



**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

**CABINET  
COUNCIL**

**24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2003  
27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2003**

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**REVIEW OF REVITALISING NEIGHBOURHOODS:  
IN PRINCIPLE DECISIONS ON AREA COMMITTEES**

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

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the outcome of the review of Revitalising Neighbourhoods undertaken by the Procedures Working Party.
- 1.2 In particular, the report puts forward a number of recommendations to make in principle decisions on setting up Area Committees. If Members agree the recommendations, officers will develop a more detailed operational framework in the form of Guidelines for Area Committees for further discussion and decision early in 2004.

**2. SUMMARY**

**2.1 Key issues**

- 2.1.1 In preparing this report, we have studied area based arrangements in other Councils. Two critical success factors emerge from these studies.
- 2.1.2 Firstly, it is clear that area based initiatives can be as effective as the resources that are put into them. It is not uncommon for Councils to find with hindsight that they have under funded them and that they subsequently have to find more resources to make them do their jobs effectively. In this report we present the key financial implications for Members' information. We outline the resource issues

associated with setting up Area Committees and advise on the level of resourcing currently available and potential shortfalls.

- 2.1.3 Secondly, supporting learning processes around these arrangements is essential. The Area Committees will have to learn and develop as they grow, and methods for reflecting and acting on what works and what doesn't should be built into the way the Committees work.
- 2.1.4 We therefore suggest that at the outset a relatively small number of functions are delegated to the Committees in order to allow them, and to allow the organisation as a whole, the maximum opportunity to reflect on how it is working before committing itself to the delegation of further powers. This means that most of the design of the Committees will have been done with the benefit of real experience, so we can be confident that we can respond to the organisational changes that will be needed to make them work
- 2.1.5 We suggest that officers develop an operational framework for Area Committees in the shape of *Guidelines for Area Committees*. In these guidelines there will be practical suggestions how the Committees can make learning part of the process of working.

## **2.2 Contents of this report**

2.2.1 At its meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> October, the Procedures Working Party (PWP) considered a range of issues associated with setting up Area Committees, and looked at the views of the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Committee on those issues. The recommendations in this report are those of the PWP. The report also provides officers' advice on taking the recommendations forward.

2.2.2 This report covers:

- The purpose and roles of Area Committees
- Criteria for selecting functions to be delegated to Area Committees
- Area Committees and community engagement
- The boundaries for Area Committees
- Arrangements in the City Centre
- The organisational implications for Area Committees, including the need for officer support
- The financial implications; and
- The next steps

## **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In accordance with the recommendations of The Procedures Working Party it is RECOMMEND that:

- 3.1 **Cabinet agree in principle to set up Area Committees 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.** See section 2.1 in the main report.
- 3.2 **Area Committees will have seven roles, with particular emphasis on the first two: executive decision making, community engagement, preparing area community plans, neighbourhood renewal, scrutiny, best value and performance management and working with local partners.** See section 2.2 in the main report.
- 3.3 **The set of six criteria be used to decide which functions to delegate to Area Committees.**  
See section 2.3 in the main report.
- 3.4 **The Council will set minimum service standards for functions that are delegated to Area Committees.** See section 2.4 in the main report.
- 3.5 **There will be community engagement in the work of Area Committees. Area Committees will choose their own method of community engagement, but will adhere to minimum standards.** See section 2.5 in the main report.
- 3.6 **The boundaries for Area Committees will be based on groupings of two or three wards. The Corporate Director of Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal will consult with all Members as to whether they wish to see any changes to the current groupings. If Members do wish to change them, there will be consultation with key partners.** See section 2.6 in the main report.
- 3.7 **There will not be an Area Committee for the city centre, but there will be a consultative forum made up of businesses, residents and other stakeholders in city centre issues. Councillors will have a key role in the forum.** See section 2.7 in the main report.
- 3.8 **Officers will develop a detailed operational framework in the form of *Guidelines for Area Committees*. The guidelines will be aimed at officers and Members and will cover such issues as the Scheme of Delegation, minimum service standards, the relationship between Area Committees and the rest of the Council's governance and political management system, community engagement, and the financial arrangements for Area Committees** See section 2.8 in the main report.
- 3.9 **Members should choose their preferred option from options 2, 3 and 4 in section 2.9 of the main report for the roles and responsibilities of neighbourhood co-ordinators.** See section 2.9 in the main report.

3.10 **Members should note the resource issues in setting up Area Committees that are set out in Appendix A.**

**The Council has put forward bids for NRF funding to support setting up and running Area Committees. However if these bids are unsuccessful, there may be financial implications as follows:**

- **Cost of having Area Committee meetings:** Current provision in the RAD budget limits members to four meetings with minimum support, and with limits on activities undertaken. There is no further provision in budgets if Members want more frequent and better resourced meetings.
- **Top up budgets:** There is no provision in current budgets for top up budgets for Area Committees.
- **Temporary officer support to set up the Area Committees:** There is no provision in base budgets to continue the RN team after March 2004.

See section 2.10 in the main report.

## **4. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **4.1 Financial implications**

4.1.1 There are a range of immediate financial implications arising out of the proposals set out in this report. These implications are set out in detail in the Supporting Information to this report and in Section 2.10 in the main report. The key financial issues are presented to Members in Appendix A for information.

### **4.2 Legal implications**

4.2.1 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.

## **5. AUTHORS**

### **Cathy Carter**

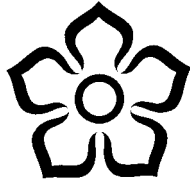
Policy Officer (Revitalising Neighbourhoods)  
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**DECISION STATUS**

<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reason</b>	<b>Policy and Budget Framework/Significant effect on 2 or more wards</b>
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	<b>Council</b>



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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

#### **1. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

##### **1.2 Overview**

1.2.1 All start up costs associated with the implementation phase of Revitalising Neighbourhoods were secured through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund up to the end of March 2004. The funding of neighbourhood co-ordination and committee administration has subsequently been mainstreamed into Council budgets.

##### **1.3 Financial implications and options**

1.3.1 Recommendation 10 asks Members to note a number of key financial issues relating to the setting up of Area Committees. Appendix A sets out these issues.

1.3.2 As detailed in Appendix A, there are four immediate financial issues associated with setting up Area Committees:

- **The costs of having area committee meetings** From 2004/05, a sum of £50,000 has been allocated within the Resources, Access and Diversity department's budget for work involved in arranging and running Area Committee meetings. It should, however, be noted that this will only provide the bare minimum standards of administrative support that would be required for the Area Committees to operate effectively. The frequency of meetings and range of activities Area Committees could undertake would be restricted. Members need to consider whether they are happy with this level of resourcing or whether they want to find additional resources for this function.
- **Top up budgets** If Members want Area Committees to have top up budgets then provision will need to be made for this, as there is no current budget allocation beyond 2003/4.
- **Temporary officer support to implement the setting up of Area Committees.** The Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project Team is currently funded from the NRF until March 2004. Members will need to consider how officer support can be provided beyond this date.

1.3.4 Members will also need to consider the need for officer support to help Area Committees fulfill their roles effectively. Currently, £505,000 of Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal base budget is being used to mainstream fund the neighbourhood co-ordinators. This money could be redirected by modifying the role of neighbourhood co-ordinators to provide some support for the Area Committees, but the decisions need to be made within the context of budget pressures within the CS&NR Department.

1.3.5 The other major financial issues, which are referred to throughout the report and in the appendices are:

- The non-negotiable financial standards relating to the project (Appendix C).
- Outline implications for the Council's finance systems (Appendix I).

*Andy Morley, Chief Accountant  
October 2003*

## **2. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

2.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000 Councils can arrange for some of the functions of the executive to be carried out by Area Committees. Details of this power are set out in Appendix B. The Council Constitution allows for the setting up of Area Committees (Article 10).

2.2 Legal Services will be fully involved as options are further considered and developed.

*Peter Nicholls, Service Director Legal Services*

**3. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

<b>OTHER IMPLICATIONS</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>	<b>PARAGRAPH REFERENCES WITHIN SUPPORTING PAPERS</b>
Equal Opportunities	Yes	Area Committees are intended to increase the involvement of local people and improve services. There are a wide range of equal opportunities issues associated with these goals.
Policy	Yes	A decision to establish Area Committees in Leicester will mark a major policy development for the Council. Proposals for Area Committees have links with community engagement policies, performance management, neighbourhood renewal and political management.
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	Area Committees are intended to improve local decision making, including decisions, which are likely to have an environmental impact in the area.
Crime and Disorder	Yes	Area Committees are intended to improve local decision making, including decisions, which may have an impact on crime and disorder in the area.
Human Rights Act	Yes	Decisions of Area Committees, and the arrangements for Area Committees will be made within the provisions of the Human Rights Act 2000.
Older People / People on Low Income	Yes	Area Committees are intended to improve local decision making, including decisions, which may have an impact on older people on low income. In addition, Area Committees will be involved in community engagement, and as older people on low incomes can be a hard to reach group for consultation, the Committees will have to ensure that this group is included in community engagement



#### 4. RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

	RISK	LIKELIHOOD L/M/H	SEVERITY IMPACT L/M/H	CONTROL ACTIONS (IF NECESSARY/OR APPROPRIATE)
L - Low    M- Medium    H – High				
1	<p>NRF bids are unsuccessful and / or other budgetary priorities mean that Members do not believe there is sufficient resourcing to carry out the proposals for Area Committees.</p> <p>Failure to carry forward proposals to improve the Council's delivery of services at a neighbourhood level and the extent of community engagement would compromise the ability to meet commitments in various key plans, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy</li> <li>• Community Cohesion Action Plan</li> <li>• Corporate Plan</li> </ul>	H	M/H	<p>Elected members and officers involved in the process of agreeing the NRF programme for 2004/6 make every effort to ensure support for the two Revitalising Neighbourhoods bids.</p> <p>Should the NRF bids not be successful, proposals to support Area Committees are recognized as a corporate priority in the budget process.</p>
2	<p>Area Committees are under-resourced.</p> <p>A key lesson from other Councils that have developed Area Committees is</p>	H	M	<p>The optimum level of resourcing for Area Committees is identified and secured.</p>

	<b>RISK</b>	<b>LIKELIHOOD L/M/H</b>	<b>SEVERITY IMPACT L/M/H</b>	<b>CONTROL ACTIONS (IF NECESSARY/OR APPROPRIATE)</b>
	<p>that they must be adequately resourced.</p> <p>Failure to do so will impact on the effectiveness and impact of Area Committees.</p>			
3	<p>Area Committees do not have the commitment of all concerned.</p> <p>The effectiveness of Area Committees will be limited if there is not commitment from all officers and Members concerned.</p>	M	M	Ensure that the reasons for developing Area Committees and their potential benefits are widely communicated
4	There is insufficient organisational capacity to support Area Committees	H	M	A learning based, evolutionary approach to the development of Area Committees is adopted.
5	<p>Area Committees are not designed so as to be best suited to deliver the priorities of the Council and are suited to the unique characteristics of the city.</p> <p>Experience from other Local Authorities suggests there is not a recognized 'blue print' for Area</p>	L	M	In considering the detailed design of Area Committees, officers and Members are mindful of the Council's Corporate Direction and Plan, the Community Plan and the views of local people.

	<b>RISK</b>	<b>LIKELIHOOD L/M/H</b>	<b>SEVERITY IMPACT L/M/H</b>	<b>CONTROL ACTIONS (IF NECESSARY/OR APPROPRIATE)</b>
	Committees; they must be designed to suit local characteristics and priorities.			
6	<p>Community involvement in Area Committees is not meaningful and inclusive.</p> <p>Public confidence in Area Committees will be diminished if it is perceived that community engagement is not being taken seriously.</p>	L	M	Area Committees seek to optimize the level of community involvement by ensuring that meetings are accessible and that new and / or existing resources are used to support involvement, particularly of those normally excluded from the democratic process.
7	<p>Officers and Members do not have the skills required to make Area Committees function effectively.</p> <p>Area Committees will involve more officers in working directly with elected Members and the public and will involve more elected Members in formal decision making.</p>	M	M	Member and officer training and development is designed and rolled out. This could involve a range of activities including learning from other Councils, shadowing / mentoring and formal training in managing meetings, presentation skills etc.
8	Boundary changes create resentment from / difficulties for partners and stakeholders.	M	L	The implications of changing boundaries are considered before reaching a decision. If changes to the previously agreed boundaries are made the reasons for change need to be communicated.

## 5. BACKGROUND PAPERS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

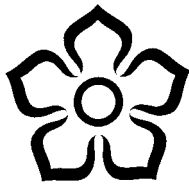
*Annual Report of the Chief Executive: Revitalising Neighbourhoods*  
Cabinet (29<sup>th</sup> January 2001)

*Review of Revitalising Neighbourhoods*  
Procedures Working Party (23rd June 2003)

*Revitalising Neighbourhoods*  
Cabinet (1<sup>st</sup> September 2003),  
Finance Scrutiny and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee (8<sup>th</sup> October 2003),  
Procedures Working Party (10<sup>th</sup> October 2003).

## 6. CONSULTATIONS

<b>CONSULTEE</b>	<b>DATE CONSULTED</b>
Mark Noble – Chief Finance Officer	October 2003
Andy Morley – Chief Accountant	October 2003
Peter Nicholls – Service Director, Legal Services	October 2003
Charles Poole – Service Director, Democratic Services	October 2003
Corporate Directors' Board	28 <sup>th</sup> October 2003



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## **REPORT**

### **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 Leicester's citizens so that they can influence the decisions 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 are 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 MORI polls)
  - The need to make political management arrangements work effectively; and
  - Evidence of disengagement from the political process, such as falling voter turnout.
- 1.3 In May 2001, the Organisations Working Party agreed the project brief for Revitalising Neighbourhoods. Revitalising Neighbourhoods was designed as a major transformational change project with the two main goals of:
- **Increasing the level of involvement by local people in their communities and in the decisions made about their communities; and**

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

- 1.4 At the June 2003 meeting of the Procedures Working Party (PWP) Members reaffirmed these goals, and agreed the scope of the review of Revitalising Neighbourhoods. Cabinet then endorsed this scope on the 1<sup>st</sup> September.
- 1.5 The elements of the project included within this scope 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.
- 1.6 After the June meeting of the PWP, it was subsequently decided by Cabinet that the financial aspects of customer services should for the time being be treated as an issue outside the review of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project, so it is not covered in this report.
- 1.7 The PWP asked for the views of the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee, and the scrutiny committee discussed a range of issues arising from the scope of the review at their meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> October. The views of the scrutiny committee are detailed in the following sections of the report.
- 1.8 The PWP met on the 10<sup>th</sup> October, considered the views of the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Committee, and made a range of recommendations to Cabinet to take forward the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project. These recommendations, designed to provide a framework for the establishment of Area Committees and the principles guiding them are covered throughout the next section of this report.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***2.1 AREA COMMITTEES AND THEIR PURPOSE***

- 2.1.1 Before the elections in May, the administration of the Council intended to set up consultative forums as part of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project.
- 2.1.2 However, since May, the new Liberal Democrat and Conservative administration have expressed a preference for Area Committees, in order to strengthen decision making at a local level and to strengthen the representative role of elected Members.
- 2.1.3 Members of PWP and the scrutiny committee were provided with information on Area Committees. This included lessons from other Councils. The key lesson was that Area Committees can be an effective means of contributing to improved

service delivery and strengthening democracy if they are adequately resourced, have the commitment of all concerned, and are designed and managed in a way that is fit for purpose.

- 2.1.4 Further information about the regulations on Area Committees under the Local Government Act 2000 is set out at Appendix B.
- 2.1.5 Members were asked to consider whether Area Committees were their preferred way of taking forward Revitalising Neighbourhoods and, if so, what their purpose should be.
- 2.1.6 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:*  
The committee agreed that Area Committees were its preferred option for local decision making and community engagement.
- 2.1.7 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*  
The PWP recommended that the Council set up Area Committees 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. The Area Committees will cover the whole of the city, with the exception of the city centre. Arrangements for the city centre are covered in section 7 of this report.
- 2.1.8 **RECOMMENDATION 1: Cabinet agree in principle to set up Area Committees 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.**

## **2.2 ROLES OF AREA COMMITTEES**

- 2.2.1 Members were asked to consider what roles Area Committees should have. The following seven roles, which are described in more detail in Appendix D, were suggested:
- Executive decision making
  - Community engagement
  - Developing area community plans
  - Neighbourhood renewal
  - Scrutiny
  - Best value and performance management
  - Working with local partners
- 2.2.2 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:*  
No views on the roles of Area Committees were expressed.

2.2.3 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*

The Procedures Working Party agreed the seven roles listed above for Area Committees, but said there should be particular emphasis on the first two roles, executive decision making and community engagement.

2.2.4 **RECOMMENDATION 2: Area Committees will have seven roles with particular emphasis on the first two: executive decision making, community engagement, preparing area community plans, neighbourhood renewal, scrutiny, best value and performance management and working with local partners.**

2.2.5 Members were then asked to consider further issues relating to devolved decision making. 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. 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.

2.2.6 All Councillors would have powers to make some decisions for their area, and the Council's executive, the Cabinet, under a Scheme of Delegation, would delegate these powers to them.

2.2.7 Officers suggest the Council begins by choosing a relatively small number of initial functions to delegate to Area Committees. This approach would allow the Council to learn fully from the new arrangements before embarking on a bigger scheme.

## **2.3 CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING INITIAL FUNCTIONS TO DELEGATE TO AREA COMMITTEES**

2.3.1 In deciding which functions to delegate, officers proposed that a set of criteria is used to make the choices. The suggested criteria are set out below:

**Criteria for choosing initial functions for delegation to Area Committees**

1. The service or issue is of importance to the public.
2. There is scope for local choices (i.e. the service is not tightly prescribed by national standards).
3. It would be cost effective to have different approaches in different areas.
4. Local choice on this issue is of more importance than a consistent approach across the city.
5. The catchment area for the service is clear.
6. Other Councils have successfully delegated this function to Area Committees.



- 2.3.2 Members were asked if they agreed that these criteria be adopted.
- 2.3.3 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:*  
No views on the criteria for selecting services for delegated decision making were expressed.
- 2.3.4 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*  
The Procedures Working Party agreed to this set of criteria for delegation to decide which functions to delegate to Area Committees.
- 2.3.5 **RECOMMENDATION 3: The set of six criteria be used to decide which functions to delegate to Area Committees.**
- 2.3.6 If Members agree to Recommendation 3, officers will put together a list of Council functions that meet the six criteria, for consideration by Members.

## **2.4 MINIMUM SERVICE STANDARDS FOR DELEGATED FUNCTIONS**

- 2.4.1 As discussed above, the implications of delegated decision making is that the same service could be delivered in a different way and to different standards in different parts of the city. Under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council will have to set out the limitations to delegations, such as budget limitations, or protocols to ensure that the Area Committee does not make decisions that have an adverse effect outside its area. These limitations will have to be set out in the Scheme of Delegation.
- 2.4.2 Members were asked if they supported the principle of minimum service standards for delegated services.
- 2.4.3 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:*  
The committee's view was that the Cabinet should be asked to explore the implications surrounding minimum service standards.
- 2.4.4 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*  
The PWP recommend to Cabinet that the Council should set minimum service standards for those functions delegated to Area Committees.
- 2.4.5 **RECOMMENDATION 4: The Council will set minimum service standards for functions that are delegated to Area Committees.**
- 2.4.6 If Members agree to Recommendation 4, officers will include suggested minimum service standards for each of the functions in the list of initial functions that meet the criteria for delegation, as put forward in Recommendation 3.

## **2.5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN AREA COMMITTEES**

- 2.5.1 Councils now have legal duty to consult with the community, and Area Committees could provide the Council with a major opportunity for doing this more effectively.
- 2.5.2 A considerable amount of work has already been done to take forward community engagement in the city. This work is outlined in Appendix E. All of the initiatives described there have the potential to give considerable support to the community engagement role of Area Committees.
- 2.5.3 Members were presented with a range of options for community engagement in Area Committees. These are set out in Appendix F. They are not mutually exclusive, and there will be others.
- 2.5.4 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:* Committee expressed the view that the model for community engagement in Area Committees should be based on a combination of options 5 and 6 outlined in Appendix F.
- 2.5.5 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*
- There should be community engagement in Area Committees;
  - Each Area Committee should choose its own methods of engagement; and
  - The Council should set minimum standards for community engagement in Area Committees (examples of such minimum standards might include provision for the public to speak at meetings or present petitions).
- 2.5.6 **RECOMMENDATION 5: There will be community engagement in the work of Area Committees. Area Committees will choose their own method of community engagement, but will adhere to minimum standards.**
- 2.5.7 If Members agree with Recommendation 5, officers will put forward proposals for minimum standards of community engagement and further advice on the methods to Members.

## **2.6 BOUNDARIES FOR AREA COMMITTEES**

- 2.6.1 The current boundaries (as shown in Appendix G) were developed as a result of considerable consultation with partners and also with a large number of voluntary and community groups through conferences and meetings held by Voluntary Action Leicester. Members are advised to bear in mind this consultation when considering possible changes to boundaries. This issue is noted in the risk assessment for this report.
- 2.6.2 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee*  
The committee expressed the view that Cabinet reconsider the area boundaries.

### 2.6.3 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party*

The PWP recommends that Area Committees be based on the principle of grouping two or three wards. It was felt that the current boundaries were generally right, but that they wanted Members to have the opportunity of revisiting them. If Members do want to change them, there would be further consultation with key stakeholders such as partners.

2.6.4 There was also some discussion at the PWP about the precise definition of the boundary for the City Centre. It was suggested that officers put forward a precise definition for the purposes of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project (see section 7.6).

2.6.5 **RECOMMENDATION 6: The boundaries for Area Committees will be based on groupings of two or three wards. The Corporate Director of Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal will consult with all Members as to whether they wish to see any changes to the current groupings. If Members do wish to change them, there will be consultation with key partners.**

## **2.7 THE CITY CENTRE**

2.7.1 The city centre is one of the keys to the liveability, development and reputation of Leicester as a whole. It has a wider and more complicated stakeholder base than any other area of the city, beyond that of its residents and the businesses located there. The PWP said that the Council needs to think differently about arrangements for decision making and community engagement in the city centre.

2.7.2 A range of work is currently being done to develop the Council's work in the city centre. This is described in Appendix H.

### 2.7.3 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:*

The committee's view was that the Cabinet be recommended to set up a single consultative forum for the City Centre, which would comprise residents and local businesses.

### 2.7.4 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*

- That there should not be an Area Committee for the city centre.
- That there should be one consultative forum for the city centre to include businesses, city centre residents and other stakeholders. Councillors could be involved in the forum.
- Officers should provide a precise geographical definition of the city centre for the purposes of the project.

2.7.5 **RECOMMENDATION 7: There will not be an Area Committee for the city centre, but there will be a consultative forum made up of businesses, residents and other stakeholders in city centre issues. Councillors will have a key role in the forum.**

2.7.6 If Members agree to recommendation 7, the Corporate Director for Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal (who is the lead Corporate Director for the city centre) will prepare a separate report with recommendations for:

- A precise geographical definition of the city centre, particularly to the south where it does not follow ward boundaries
- The role of City Centre Management
- The role of the Council's neighbourhood co-ordination function in the city centre; and
- Options for the political leadership of the city centre

## **2.8 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

2.8.1 There are a number of organisational implications for the Council in setting up Area Committees. These are detailed in Appendix I and J and they include implications for the Council's:

- Political management system
- Finance system
- Service management systems; and
- Officer roles in relation to the Area Committees

2.8.2 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:*  
No views on the organisational implications of Area Committees were expressed.

2.8.3 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*  
The PWP did not make specific recommendations on this aspect of the review but asked officers to provide further information.

2.8.4 **RECOMMENDATION 8: Officers will develop a detailed operational framework in the form of *Guidelines for Area Committees*. The guidelines will be aimed at officers and Members and will cover such issues as the Scheme of Delegation, minimum service standards, the relationship between Area Committees and the rest of the Council's governance and political management system, community engagement, and the financial arrangements for Area Committees.**

2.8.5 Some of the issues relating to the requirement for additional officer roles to support Area Committees are covered in the following section.

## **2.9 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-ORDINATORS**

2.9.1 A critical success factor in making Area Committees effective is the amount and quality of officer support that they receive. This is a key lesson learnt from our case studies of other authorities with area based arrangements.

2.9.2 Members were presented with four options for roles and responsibilities of neighbourhood co-ordinators. These options are set out below, and in Appendix J, which also gives a description of the current roles of neighbourhood co-ordinators and options for new senior officer support to Area Committees that will be needed. This work could form part of a modified function for neighbourhood co-ordinators, suggested in option 2 below.

1. **Status Quo** - the same number of co-ordinators carrying out their current functions listed in Appendix J.
2. The same, or a **modified** number of co-ordinators (depending on number and configuration of local areas) with a modified remit, which could include the new roles associated with supporting Area Committees as identified in Appendix J.
3. Finding **other ways** of delivering some or all of the current tasks and / or potentially the new roles, identified in Appendix J
4. **Stopping** altogether the work described in Appendix J

The financial implications are noted in Appendix A.

2.9.3 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:*  
The committee expressed the view that the Council should not employ neighbourhood co-ordinators. Whether this is done through option three or four was not specified.

2.9.4 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*  
The PWP considered all four options for neighbourhood co-ordinators, and recommend that the Cabinet consider options 2, 3, and 4, but not option 1.

2.9.5 **RECOMMENDATION 9: Members should choose their preferred option from options 2, 3 and 4 in section 9 of the main report for the roles and responsibilities of neighbourhood co-ordinators.**

## **2.10 RESOURCE ISSUES**

- 2.10.1 The resource issues relating to the cost of running Area Committees (Committee administration, communications, venues etc), top-up budgets and project management support through the Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project Team are set out in Appendix I, and the financial implications are contained in Appendix A.
- 2.10.2 The effectiveness of Area Committees will be enhanced if additional money can be identified for committee administration and new money can be identified for top-up budgets and a time-limited continuation of part of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project Team.
- 2.10.3 Bids for further NRF money to meet these needs have been submitted, although they are not currently ranked as priorities for the NRF programme.
- 2.10.4 The need to provide senior officer support to Area Committees is discussed in the context of the roles and responsibilities of neighbourhood co-ordinators (Appendix J and Recommendation 9).
- 2.10.5 *View of Finance Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee:*  
The committee did not express a view on resource issues.
- 2.10.6 *Recommendation of the Procedures Working Party:*  
PWP recommended that in principle Area Committees should have top-up budgets, subject to funding being available.
- 2.10.7 **RECOMMENDATION 10: Members should note the resource issues in setting up Area Committees that are set out in Appendix A.**

**The Council has put forward bids for NRF funding to support setting up and running Area Committees. However if these bids are unsuccessful, there may be financial implications as follows:**

- **Cost of having Area Committee meetings:** Current provision in the RAD budget limits members to four meetings with minimum support, and with limits on activities undertaken. There is no further provision in budgets if Members want more frequent and better resourced meetings.
- **Top up budgets:** There is no provision in current budgets for top up budgets for Area Committees.
- **Temporary officer support to set up the Area Committees:** There is no provision in base budgets to continue the RN team after March 2004.

### **3. NEXT STEPS**

3.1 If Members agree to the recommendations in this report, a range of work will have to be done to firm up on the details and to implement the proposals. The stages are shown in Appendix K. It is intended that this work will have seven elements:

- Putting together a project plan for the implementation of Area Committees.
- Preparing detailed costings and advising on financial implications and options.
- Making proposals for the boundaries for Area Committees based on consultation with Members and possibly key partners
- Communicating inside and outside the Council about the intention to set up Area Committees, and inviting feedback
- Further work on city centre issues including: a precise geographical definition of the city centre, the role of City Centre Management, the role of the Council's neighbourhood coordination function in the city centre; and options for the political leadership of the city centre
- Drawing up proposals for initial functions to be delegated to Area Committees
- Writing *Guidelines for Area Committees* – providing more operational detail aimed at Members and officers (see 2 below); and
- Managing the early stages of implementation

3.2 In order to work out the more detailed issues around how Area Committees will work, we will draw up Guidelines for Area Committees. The guidelines will be aimed at both Members and officers of the Council and will link to other relevant Council documentation such as the Council Constitution, guidance on the wider political management system of the Council, Finance Procedure rules etc.

3.3 The types of information that could be included in these guidelines are:

- Terms of reference of Area Committees
- Initial functions delegated and minimum standards for those functions - the Scheme of Delegation
- Minimum standards of community engagement and advice on community engagement generally
- Conduct of meetings
- How Area Committees fit in to the wider political system and the governance of the Council
- Financial arrangements for Area Committees

- Proposals for learning from the experiences of Area Committees and outline proposals for evaluating them

## **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 The recommendations in this report reflect the new administration's desire to give the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project the best chance of meeting its objectives to:

- **Increase the level of involvement by local people in their communities and in the decisions made about their communities; and**
- **Improve the delivery of services to local communities**

4.2 If Members agree to these recommendations, the real challenge will come in making Area Committees work for the best interests of the people of Leicester. In this respect the proposals can potentially make a valuable contribution to the Council's 'Corporate Direction', not least the strategic priority of "Improving the environment and well-being of Leicester to make local neighbourhoods and the city centre places to be proud of".

4.3 Making Area Committees work effectively will be a learning process for the whole organisation. We will need to build learning and reflection into the process of developing them, and to act on what we learn.

4.4 Officers and Members will need to work closely together over the coming months to ensure that the practical details of how Area Committees work ensures that they make a real contribution to taking forward service improvement and local democracy in Leicester.