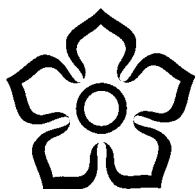
Peter Nicholls, Service Director Legal Services
August 2003

5. Report Author

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DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	No
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)

![Leicester City Council logo]

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REVITALISING NEIGHBOURHOODS
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**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL SERVICES
AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.   Background

1.1   The Chief Executive's annual report of 2001 identified that the Council needs to improve the way it listens to and works with local people so that Leicester's citizens can influence the decisions we make that affect their lives.   The Council gave a commitment to improve the delivery of Council services at neighbourhood level.

1.2   Beyond our desire to be more responsive to our citizens, there were a number of key drivers behind the need to improve, including:

- The Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal
- Reduced levels of customer satisfaction with key services in Leicester (as shown in Marketing Opinion Research International (MORI) polls)
- New political management arrangements
- Evidence of disengagement from the political process (including falling voter turnout)

1.3   In May 2001, the Organisations Working Party agreed the project brief for Revitalising Neighbourhoods. The two main goals of the Revitalising Neighbourhood Project are:

- **Increase the level of involvement by local people in their communities and in the decisions made about their communities**

- **Improve the delivery of services to local communities**

1.4   A period of research and consultation ended in a set of proposals that were agreed by Council in March 2002.   During the Spring of 2002 officers put together the project management arrangements for the project. The project formally began in the Summer of 2002.

1.5 By April 2003, around half of the proposals had been implemented, with most of the others well underway. No neighbourhood forums have been established yet, although a number of steering groups are ready to start work.

1.6 In June, Members of the Procedures Working Party called for the following elements of project to be reviewed:

- Area Committees as an option for local decision making and community engagement

- Boundaries as defined by the project

- Neighbourhood co-ordinator responsibilities

- Resource issues, including

- Financial aspects of customer services.

1.7 This report presents options for reshaping the above aspects of the project. A separate report on the financial issues concerning customer service improvements will be brought to Members. This report focuses on the possible introduction of Area Committees and their impact on the other elements within the review.

2. Options for Community Involvement and Local Decision Making

2.1 In considering how best to meet the goals of Revitalising Neighbourhoods there are a range of options for area based decision making, consultation, partnership working and service delivery and management open to Members. Over half of other Councils have adopted some form of area based arrangements, and there is evidence from them that all of the possible options can bring about improvements in service delivery and community engagement. But there are also examples where adoption of these new arrangements has failed to deliver the desired outcomes.

2.2 We can conclude from the experience of other Councils that:

- It is important that the option chosen is 'fit for purpose', that it is the model best suited to deliver the priorities of the Council and is suited to the characteristics of the city (e.g. historic, cultural, demographic, spatial.)

- There is real commitment from all concerned to make the arrangements work.

- Arrangements are adequately resourced

2.3 The Local Government Act 2000 enables two basic models for area arrangements: area forums and area committees. But there is considerable flexibility in how such arrangements are designed and operated. A further option, Urban Parish Councils, could also be considered.

2.4 The primary purpose of an area forum is to provide a mechanism for the Council to consult with the public on issues in their locality. This consultation can help inform decisions made by the Council's executive.

2.5 An Area Committee, which is a formal committee of the Council, provides a means by which Ward Councillors make decisions (delegated by the executive) on issues affecting the areas they represent. There are various ways in which an Area Committee can consider local peoples' views.

2.6   Parish Councils are a tier of local government in their own right and are able to discharge a range of functions on behalf of local people and raise local taxes. However, such arrangements are rare in urban areas.

2.7   As part of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project, the Council originally decided to set up consultative neighbourhood forums across the city, designed to influence decision making in the city.

2.8   However, the new administration has expressed a desire to re-consider this decision on the basis that the model of area committees may be better suited to the priorities of the new administration, particularly in terms of strengthening the representative role of Members.

2.9   The following section of the report and Appendices 1,2,3 and 4 provide information on area committees, options as to how they might be developed, and the associated implications to help Members decide on the way forward.

Issue 1

Area Committees are the preferred model for local decision making and community involvement in Leicester. What are your views?

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3.   Bringing the Council to the People: Options for Area Committees

3.1   *What are Area Committees for?*
Area Committees in other Councils vary considerably in the way they are designed and run. But they often share a similar purposes; **to provide better solutions to local problems and improve services by; giving some key decision making powers to Ward Members and bringing decision making closer to the public.**

If this role is accepted it implies a material level of devolution of services that are currently provided centrally. This will cost money, both in terms of resources to implement the change and ongoing administration of area committees. They will which will cost more than neighbourhood forums.

Issue 2

If the Council is to develop area committees, do you agree that their purpose should be: '*to provide better solutions to local problems and improve services by; giving some key decision making powers to Ward Members and bringing decision making closer to the public'*.

3.1   *How would area committees work?*
Below are some of the regulations governing area committees. A fuller list of the key regulations is set out in Appendix 1.

- The accountability for the functions of the Council still rests with the executive, even if the executive decides to delegate the function to Area Committees (or to officers).

- Area Committees do not have to be politically balanced (because the responsibility for delegated functions still rests with the executive).

- They must include all the elected Members who are Members for wards that are partly or wholly contained in the area.

- They cannot include Members who do not represent wards contained within the area.

- They must not have functions covering an area greater than two fifths of the area of the whole authority, measured either by geographical area or population.

- They are subject to Access to Information regulations.

3.3 *What roles could area committees have?*

Before we decide how Area Committees could work, we need to decide their roles, and there are a number of options. These are set out below, with further details on the first four roles (likely to be the most important) attached as Appendix 2.   But it should be noted that there are considerable links between all of them.

3.3.1 Executive decision making

Ward Councillors have delegated powers to make some decisions for their area. The purpose of delegated decision making would be to give Members more scope and freedom to respond directly to issues in their local communities. It is intended to help the Council make faster and more responsive decisions, tailored to local needs.

3.3.2 Community engagement

Area Committees could provide the Council with a major opportunity to involve the public in helping to decide local issues. There is a wide range of methods for doing this, from having public involvement at Area Committee meetings, having a consultative forum set up as part of or with links to the Area Committee, working with existing local groups and organisations and/or doing specific one off consultation exercises on specific issues in the area. However, Ward Members must be careful in these situations to ensure that they share the decision making with local people.

3.3.3 Community planning

Councils now have legal duty have to develop a community strategy. Area Committees could help to make sure that the community strategy for Leicester is strengthened by asking Area Committees to develop community plans for their area which would link to the citywide Community Plan.

3.3.4 Neighbourhood Renewal

The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal emphasises the importance of tackling deprivation on an area basis. This approach is recognised in Leicester's own Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. There are a number of ways in which Area Committees could be given responsibilities to help contribute towards neighbourhood renewal in the city.

3.3.5 Scrutiny

Area Committees could be commissioned by Scrutiny committees to look at a local issue or specific problem. There is also the possibility of Area Committees hosting Scrutiny meetings where there are relevant local issues. They could also be invited to comment on Cabinet decisions affecting the locality.

3.3.6 Best Value

Area committees could help the Council pursue best value by getting involved in best value reviews, consulting people in their area about services being reviewed, and challenging services from a local perspective.

3.3.7 <u>Building Local Partnerships</u>
Area committees could be a way of bringing partners in the area together to work jointly on local problems. By working more closely with ward Members, partners could be linked more closely to the democratic machinery of the Council and possibly be subject to Council scrutiny.

Issue 3

    a) **Which of these roles do you envisage for Area Committees?**

    b) **Do you support the principle of 'minimum service standards' and the suggested criteria for determining a scheme of delegation (as detailed in Appendix 2)**

    c) **Do you have a preferred option for community engagement (as detailed in Appendix 2)?**

3.4 ***How could we make Area Committee meetings effective?***
One of the issues that will have to be decided is how meetings of area committees will work. If Members wish to encourage active public involvement - as suggested in some of the options listed above under 'community engagement' - then the meetings will need to be attractive, meaningful and accessible to the public.

3.5 ***What are some of the organisational implications of having Area Committees?***
There are a number of organisational implications for the Council in setting up Area Committees. These include:

- The way Area Committees fit into the overall political management system of the Council;

- The Council's finance system;

- Service management; and

- Officer roles in relation to the Area Committees.

These implications are covered in more detail in Appendix 3.

There are also certain non-negotiable financial standards that need to be adhered to with any proposals for developing this project. These are overriding principles and further detail is provided, where appropriate, throughout this report. However, this is no reason why arrangements for area committees should not be capable of operation within the Council's normal processes of financial control. In summary, the key financial parameters that must be met are:

- <u>Budgetary control and responsibility</u>
  A single manager is appointed for each cost centre, to be responsible for monitoring income and expenditure for that area of the budget; even with pooled budgets, one named person has overall responsibility.

- **Accountability**
  Budget managers are accountable through a management framework right through to the highest level of the Council.

- **No overspends**
  A key principle within the Constitution is that overspending is not permitted, and must be managed within overall budgets.

- **Incentives and levers**
  No perverse incentives to overspend or spend up should exist. Budgets should be sufficiently large and diverse to enable budget pressures to be managed, and by permitting carry forwards as a tool to ease these pressures

- **Integrated financial framework**
  A single corporate system should exist for reporting and controlling the budget.

- **Responsibilities to be defined for Area representatives**
  Those who are members of forums or Area Committees, or have a say in how resources are spent, must sign up to an agreed set of personal obligations.

Issue 4

Do you have any views about the organisational impact of setting up Area Committees?

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4. Boundaries

4.1 The Revitalising Neighbourhood project considered a number of boundary options. These included the size of the areas and whether they should be based on administrative / political boundaries or more natural boundaries. Community groups, Voluntary Action Leicester and key partners gave their views and the boundaries (shown in Appendix 5) were agreed by the Leicester Partnership, prior to Cabinet ratification in November 2002.

4.2 Members can reconsider boundaries from three perspectives:

- Boundaries for Area Committees

- Boundaries for community involvement

- Boundaries for service management and delivery

While there is a clear logic to having a relationship between these boundaries they do not have to be the same.

4.3 By far the most common approach that other Councils take is to base arrangements on ward boundaries. This relates Area Committees directly to the political decision making machinery of the Council. Although wards do not usually represent geographical communities, this can be offset by engaging communities in different ways, as suggested in the section on community engagement (see appendix 2).

4.4 Some Council services, such as city cleansing, are now planning to reorganise their service boundaries to match the agreed ten areas. Equally, partner agencies such as Eastern Leicester PCT, are planning new services around these boundaries. Leicester Partnership

has also now developed arrangements for community representation on the LSP using the ten area boundaries.

4.5 ***The City Centre***
Under the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project, it was agreed to make the city centre a separate area. The Procedures Working Party endorsed this position in June.

4.5.1 One of the key reasons for not including the city centre in the arrangements for neighbourhood forums was because of the special nature of the city centre. It is one of the keys to the well being and development of the city as a whole, and has wider and more complex stakeholder base – far beyond that of its resident population. So it was not felt to be appropriate to have a forum of residents alone as one of the major consultative mechanisms.

4.5.2 The consultative arrangements in the city centre are now being developed under the City Centre Synergy Review, working with City Centre Management. But we need to think again about our approach to the city centre when setting up Area Committees with executive decision making arrangements.

4.5.3 An important consideration here is how the Council defines/reconciles the difference between an issue in the city centre that impacts on the whole city and one that is purely a local issue for the city centre. This difficulty, combined with the established principle that we need different arrangements for the city centre, presents a case for excluding the city centre from Area Committee arrangements.

4.5.4 The main disadvantage of excluding the City Centre from Area Committee arrangements, is that people living in the city centre would be excluded from the decisions of an Area Committee and may feel unfairly treated. However, this could be addressed if residents of the city centre are consulted (through the consultative arrangements mentioned above) on issues relevant to them. In reality the only difference would be that decisions impacting on city centre residents are made by the Cabinet rather than an Area Committee. Moreover, city centre residents would have the same access to Ward Councillors as people living in the rest of the city.

Issue 5

How do you want to manage local democracy in the city centre?

4.6 ***Deciding on the areas***
Once Members are happy with the principle of how the areas should be defined, we then need to decide on the actual map itself. Under the Revitalising Neighbourhood Project, the wards have been grouped into nine areas plus the city centre for the purpose of setting up neighbourhood forums and assigning areas for the neighbourhood co-ordinators. An important consideration in deciding the grouping of wards was to try and encourage community cohesion by bringing together people from diverse neighbourhoods. If it is agreed that the principle of amalgamated wards is to be the basis for area committees, this review provides you with an opportunity to decide on whether you want to change the current boundaries or keep them as they are.

5. Role and Responsibilities of Neighbourhood Co-ordinators - Options

5.1 ***The neighbourhood coordinators and what they do***
There are 10 Neighbourhood Co-ordinators in post, nine for local areas and one for the City Centre.

5.1.1 The co-ordinators current main tasks are to:

I. Communicate and liaise with all the Council's partners, stakeholders, elected Members, Council Departments and representatives of renewal and regeneration programmes in their local area.

II. Support Revitalising Neighbourhoods by consulting local residents and local service providers over the best way to achieve the goals of Revitalising Neighbourhoods (*Increase the level of involvement by local people in their communities and in the decisions made about their communitie*s and *Improve the delivery of services to local communities)* in the local area.

III. Help and equip groups of residents to get the best from neighbourhood management

IV. Make sure that local services or initiatives are co-ordinated and delivered locally. Report on achievement against output and outcome targets.

V. Be responsible for putting together and co-ordinating the virtual Neighbourhood Management Team, which brings together staff from the Council and other services (such as the police and health providers) to co-ordinate local services. This work includes helping the local community put together their local plan.

VI. Fundraise and help local residents and agencies fundraise for project that will benefit the local community.

VII. Manage some specific projects

VIII. Work with elected Members

IX. Review, develop and improve the Council's systems, processes and services to give local people better services, including lining up regeneration programmes and mainstream spending to help meet community needs. This work includes problem solving complex local issues that need a co-ordinated response from different agencies and Council departments.

X. Produce reports, correspondence, publicity and management information.

5.2 ***Options***
When considering the future of Revitalising Neighbourhoods there seem to be four options in relation to the Co-ordinators:

- *Status Quo* - The same number of Co-ordinators carrying out the functions listed in 5.1.1 above.

- The same, or a *modified* number of Co-ordinators (depending on number and configuration of local areas) with a modified remit

- Finding *other ways* of delivering some or all of the tasks in 5.1.1

- *Stopping* altogether the work described in 5.1.1

5.3 <u>Status Quo</u>
This option needs no particular exploration. The trick is ensuring that the work is done, and done to the satisfaction of Members and local communities.

5.4 <u>Modification</u>
A different, or the same number of Co-ordinators could have an additional, or different, role in supporting and servicing Area Committees. It would not be appropriate for staff at the level of Co-ordinators to clerk for committees, but there may well be a policy or advisory role for area committees, as well as the high level co-ordination of neighbourhood management. Further details of the potential roles in supporting Area Committees are given in the section on officer roles in appendix 3.

5.4.1 A modified role might, for instance, reduce the current level of staffing by half, with 4 staff supporting Area Committees and having a strategic role in ensuring the co-ordination of local services; and one member of staff taking the same role in the city centre.

5.5 <u>Other methods of delivery</u>
It may be possible to transfer some of the Co-ordinators tasks to other staff, or other organisations.

5.5.1 Ideally, neighbourhood management, and the complex negotiations required to bring together local services and re-assign budgets, needs someone to manage and push the process. These tasks (II, III, IV, V and IX in 5.1.2 above) could be carried out by other managers, but they do need someone to do them. The Procedures Working Party re-stated the Council's commitment to neighbourhood management, and re-designing the council to deliver services at a local level. If, however Members choose to move away from locally responsive delivery, back to professional service lead delivery there is no need to have someone to carry out these tasks.

5.5.2 The communication task (I in 5.1.2 above) could be carried out by officers passing information directly to local groups and interested residents (though this may result in patchy communication), and, of course, by Ward Members. The passing of local information from the community to officers, is, to some extent already carried out by Members on an informal basis, but a more formal method of analysis of case work and local issues, and the reporting of those issues could be carried out through the central policy unit, if they stopped doing some of the work they are currently doing, or created new posts to do the work.

5.5.3 Fundraising (VI in 5.1.2 above) could be carried out in other ways, and by other staff, but will risk being generic, and not specific to local needs.

5.5.4 Specific projects (VI in 5.1.2 above), such as the production of local plans, or overseeing short term pieces of work, could be carried out by seconded staff as required. Though, obviously, their existing work loads would need to be deleted, or carried out in some other way.

5.5.5　The impact on existing workloads of transferring work from the Co-ordinators should be taken into account if Members wish to pursue this option. This option is not recommended.

5.6　Stopping altogether
Deleting the work currently carried out by the Co-ordinators has implications for neighbourhood management and local service delivery. Without someone to co-ordinate and champion the work, the Council, and to some extent, partners may slip back into comfortable ways of working, some of which will frustrate local delivery.

5.6.1　The virtual team method of organising the Council's work to deliver community expectation was chosen over other ways of organising locally because it was cost effective. Without co-ordination and support through the Co-ordinators, neighbourhood management may require a more expensive method of delivery.

5.6.2　Stopping altogether has options for whatever form of local involvement democracy Members may wish to apply in the future, and for the co-ordination of interests in the City Centre.

Issue 7.

Which of these options do you think will work best for the Council?

6.　Resource Issues

6.1　The following elements of the original Revitalising Neighbourhoods project (along with the New Parks Customer Service Centre, which is referenced in section 7) have been funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. This funding comes to an end on 31st March 2004. Members' views on the need for and level of, continued funding are welcomed.

6.2　*Committee Administration*
Funding of £50,000 is in place for 2003/04 to provide support to Neighbourhood Forums. This funding could be used to support area committees.   However, ongoing committee administration support will be required and no decision has yet been taken as to how this will be financed when NRF ends. This issue needs to be considered in the light of this review, as the actual funding required will be dependant on Members' decisions (i.e. if area committees are the preferred option, the number of Committees as determined by the decisions on boundaries and the frequency and nature of meetings will determine the level of committee administration required).   It is envisaged that area committees will cost more than neighbourhood forums.

6.3　*Top-up Budgets for areas*
NRF money is available up to March 2004 to provide top-up budgets for locally determined spend (through Neighbourhood Co-ordinators). Members will need to consider as part of this review whether they would like to continue with local top-up budgets and if so, to what level.   Should Members chose to delegate a significant level of decision making to area committees then there may be less need for a additional budgets as main programme budgets would follow the delegated decisions.

6.4　*Core Project Team*
As detailed in Appendix 3, this team is funded by the NRF to provide project management, policy, research, communications and accountancy support for Revitalising Neighbourhoods until 31st March 2004. If a core Project Team is still required after that date to implement any new elements of the project further funding will be required, either through a bid for NRF or by prioritising existing mainstream budgets.

6.5 *General Resource issues*
Should Members decide to move towards the greater localisation of services, this will generate its own resource issues. Practice (such as it is) suggests that there is no reason why localisation per se will result in cost increases, although there are reasons why this could occur. Localisation will, however, result in additional short term costs to manage change. We have previously used NRF as a means to deliver this, and this route may be open to us again

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Issue 8.

What are your views on funding for these elements of the project?

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7. Customer Service Improvements

7.1 Members of the Council Procedures Working Party at their meeting on the 23rd June 2003 confirmed their commitment to improving customer access to services. However, this element of the project was included within the scope of this review because of concerns expressed by the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee (December 2002) about the ongoing financial implications of delivering the desired improvements.

7.2 The first major improvement in neighbourhood access to customer services, the New Parks Customer Service Centre is now up and running. This was designed as a pilot project to test the idea of local access points, evidence from the first five months of operation shows it to have been highly successful, with the level of usage exceeding expectation. The running costs of the New Parks Centre will need to be picked up once NRF expires at the end of 2003/04. Whilst this was always anticipated, the running costs of £110,000 p.a. exceed the original estimate of £75,000 p.a.

However, this particular model of delivery, though popular, is not suitable for all areas of the city. A series of alternative delivery methods are described below.

7.4 The following projects are currently underway:

- *The Telephone Access Project*
  An internal review of Leicester City Council's telephone services during 2002 by KPMG identified significant weaknesses in our existing telephone access arrangement and very low levels of customer satisfaction. Users were particularly critical of being 'passed around the Council'.

  This project will improve telephone access to Council services by developing a general enquiries contact centre for the Council. The centre will be made up of existing Council switchboard teams, ER&D helpline and additional staffing resources. The target is that at least 80% of service enquiries will be fully addressed within this Contact Centre, thus offering a more complete service and in turn reducing the pressure in the back office. The Contact Centre is on target to open in the Autumn.

- *The Customer Relations Management System*
  Customer Relations Management software is at the heart of the Council's Customer Access Strategy. A single database of customer contact information will enable us to

give a more complete service to users of the General Enquiries Contact Centre and the Councils Customer Services Centres (NWC and New Parks). E-Government money is being used for the project.   A product has been chosen and will be implemented in October this year.

7.5 In addition the following projects are under consideration:

- ***Braunstone Customer Service Point***
  The Braunstone Community Association commissioned Leicester City Council to design and build a new library and community resource centre on Braunstone Avenue with a total project budget of £2.975 m.

  Members have agreed to release capital funding to fund a larger reception area as part of the build that could be used for a customer access point in the future should on-going revenue funding become available.

  Negotiations with the Braunstone Community Association and the Libraries Service over several months secured this additional aspect to the library project. Braunstone is a priority area in the Customer Access Strategy for a direct, staffed customer service point, similar to the New Parks concept.   However, until the estimated £90,000 p.a. revenue is identified no commitment can be made.   The Council could bid for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding for the first year of opening (2005/06).

- ***Customer Services in Libraries Pilot Scheme***
  Members have agreed to fund pilot customer services surgeries in Libraries. This is a form of service delivery that may prove effective in areas where there is a demand for face-to-face access to Council services, but insufficient demand to justify a full time solution.

- ***Customer Services as part of the LIFT scheme***
  The Council is also discussing the possibility of including a Customer Services Centre within the planned integrated Charnwood Health Centre.

8. Financial and Legal Implications

8.1 All start up costs associated with the implementation phase of Revitalising Neighbourhoods have been identified and secured through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, with an additional £300,000 included within the Council's Capital Programme.   In addition £410,000 from client/contractor/consultant rationalisation and £95,000 of Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal base budget have been used to mainstream fund the Co-ordinators. £200,000 of the £300,000 capital has now been committed.

8.2. When the project was approved, it was recognised that NRF funding of £50,000 for committee administration and £75,000 (now £110,000) for the New Parks Customer Service Centre would need to be found from mainstream budgets from 2004/05 onwards.

8.3 Other financial implications relating to the project are detailed throughout this report and its appendices. In summary the key issues covered are:

- The non-negotiable financial standards relating to the project are detailed in paragraph 3.4.2 above.

- The implications for the Council's finance systems should Members support the establishment of area committees are detailed in Appendix 3.

- The potential requirement for funding for additional committee administration, locally determined top-up budgets and the Revitalising Neighbourhoods core project team are outlined in section 6 above. In particular it is envisaged that area committee will lead to extra costs.

- The capital and revenue implications of customer access improvements will be the subject of a further, more detailed report to Members.

8.4 Further detailed work on the financial implications of the project will be required once Members have reached decisions on this review.

Andy Morley, Chief Accountant/Mark Noble, Chief Finance Officer
August 2003

8.5 The principal legal implications associated with the establishment of area committees are covered in the report. Legal Services will be fully involved as options are further considered and developed.

Peter Nicholls, Service Director Legal Services
August 2003

9. Other Implications

Other implications	Yes/No	Paragraph referred
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	Yes	Throughout
Sustainability and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/people on Low Income	No	

10. Consultation

10.1 The following Officers have been consulted directly during the writing of this report (July / August 2003):

Peter Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Tom Stephenson, Corporate Director for Resources Access and Diversity
Charles Poole, Service Director, Democratic Services
Frances Wake, Head of Committee Administration
Jill Craig, Service Director, ICT & Customer Access
Andy Keeling, Service Director, Neighbourhood Renewal
Mark Noble, Chief Finance Officer

Andy Morley, Chief Accountant
Liz Reid-Jones, Head of Policy, CXO

11.   Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

- **Revitalising Neighbourhoods** - Report of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project Team, October 2001
- **Leicester City Council: Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project** - Office for Public Management, January 2002
- **Revitalising Neighbourhoods** - Cabinet, February 2002; Council March 2002.
- **Revitalising Neighbourhoods: New Arrangements for Implementation** – Organisations Working Party, May 2002.
- **Revitalising Neighbourhoods: Progress Report** – Organisations Working Party, November 2002.
- **Revitalising Neighbourhoods: Guidance and Boundaries for Neighbourhood Forums**– Cabinet, November 2002
- **Revitalising Neighbourhoods: Progress Report (No. 2)** – Directors Board, November **2002**
- **Revitalising Neighbourhoods: Progress Report (No. 3)** – Directors Board, June 2003
- **Revitalising Neighbourhoods** – Procedures Working Party, June 2003

12.   Report Author

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Area Committees:
What is permitted under the Local Government Act 2000

1. The Local Government Act 2000 says that the executive of a Council can arrange for its functions to be carried out by area committees.

2. The accountability for the functions of the Council still rests with the executive, even if the executive decides to delegate the function to area committees (or to officers).

3. Area committees do not have to be politically balanced (because the responsibility for delegated functions still rests with the executive).

4. They must include all the elected Members who are Members for wards that are partly or wholly contained in the area.

5. They cannot include Members who do not represent wards contained within the area.

6. They must not have functions covering an area greater than two fifths of the area of the whole authority, measured either by geographical area or population.

7. They can include voting members who are not representing the authority for a limited range of functions (as determined by the 1990 Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations).

8. They are subject to Access to Information regulations.

9. Members of the executive can also be members of area committees

10. Members of Scrutiny Committees can also be members of area committees. But a member should not scrutinise his or her own decision. So if a member is sitting on a Scrutiny Committee that is <u>considering specific decisions</u> in relation to functions delegated to an Area Committee of which he or she is also a member; he or she cannot speak or vote on that item at the Scrutiny Committee unless given permission to do so by the Standards Committee before the scrutiny meeting.

11. However if the Scrutiny Committee is simply <u>reviewing</u> policy related to a delegated function, there is not considered to be a conflict of interest. So in that case the Member must declare his or her interest orally before the item and can remain and speak and vote on the item.

12. Arrangements will need to be made to ensure that Scrutiny Committees can hold the executive to account for both the decision to delegate and the outcome of that delegation.

13. Functions delegated to area committees must still be carried out in accordance with the policy framework of the authority, which is set by the full Council

14. Area committees can also make decisions on non-executive functions such as planning and licensing. But this would have to be clearly distinguished on the agenda as non-executive business. It has been suggested that this measure is particularly useful for conurbations or

metropolitan areas with separate towns. But cities such as Leicester would have to balance this against the needs for consistency in the award of planning consents.

15.   A comprehensive scheme of delegations will have to be published, to include:

- Which functions have been delegated; and
- What the arrangements are for these delegations

16.   The executive should set out the limitations on delegations. Examples of limitations include budget limitations, or protocols ensuring that the area committee does not make decisions that have an adverse effect outside the area covered by the area committee.

17.   The person who has made the delegation arrangement (this would probably be the Leader of the Council under a Cabinet arrangement) has the ability to override the decisions made by area committees. But this is intended as an ultimate safeguard and it is not expected that he or she would generally do this.

18.   Meetings are subject to access to information rules.

THE POTENTIAL ROLES OF AREA COMMITTEES

A.   Options for executive decision making

1.   This is the main role for area committees. All Councillors would have powers to make some decisions for their area, and these powers would be delegated to them by the Council's executive, the Cabinet, under a Scheme of Delegation.

2.   The Council's Constitution already makes provision for the setting up of area committees (Article 10).

3.   The purpose of delegated decision making would be to give Members more scope and freedom to respond directly to issues in their local communities. It is intended to help the Council make faster and more responsive decisions, tailored to local needs.

4.   ***Decisions: flexibility vs. maintaining standards***
One of the implications of delegated decision making is that it means that the same service could be delivered in a different way in different areas.

4.1   In recent years, the idea that everyone should receive the same service or level of service has been seen as a barrier to creating services that are more flexible and responsive to local needs. This view is particularly strong in the field of regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.

4.2   Delivering services in a different way does not necessarily mean delivering them in a more expensive way. In some cases it my well be possible to save money by looking more carefully at whether a service does meet people's needs as effectively as possible.

4.3   However, it is suggested that the Council could choose to set parameters or minimum standards across the city for services affected by delegated decisions. This would then define the scope within which area committees could make their own choices about service delivery. At the same time, the executive does have the ultimate power to over rule a decision of an Area Committee if it is felt to be inappropriate.

5.   ***The principle of subsidiarity***
Before thinking about which services to delegate, it is useful to think about the principles behind the decision to delegate. The key principle here, and one that has become familiar from European politics, is the principle of subsidiary: that the most effective decisions are made at the lowest possible level consistent with efficiency, justice and policy framework of the governing body.

6.   ***What should the criteria be for deciding the decisions to delegate to Area Committees?***
It would also be useful to think about the criteria we will use to decide what decisions should be delegated, as a way of selecting and testing the decision we choose. Some suggested criteria are listed below:

> **Criteria for choosing decisions to be delegated to Area Committees**
>
> The service or issue is important to the public.
>
> There is scope for local choices (i.e. the service is not tightly prescribed by national Standards)
>
> It would be cost effective to have different approaches in different areas.
>
> Local choice on this issue is more important than a consistent approach across the city.
>
> The catchment area for the service is clear.
>
> Other Councils have successfully delegated this decision to area committees.

6.1   For information, some examples of the decisions delegated to area committees in other Councils are shown in Appendix 4.

B.   Options for community engagement

1.   Councils now have a duty to consult the local community. One of the key ways in which area committees can add value to decision making in the Council is by acting as one of the focal points for community engagement.

2.   There are a number of ways this could be done. Nine options are listed below, and the implications for each are discussed. The options are not all mutually exclusive, and a combined approach could be followed.

> **i.   No direct community engagement.**
>
> Uses ward Members' own extensive knowledge of local issues and can reflect issues raised with Members by the public through surgeries etc, but might not satisfy the desire for improved community engagement.
>
> **ii.   Area Committees carry out one off consultation exercises on specific issues that are relevant in the area.**
>
> Could focus resources used on consultation on the most relevant issues. But may not help the community to develop the capacity for more sustained involvement in more complex or strategic issues.
>
> **iii.   Area Committees use the People's Panel to consult panel members in its wards.**
>
> The People's Panel provides a relatively cost effective ready made consultation mechanism, involving people who have already said they are interested in putting forward their views. But it may not provide enough people in the area to get a broad view of opinion and might need to be supplemented with other approaches.

iv. **Area Committees involve the public in their meetings. There could be a slot for people to raise issues (a kind of surgery) or to ask questions, and/or provision in the agenda to ask the public what they think about the issues on the agenda.**

Asking the public to raise issues or have their say can provide people with a direct line to Members and to decision making. But many people would find committee meetings off putting, or difficult to follow, and may not have the skills to take part. This would have to be addressed through specific measures around the conduct of meetings.

v. **Area Committees consult with existing local groups on local issues.**

This helps area committees to connect with the existing community infrastructure and benefit from the extensive knowledge and background that those groups have. However we have to be careful not to assume that the views of people in local groups are necessarily the views of the wider community.

vi. **Area Committees invite representatives from local groups to contribute/be co-opted onto them**

This helps area committees to connect with the existing community infrastructure and benefit from the extensive knowledge and background that those groups have. However we have to be careful not to assume that the views of people in local groups are necessarily the views of the wider community. Most local authorities only co-opt others on a non-voting basis, indeed there is limited scope under legislation for any voting rights for non Councillors.

vii. **Consultative area mechanisms are developed in each area with along with area committees. These bodies consult local people, and debate and discuss issues, the Area Committee receives their views and makes decisions.**

These mechanisms could be designed specifically to be attractive and interesting to local people. There would be a clear separation of the mechanism for local decision making and political debate through the area committees on the one hand and public consultation and debate on the other. Key issues that would have to be decided are: who could be on the consultative bodies; what would the role of local Members be in relation to them; and how might partners and existing local groups fit in?

viii. **A combined area committee and consultative body is created in each area, with the committee at its core, so that committee members are all members of the wider body. Meetings could be divided into Committee business and consultation so that it is clear where decisions are being made by the Committee (with its delegated powers and the associated rules that apply) and where debate and discussion with the wider body is taking place. The wider element may have a less formal approach - with open sessions for members of the public to raise things.**

This would bring consultation and decision making into one place. But there are some disadvantages. In practice it would be difficult to swap from committee style to consultative style working in one meeting. Committee business could eat into consultation or vice versa, which could be frustrating. It is unlikely that the political decision making about a specific issue could happen in the same meeting as a wider debate about it. This is because Members will want to have time to discuss the issues raised by the public with their political colleagues in private before deciding on their position on the issue at the area committee.

> **ix.   Create a two-tier system - with consultative arrangements at a smaller, lower level than area committees, feeding into them. They could be based on areas that are closer to the definition of neighbourhoods – i.e. a sub ward level along more natural boundaries**
>
> This would bring the system closer to real neighbourhoods which would be more relevant to members of the public, but the Council may not have the capacity to set and run what could be over 50 smaller neighbourhood bodies. If area committees are to be set up along ward boundaries, natural boundaries do not fit neatly into them. It may also be felt that given there are already a large number of community groups, setting up more would create too much complexity and confusion.

C.   Options for community planning: area community plans

1.   Councils have a duty to prepare a community strategy. The Council has developed a Community Plan for Leicester in 1999 after consultation with people and groups in the city. A modified plan was developed by the Leicester Partnership for 2003, and it is intended that it will be reviewed by 2005 through an extensive consultation process with the residents of Leicester.   The development and implementation of the plan is now the responsibility of the Leicester Partnership.

2.   Members have agreed to develop area community plans alongside the citywide strategy. Community Planning also covers a range of other consultation activities that the Council engages in, for example developing strategic and service plans and consulting over the budget strategy.

D.   Options for Neighbourhood Renewal

1.   The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal is designed to improve standards of health, education, housing and the environment, and reduce crime and worklessness, and to close the gap between the worst-off neighbourhoods and the rest of the country.   The strategy includes a variety of new programmes, but above all seeks to improve the way main programmes and services are delivered in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

2.   Revitalising Neighbourhoods forms a key element of Leicester's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy in so far as it aims to deliver service improvements at the local level and promote greater community engagement. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) has also financially supported the project.

3.   Other local authorities with area committees have identified support for Neighbourhood Renewal as one of their primary functions.   Local plans (as discussed above) are often used to identify and prioritise the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.   In some cases, area committees are responsible for allocating NRF monies within their area.

4.   A number of authorities that do not qualify for the NRF have established Neighbourhood Management pathfinders, which often work closely with area committees.   These work on similar principles of devolved service delivery, joined-up / partnership working (often through service level and partnership agreements) with Neighbourhood Managers providing a lead officer role.   Members may wish to develop some of the principles of Neighbourhood Management in Leicester.

ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

A.   Political Management System

1.   There are two key links to be made:

- How the decisions of the area committees are brought to Cabinet and full Council;

- How area committees link to scrutiny committees.

2. Area Committees could be used to support the work of Scrutiny Committees, but the decisions of Area Committees in turn would need to be subject to scrutiny themselves.

B.   Finance System

1.   A decision will need to be taken later in the process as to whether the intention is to devolve budgets for full service provision to Area Committees, or whether Area Committees will only receive top-up budgets to enable them to respond to neighbourhood led requests for additional services. "Community Chest" type budgets, as used by other Councils, would enable Area Committees to provide such facilities as extra street lights or bins or, depending on the size of the budget, provide additional resources for parks maintenance or enable street cleaning to take place more often.

2.   A possible drawback for this is that different standards might apply between areas of the City. Efforts would also need to be made to ensure services are still being delivered, particularly if funding for these area budgets is being provided by top-slicing front-line service budgets. Depending on the service being considered for devolvement, economies of scale might also mean that it is cheaper to provide a service city-wide, rather than for individual areas, and would also enable more flexibility in service delivery in terms of where staff are working, e.g. carrying out highways maintenance work in a logical programme rather than having staff travelling to different parts of the city on a weekly basis.

3.   ***When aspects of service management are to be devolved to areas, then the relevant budget for that service will also have to be disaggregated to fit the areas***.
Discussions and preliminary exercises to try to identify costs of services provided on a ward-by-ward basis has taken place in the past. This has highlighted major difficulties in separating out meaningful costs per ward for some services that are carried out on a city-wide basis. Some services are also statutory requirements e.g. elderly persons' homes, and it is likely these would need to be managed on a central basis to ensure minimum standards are met and a consistent approach is taken in providing the service. For other services, such as leisure centres, it needs to be recognised that users of these facilities do not necessarily live in the area in which the facility is located, and so devolving a budget for these services would require careful consideration as to how the budget for individual centres was apportioned. The key rule is that the Council must first decide which decisions it wishes to devolve, and the budgetary responsibility should follow the management responsibilities.

C.   Service Management

1.   There may be implications for the way that a service is managed if significant elements of that service are to be made the responsibility of area committees. Once the areas for delegation have been agreed this can be looked at in more detail, but it is important to note potential implications at this stage.

2.   Managing and delivering services on an area basis is not new to the Council. Many services have over the years have had some form of area management, but importantly, they have not worked to the same boundaries as other services and have not been linked to area based decision making and consultative arrangements.

3.   As part of Revitalising Neighbourhoods some services have, or are in the process of, re-structuring on the basis of the ten areas.

4.   As discussed in the section on boundaries in the main report, it might not always be practical for a service to be managed at the same level as consultative or Area Committee arrangements. However, managing a service across, for example, two area committees could still prove to be effective.

D.   Officer Roles

1.   There are a number of issues around officer roles in relation to area committees that will also have to be tackled:

2.   ***Neighbourhood Co-ordinators***
      As part of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project, Neighbourhood Co-ordinators were appointed to co-ordinate the delivery of services across their areas and to develop and support neighbourhood forums.   As part of this review of Revitalising Neighbourhoods, Members have asked for the roles and responsibilities of Neighbourhood Co-ordinators to be examined.   This is covered in Section 5 of the main report.   However, above and beyond these aspects, a decision to establish area committees could have major implications for the roles of Neighbourhood Co-ordinators

2.1   Having effective and efficient area committees will depend to a large extent on making sure that they are properly supported. This could be one of the key roles for neighbourhood coordinators. Neighbourhood Coordinators could:

- Develop and implement community engagement arrangements in the area;
- Draf area community plans and other key documents;
- Provide an information and research service for the Area Committee;
- Co-ordinate support from Council services and other agencies;
- Manage any budgets delegated directly to Area Committees;
- Help with communications about Area Committees meetings; and
- Oversee the changes Members want to make through Area Committees.

2.2   If it is not felt appropriate for Neighbourhood Co-ordinators to undertake these roles in support of Area Committees other officers will need to be identified.

3.   ***Committee Administrators***
      As formal committees of the Council, Area Committees will need support from committee administrators. Some provision for this has already been made in preparation for the setting up of neighbourhood forums through the neighbourhood Renewal Fund.   The long-term resource issues associated with the requirement for additional committee secretariat support are considered in Section 6 of the main report covering resource issues.

4.   ***Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project Team***
        In agreeing the set of proposals to deliver Revitalising Neighbourhoods, Cabinet recognised the importance of ensuring that effective project management arrangements were established. Central to this was the creation of a core Project Team. In addition to overseeing the project management of Revitalising Neighbourhoods the team also provide policy, research, communications and accountancy support to the project. The team is financed in full by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) until 31 March 2004.

4.1   Given the potentially significant changes to Revitalising Neighbourhoods being considered by Members in this review, it is likely that project management arrangements will need to be extended beyond this date. Members will need to consider what form these arrangements should take. Resource implications for this are considered in Section 6 of the main report.

5.   ***Other officer support***
        There will also be some implications for other officers in the Council. Area Committees could require policy support and community development support, and Members may need more administrative support for their work on area committees.

Case Studies of other Local Authorities

1. In preparing this report, information was gathered about the area committee arrangements in other local authorities. Some of this information was gathered from secondary sources (e.g. Local Government Information Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, INLOGOV, and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

2. Sixteen local authorities responded directly to a questionnaire, of which the following case studies are presented as an illustration. The other local authorities approached were: Barnsley, Basildon, Chester, Coventry, Islington, Kirklees, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, Walsall and York.

(i) Derby City Council

1. Size and Boundaries	
1.1 Number of Area Committees and size	There are 5 Area Panels, which are equivalent to Area Committees, and they are formal committees of the Council. Average population of about 25,000 (3 or 4 wards).
1.2 Boundaries	Ward boundaries.
1.3 Structure & membership	Only local Elected Councillors are formal members of the Panels but all meetings are held in public.
2. Roles of Area Committees	
2.1 Decision making powers	The Panel's main role is consultative, except that each Panel has authority to: a) use a delegated budget for local environmental and community purposes (either £ 22,000 or £ 29,000) b) deal with petitions on local issues
2.2 Community engagement & consultation	The Panels give local citizens a greater say in council affairs. They provide a forum to discuss local issues with the Council's partner organisations and local residents.
2.3 Area community plans	Not yet, but likely to have this responsibility soon.
2.4 Neighbourhood renewal	No specific involvement as yet but the Panels will play a key role in the future
3. Effectiveness of Area Committee Meetings	
3.1 Public involvement	The Panels are well attended in general, with often over 100 members of the public
3.2 Consultation meetings	There are no other consultation meetings
4. Organisational Implications & Resources	
4.1 Formal links to Full Council, Cabinet & Scrutiny	There is increasing cross-over and linkages. The panels inform the Scrutiny process and Best Value reviews.
4.2 Service management	" Integrated Service Development " is a key Council project to be delivered by the Area & Neighbourhood Unit, with a heavy emphasis on residents needs and opinions. The Panels will be a key driving force for integrated services.
4.3 Meetings & officer support	Each Panel area will soon have its own manager, with similar duties to Leicester's Neighbourhood Co-ordinators. They set meeting agendas in conjunction with Councillors and co-ordinate the smooth running of the Panels. Committee secretariat staff produce agendas and take notes. Meetings held

	every six weeks.

5. Lessons for Leicester City Council
• Get strong backing from the Strategic Partnership
• Area Committees require significant officer support

(ii) Nottingham City Council

1. Size and Boundaries	
1.1 Number of Area Committees and size	In May 2003 the number of Area Committees was increased from 7 to 9. There are three or four wards in each Area.
1.2 Boundaries	Ward boundaries.
1.3 Structure & membership	An average of six ward councillors sit on each committee. An Area Committee would typically be made up of representatives from local schools, Health, Police, Council departments, residents groups and community groups. Individual residents cannot be Committee members unless they are members of formal residents or community groups.

2. Roles of Area Committees	
2.1 Decision making powers	Area Committees offer an opportunity for councillors to consider the needs of their areas and take and influence decisions which have local impact. The existing remit of the Committees is quite broad and their role is primarily consultative and advisory. The Areas can allocate their own local budgets (£ 56,000 per annum). Development of local area working is being pursued, particularly in the following areas:
	• local spending – the level of existing direct budget provision requires reconsideration
	• local approvals – the devolution of decision making relating to, for example, local traffic schemes, environmental schemes and playground improvements.
	• local service standards – a degree of discretion in the delivery of, for example, local housing and street services.
	On 21 July 2003 the Council approved recommendations to enhance the role of Area Committees in the above ways. New terms of reference are being prepared and a report addressing these matters will be considered by the Council in September 2003.
	Current terms of reference are:
	• To lead and co-ordinate regeneration activity at an area level
	• To prepare implement and monitor area action plans
	• To undertake and co-ordinate consultation within their areas
	• To agree priorities and work programmes for services and functions delegated to Area Committees by the Executive, Advice and Scrutiny Committee and policy and Development Review Committees
	• To contribute to best value reviews as specified by, and in consultation with, the Executive
	• To advise the Executive Board , Advice and Scrutiny Committee and Policy and Development Review Committees on local needs and priorities and on the impact of Council Policy on their areas
	• To express views on major planning and licensing applications that effect their areas, either through the Area Committee meeting itself or in other ways depending upon the timescale for determining the applications
	• To build partnerships between other public, private, voluntary and

	community organisations and local residents
	• To input local needs and priorities to the preparation of corporate budgets, policies and strategies as specified by the Executive • To prepare implement and review local projects and secure funding from an appropriate source • To Make appointments to outside bodies (Where the body relates to the area concerned) as specified by the Executive
2.2 Community engagement & consultation	Only councillors may vote on the Committees but they are held in public. The committees aim to enhance local democracy by involving local people in decision-making and strengthening and supporting the role of ward councillors.
2.3 Area community plans	The Committees prepare, implement and monitor Area Action Plans.
2.4 Neighbourhood renewal	The new objectives will focus on the co-ordination of service delivery and local regeneration activity, through Area Action Plans. Local neighbourhood renewal action plans are also prepared to identify opportunities for funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

3. Effectiveness of Area Committee Meetings

3.1 Public involvement	Area Committee meetings are held every two months, in public.
3.2 Consultation meetings	There are other ad hoc consultation events.

4. Organisational Implications & Resources

4.1 Formal links to Full Council, Cabinet & Scrutiny	There is an Area Chairs Panel that meets to consider issues and proposals from the Committees. The Area Committees also have a formal role in the scrutiny process. Area Committees agree an annual programme of local services to scrutinise, which is submitted to the Advice and Scrutiny Committee. The Committees receive regular reports on performance.
4.2 Service management	The proposals in section 2.1 above indicate that in future Committees will play a more prominent role in service co-ordination and local performance monitoring.
4.3 Meetings & officer support	Each Area Committee is supported by an Area Co-ordinator, a half or full time Assistant Co-ordinator and an Administrative Assistant. The Area Committee Co-ordination Team is supervised by a Service Manager.

5. Lessons for Leicester City Council
• Clarify the precise role of the Committees**.**

(iii) Birmingham City Council

1. Size and Boundaries

1.1 Number of Area Committees and size	Area Committees have existed since 1997. There are 39, one for each ward. However, the Council is in the process of splitting into 11 Constituency Directorates and Constituency Committees. The Area Committees will continue to operate, under the umbrella of the Constituency Committees. 5 streamlined strategic directorates will provide city-wide support services.
1.2 Boundaries	Ward boundaries.
1.3 Structure & membership	The Councillors who represent the ward are the Members of the Area/Ward Committees. There are no co-opted members. The Member of Parliament relating to each ward is invited to all meetings. Meetings are held in public.

2. Roles of Area Committees

2.1 Decision making powers	The terms of reference of Area Committees are: • to encourage and facilitate dialogue between the Council and local people • to encourage and facilitate the development of constructive and effective partnerships between local people and the Council in regard to any matters relevant to the ward. • to approve expenditure and services from whatever budget may be

	allocated to their ward, and in this regard to have all the necessary powers of the Council relevant to such approvals
	• to be responsible for approving the expenditure of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund monies allocated to the ward by the Executive
	• to approve the establishment of Neighbourhood Forums and to make grants, from the budget approved for this purpose, Neighbourhood Forums
	• to nominate, to the Council Business Management Committee, members to serve on Local Police Consultative Committees covering their ward
	• as determined by the relevant Cabinet Member / Committee :
	to appoint representatives to serve on the management committee of Council managed Youth and Community Centres and Community Service Advisory Committees
	to nominate to the Council Business Management Committee persons to Serve on the management committees of voluntary organisations in receipt of grant aid from the council
2.2 Community engagement & consultation	Only Councillors may vote on the Committees but they are held in public. The Committees aim to encourage and facilitate the development of constructive and effective partnerships between local people and the Council in regard to any matters relevant to the ward.
2.3 Area community plans	Ward Committees are required to prepare Ward Development Plans. These documents include a brief profile of the ward, map out local needs and priorities, identify milestones and opportunities for local partnerships and take account of any relevant action already being taken.
2.4 Neighbourhood renewal	Ward Development Plans form the starting point for local neighbourhood renewal. Through the Plans local communities can set priorities for improving mainstream services.

3. Effectiveness of Area Committee Meetings

3.1 Public involvement	Each Area Ward Committee may meet a maximum of six times per year. Cross-boundary meetings can be arranged. The Committees are required to ensure that members of the public have an opportunity to speak on any item being considered.
3.2 Consultation meetings	Neighbourhood Forums advise the Area Committees.

4. Organisational Implications & Resources

4.1 Formal links to Full Council, Cabinet & Scrutiny	There are no formal mechanisms at the moment but issues may be referred to Cabinet.
4.2 Service management	The terms of reference cover the need to co-ordinate local service provision. In 2000 the Council launched a policy to make mainstream services more sensitive and more accountable to local needs. The vehicle for this is the Area Ward Committee. The Ward Committee is responsible for: • making decisions on, for example, the location of special collection services. • influencing new developments, for example book purchasing, holiday activities in libraries • monitoring the work performed
4.3 Meetings & officer support	A maximum of six meetings a year. Officers, with the exception of Committee Managers and appropriate staff from the Neighbourhood Office establishment, will attend only at the invitation of the Chair. One or two senior officers act as Ward lead Officer for each ward. A Ward Support Officer leads a small team for each ward, who facilitate the effective running of the meetings and follow up as needed.

5. Lessons for Leicester City Council
- Make sure both members and officers are fully briefed as to their powers and procedures
- Consider agreeing behaviour protocols in meetings

(iv) Cumbria County Council

1. Size and Boundaries	
1.1 Number of Area Committees and size	There are 6 Area Committees, covering the whole Council area. The Areas correspond to district council areas and populations vary a lot. There are also Neighbourhood Forums in each ward.
1.2 Boundaries	Ward boundaries.
1.3 Structure & membership	All elected county Councillors for the Area are the members of the Committee. All Committee meetings are held in public.

2. Roles of Area Committees	
2.1 Decision making powers	All Area Committees have the following delegated functions;

2.1 Decision making powers — continued:

All Area Committees have the following delegated functions;

Non- Executive Functions
- To consider in co-operation with other tiers of local government, the social, economic and environmental development of the area concerned, including contributing to Renewal Strategies, Community Strategies and District Corporate Strategies as appropriate
- To consider reports on Emergency Plans so far as they affect their area and
- To consider all relevant Inspections Reports for services provided in their area
- And to make recommendations to the Council, Executive or Overview and Scrutiny Committee thereon as appropriate

Executive Functions
- To formulate a Community Contract for their area
- To Establish Council Centers within their area
- To commission the provision of Adult Education, to meet the needs of the resident adult population, in accordance with any general countrywide strategy, policy, and standards determined by the Council
- To consider and approve proposals for the local economic initiatives within their area
- To invest in Early Years Services, so as to complement the Cumbria Early Years Plan
- To exercise the powers and duties of the council in respect of School Crossing Patrols
- To determine applications for grants, loans, and contributions to outside bodies, voluntary organisations, or individuals not specifically delegated to an officer, including:

  Neighbourhood forum Grants

  Social Services Divisional Grants

  Leasing out premises under the Council's policy for leases to voluntary organizations

- To appoint Local Education Authority Governors to Schools (other than Special Schools)

	• To determine the level and nature of Neighbourhood Development Work in the area
	• To commission the provision of services for young people within their area
	• To determine the programmes, within agreed budgets, for
	
	    -- Revenue structural maintenance
	    -- General highway maintenance
	    -- Schemes for road improvement and road safety
	    -- Grass cutting, street lighting, and verge maintenance
	    -- Such part of the principal road structural carriageway maintenance budget as may be delegated by Council
	
	• To exercise the powers and duties of the Council relating to the maintenance of Public Rights of way (subject to existing delegation agreements with other authorities)
	• To name and determine the opening hours of local libraries
	• To extend the standard opening hours of civic amenity sites
	• To promote, support, and fund Local Agenda 21 initiatives in partnership with other Councils, organizations, agencies, and members of the local community
	• To make appointments to outside bodies not dealt with by the Council or the Executive
	• To exercise the powers and duties of the County Council, under Parts 1, 2, and 4 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 within their areas
	• To authorise the making of applications for stopping up of highways within their Area under the Highways Act 1980
	• To consider and determine grants for public transport services within their area
	• To exercise the Councils functions in respect of locally based trusts
	• To agree highway maintenance budget allocations under claimed rights

2.2 Community engagement & consultation	Only Councillors may vote on the Committees but they are held in public. The Committees aim to address local problems with local solutions. They support local Councillors and help to give local people a say on matters in their areas.
2.3 Area community plans	This is not a duty of the Committees.
2.4 Neighbourhood renewal	The Committees are supportive of the priority wards for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.
3. Effectiveness of Area Committee Meetings	
3.1 Public involvement	Forums are well attended but the Committees are not so well attended.
3.2 Consultation meetings	The Neighbourhood Forums advise the Committees and are very successful.
4. Organisational Implications & Resources	
4.1 Formal links to Full Council, Cabinet & Scrutiny	There are formal mechanisms to refer matters to Council and Scrutiny Committees.
4.2 Service management	The extensive list of delegated functions illustrates how influential the Committees can be in the nature of service provision.
4.3 Meetings & officer support	There is an Area Support Manager for each Committee, plus a Committee Secretary for each.
5. Lessons for Leicester City Council	
• The role of Members can be enhanced through Area Committees.	

(v) Eastleigh Borough Council

1. Size and Boundaries

1.1 Number of Area Committees and size	There are 5 Area Committees, covering the whole Council area. Area Committees are amalgamations of 3 or 4 wards. Average population of Area Committees is 20,000 – 25,000.
1.2 Boundaries	Ward boundaries.
1.3 Structure & membership	All elected Borough Councillors for the area are the members of the Committee. Between 7 and 13 councillors are on each Committee. All Committee meetings are held in public.

2. Roles of Area Committees

2.1 Decision making powers	Area Committees have delegated powers to: • take executive decisions within policy framework and budget on locally provided services and the Local Community Investment Programme. • take local development control, licensing and bye-law decisions within policy framework and to make recommendations to the Council on development control matters outside the terms of their delegated powers • to act for the Council where a local response is appropriate to a local community issue • to develop partnerships/links with other agencies to the benefit of the local area community, and in particular with local councils. • to contribute to the wider community planning process and to the Council's related corporate planning process. • to promote Best Value at local level and to work with the Executive and Scrutiny panels on the wider promotion and securing of Best Value objectives • to work closely with the Executive's lead member for the local area, to promote close integration between local level and executive level action • if appropriate, to report to the Council on the local impact of decisions of the Executive.
2.2 Community engagement & consultation	The Area Committees aim to improve local democracy and empower local members by bringing them face to face with electors on a regular and public basis. Only Councillors may vote on the Committees but they are held in public. The agenda of meetings begins with a 15 minute public participation period for comments or questions about issues not on the agenda. For agenda items members of the public are allowed a maximum of 5 minutes to speak for or against. Only Councillors may vote.
2.3 Area community plans	The Committees do have this responsibility and they are allowed flexibility in the way they approach this task. There is a direct link to the Community Strategy.
2.4 Neighbourhood renewal	Area Committees take the lead on identifying priority wards for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

3. Effectiveness of Area Committee Meetings

3.1 Public involvement	Area Committee meetings are very well attended. Leaflets, notices and press releases go out before every meeting. Controversial planning applications get a very good response.
3.2 Consultation meetings	n.a.

4. Organisational Implications & Resources

4.1 Formal links to Full Council, Cabinet & Scrutiny	There are formal mechanisms to refer matters to the Executive. The Committees can ask Scrutiny Committees to look at issues.
4.2 Service	Within overall corporate guidelines the Area Committees are influential in local

management	service provision.
4.3 Meetings & officer support	There is an Area Co-ordinator for each Committee who is a Head of Service. 5 Area Committee Services officers provide administrative support.

5. Lessons for Leicester City Council

- Consistently high profile publicity and marketing will maximise resident participation.

Existing Area Boundaries