



Leicester
City Council

Draft: Subject to decisions by Cabinet/Council

Toolkit for Area Committees

Draft April 2004

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1. Introduction to the toolkit

Welcome to the Toolkit for Area Committees.

The ideas and materials in this toolkit provide a starting point for Councillors and officers to set up and develop effective Area Committees in Leicester.

The toolkit is just a starting point. As the Area Committees develop and grow we will learn more about what we need to do to make them as effective as possible, and we will develop the way we run Area Committees, and the toolkit, to reflect what we have learnt.

The folder contains material to explain how the Area Committees work and to help you reflect on and learn from the experience of working with them. When we come to evaluate them we need to use the experience to make improvements to the way we run the committees.

This toolkit gives three types of guidance:

A: Council standards for Area Committees These are the things that will be standard across all Area Committees. Examples include: the minimum standards for public involvement in the meetings, and, when they are decided, the functions delegated to the Area Committees. [Decisions on these will be made by Cabinet and Council in June].

B: Arrangements that Area Committees must decide for themselves These are the things that Area Committees must do, but each committee can choose how to do them. Examples include: the format for the agenda and the specific agenda for the meetings, the frequency of the meetings (subject to the budget available for holding them), the arrangement for electing the chair.

C: Ideas

The toolkit also includes ideas and resources from which Members and officers can choose to help them develop the Area Committee.

There are two checklists at the end of the toolkit that summarise A and B – for easy reference.

2. Why have Area Committees?

Today, Leicester City Council faces many challenges. Low voter turnout and the difficulty in attracting people to become Councillors signal a mini crisis in local democracy. The needs of the people of Leicester are complex and often urgent. Consumer expectations are rising, but satisfaction with the Council as a means of meeting those expectations is low. Yet we are operating with dwindling resources.

In addition, our attention is in danger of being pulled away from listening to local people, towards the need to meet the ever-increasing demands placed on us by central Government, the regional agenda and Europe.

How do we redress the balance, keep in tune with local people, and use our local knowledge to prioritise and influence city wide and national agendas?

We know 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. Developing Area Committees, and making them work effectively, may be one important way we can do this

Cabinet agreed that the purpose of Area Committees is:

“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 committees would have eight roles – with the first two being the most important:
The roles are to:

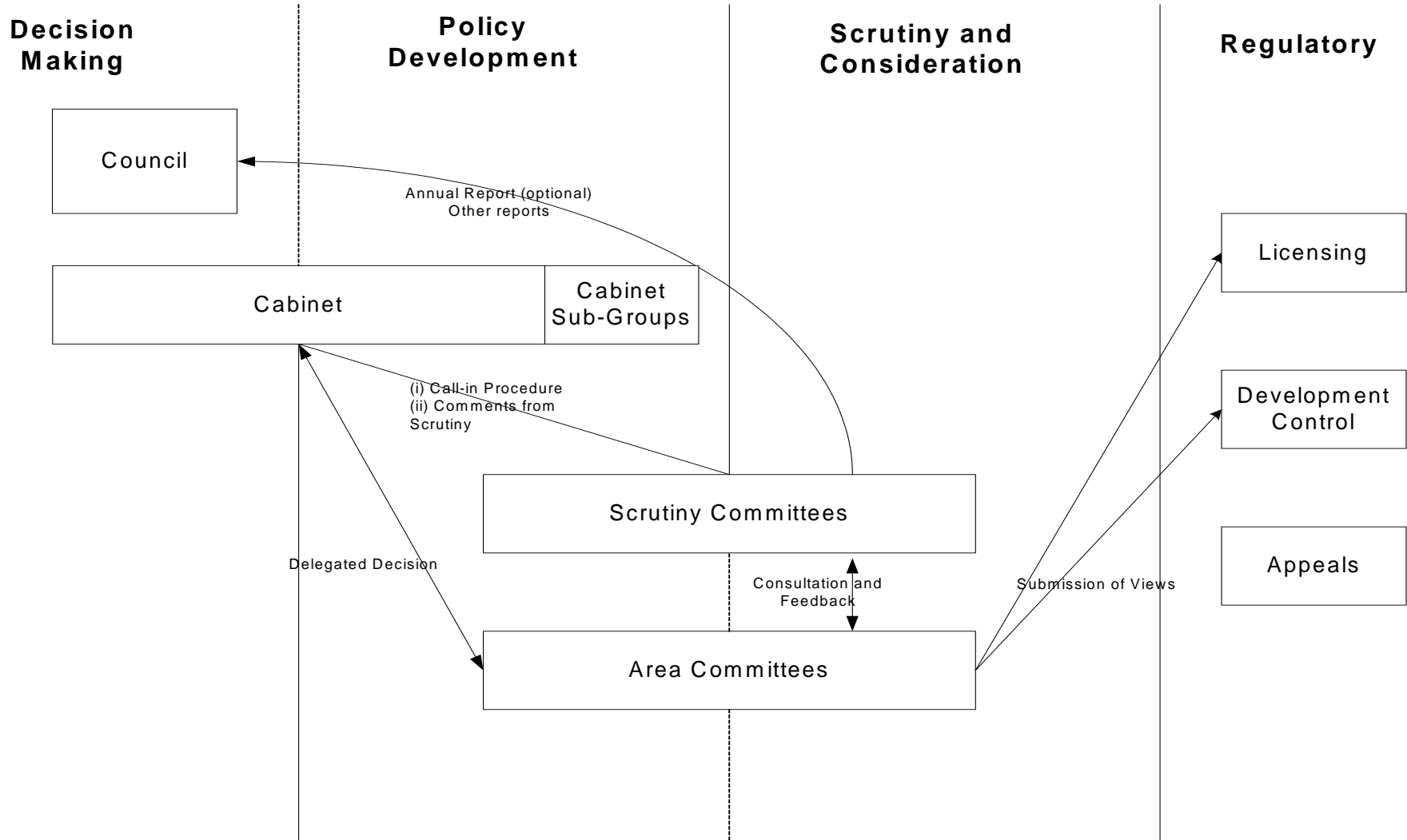
- make and influence decisions affecting the area
- engage the community
- prepare area community plans
- take forward neighbourhood renewal
- help scrutinise Council decisions from a local perspective
- help the Council and other service providers to manage best value and performance management
- develop local partnership working
- improve community cohesion

Each of these roles is covered in the toolkit.

3. How Area Committees fit into the political management of the Council.

As indicated elsewhere in the toolkit, Area Committees are being established as part of the formal political management arrangements within the Council, and being written into the Council's Constitution. Area Committees may only make executive decisions within defined arrangements. Otherwise, the main role within the Council's political management structure is one of influence linked to consultation. The diagram below demonstrates how the area Committees fit into the Council's political management structure.

Area Committees and the Council's Political Management System



4. Finance

For 2004-05 Area Committees have an allocation of £50,000 which will be used to introduce the first phase of Area Committees. This money will be used to fund Committee Services support and the other basic costs of having meetings.

In future, the Council may decide to give the committees 'top up budgets' to spend on issues of local importance. Area Committees may also be given delegated functions. In both cases, Area Committees will need to operate within the Council's normal processes of budgetary control, and meet the Council's financial standards. These standards are:

- **Budgetary control and responsibility** 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 Area Committees, or have a say in how resources are spent, must sign up to an agreed set of personal obligations.

5. Arrangements for Area Committees and meetings

Area Committees will be Committees of the Council and as such will be bound by the provisions of the Council Constitution that relate to Council Committees.

The specific Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure for Area Committees is set out in the Council Constitution and a copy is included in the toolkit folder.

There will be nine area committees (see map).

Area	Wards
1	Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead
2	Humberstone, and Hamilton & Thurncourt
3	Coleman, Evington and Stoneygate
4	Charnwood and Spinney Hill
5	Knighton and Castle, excluding the city centre (see map)
6	Aylestone, Eyres Monsell and Freeman
7	Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields, Western Park and Westcotes
8	New Parks and Fosse
9	Beaumont Leys and Abbey

To begin with, Area Committees will be set up in [insert names of first areas].

Membership of Area Committees

The Area Committee will consist of all the ward Councillors in the area concerned.

Other people can be invited to the committees – for example key partners or representatives from local community groups (see the section on Partners).

Venues

The meetings will be held in the areas concerned, and each meeting could be held in a different part of the area. This would make the meeting more accessible to people in different parts of the area.

Committee Services will book the venues, and set them up for the meeting. They will ensure that the venues meet health and safety standards and that there is access for disabled people.

Chairing the meeting

Area Committee Members will need to choose a chair for each meeting. This will be done at the end of the preceding meeting. That Member will then act as chair between meetings. There are a number of options for choosing the chair, for example:

- Ask for a volunteer
- Rotate the chair in alphabetical order of Councillors' names
- Ask for a volunteer, but choose a different ward each time
- Rotate the chair amongst the political parties represented in the area;
or
- Elect a Chair for one year

Chairing Area Committee meetings will require skill to maximise public involvement and sometimes to manage conflict. A checklist for chairing effective public meetings is included in the toolkit folder.

Agenda

The agenda will be decided by the Chair of the meeting and he or she should consult with other Area Committee members on it.

There will be five compulsory items:

- Declaration of interests
- Approving the minutes of the last meeting
- At least half an hour for the public to raise questions
- An opportunity for the public to submit petitions; and
- A report on progress with questions raised at petitions submitted to previous meetings

Other items will be decided by the Chair

6. Community Engagement

Public involvement in the meetings

One of the most important roles of the Area Committees is to develop better community engagement in solving local problems, delivering local services and developing Council policy.

Further guidance on public involvement and community engagement generally is provided in *The Ladder of Community Engagement – Checklists for Effective Working* which is included in the toolkit folder.

Why should the public be involved in Area Committee meetings?

There are several reasons:

- Services can be targeted more closely to provide what people in the area want, and avoid what people don't want.
- Take up of services in the area can be improved by raising local awareness.
- The views of people in the area can help us monitor service performance on the ground.
- We can get a better idea of what people will feel about proposed changes to services.
- Local people can help us make more informed choices about policies and decisions.
- Area Committees give us another way of getting information across to the public.
- Area Committees could help us build a sense of community and shared ownership of problems.
- More contact with the public will help raise our awareness of hard to reach groups that we might otherwise miss.
- By getting involved in Area Committees, more members of the public might get a chance to meet their Councillors and become interested in local politics.

How should the public be involved in the meetings?

Committee style meetings could be off-putting to many members of the public. The meetings will have to be disciplined and transparent, so that members of the public can understand what is going on. There will need to be clearly recorded decisions and monitoring of progress made on the decisions made at previous meetings. But these do not have to be couched in local government language. One example of good practice is the way the Leicester Learning Disability Partnership Board is run. The partnership includes Councillors and professionals, but also people with learning disabilities and their carers. So the meetings are run in a way that includes all participants and the paperwork is written in plain English. An example of an agenda and minutes from one of the meetings is included in the toolkit folder.

The next section of the toolkit looks at how Area Committees can develop community engagement in general. But to be effective – the way in which the public are involved in the Area Committee themselves will be one of the main keys to the committees' overall effectiveness. This section looks at some of the practical issues that we need to tackle to ensure effective public involvement in the meetings.

Each pilot Area Committee will decide the format for the meetings – including how to facilitate public involvement. However, the following are some basic standards that need to be met.

13 Minimum standards for public involvement in Area Committee meetings

These are *minimum* standards. They reflect the Local Government Access to Information regulations, which give the public the right to see public committee papers and attend meetings. But they also create a number of other standards intended to promote public involvement further.

Area Committees are encouraged to consider other ways in which to maximise public involvement beyond these minimum standards. For example, Members may decide that they will allow members of the public themselves to put items on the agenda and give presentations or reports on issues they would like to discuss, promote or influence.

13 Minimum Standards for public involvement in Area Committee meetings

1. Meetings will be open to members of the public.
2. Meetings will be held in venues that are accessible to everyone, including disabled people, and meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.
3. Notice of the meeting will be posted on the Councils' internet site, in Link magazine and in public places in the areas concerned. The notices will be visually accessible and attractive, and will tell people how to get copies of the papers in community languages.
4. All reasonable requests for papers in community languages will be met.
5. Papers for the Area Committee meetings will be widely available at least five clear working days before the meeting and at the meeting itself.
6. Papers and presentations for the meeting must be in plain language, short, and based on what committee members and the public need to know. More detailed information must be available if requested.
7. Copies of papers available to the public must include:
 - information on how the meeting works and what the different items are for – written from the public's point of view
 - agenda
 - reports
 - minutes of the previous meeting
 - responses to progress on public questions raised at previous meetings
 - responses to progress on petitions raised at previous meetings
 - Form for submitting written questions with freepost address
8. Committee members and officers must use plain language when talking in the meeting, and any jargon or acronyms should be explained.
9. The layout of the room should be designed to allow the public to hear and contribute to the discussion as much as possible.
10. Members of the public should be given at least half an hour in which to ask questions of Committee Members (see Procedure for Public Questions at Area Committees).
11. Committee members, or officers, will either respond to public questions at the meetings itself or give feedback on progress on the issue at the next meeting .

12. Members of the public will be able to submit petitions on local issues to the committee (see Procedure for Petitions at Area Committees).

13. Members of the public will be invited to give their views on all reports and presentations to the Committee.

Public questions

The public will be invited to ask questions at Area Committees and as a minimum half an hour will be allocated to this.

A procedure for public questions at Area Committees is included in the toolkit folder.

It is envisaged that question time this will be a relatively informal process. The Committee may want to discuss the question and other people in the meeting may have views on it.

Members or officers may be able to respond to the question immediately – but it is important that they are confident about their information before they do so. If the question can't be answered to the satisfaction of the questioner at the meeting, it will be passed on to a relevant officer in the Council who will be asked to provide a written response in time for the next meeting of the Area Committee.

Petitions

The public will be able to submit petitions to the Area Committee. A procedure for petitions to Area Committees included in the toolkit folder. The procedure follows the procedure used for petitions generally by the Council, but gives the public another way of submitting them.

Responses to and progress on questions and petitions

At each meeting there will be a report on responses to and progress on questions and petitions that are still outstanding from previous meetings.

Consultation carried out by Area Committees

Beyond the meetings themselves, 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:

- enhancing 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 organisation and/or
- doing specific one off consultation exercises on specific issues in the area

If Area Committees carry out consultation exercises they must follow consultation good practice as outlined below.

What is consultation?

Consultation is a process of dialogue that leads to a decision. It should be two way – an ongoing exchange of views and information, not just one way process. And it should lead to a decision!

Minimum standards for consultation by Area Committees

All consultation exercises carried out by Area Committees must pass four tests. They must be:

- ✓ related to a decision that the Council (or others) intends to take
- ✓ competently carried out
- ✓ inclusive; and
- ✓ used in practice

These principles are set out in the Audit Commission paper *Listen Up! – Effective Community Consultation*. Chapter 4 of the paper – entitled ‘The principles of Good Practice’, is included in the toolkit folder, together with a chart listing some of the main consultation techniques, their advantages and disadvantages, what issues they are best suited for and their relative cost.

7. Making and influencing decisions

Area Committees can affect what happens in an area in two main ways:

- **Making decisions by having delegated functions; and**
- **Influencing decisions made by others**

Each of these is explained in further detail below.

In both cases one of the effects of area based arrangements is likely to be that the same services could be delivered in a different way in different areas.

But we know that in a diverse city one size doesn't fit all. Organisations such as the Council are geared up to try to provide the same level of service to all members of the community. But sustainable change can only come about by helping people to be involved in deciding the particular services that they need.

Making decisions by having delegated functions

Under the Local Government Act 2000, the executive of the Council – the Cabinet – can delegate functions to Area Committees. These functions can be:

- Executive functions – i.e. The functions of the cabinet (some of which in turn are delegated to officers) and/or
- Non executive functions – such as licensing or development control

The purpose of giving Area Committees delegated functions is to bring decision making closer to the public. It would give Members more scope and freedom to respond directly to issues in local communities. It is intended to help the Council make faster and more responsive decisions, tailored to local needs.

If Area Committees are given delegated functions under the Local Government Act 2000, they have to be set up as official committees of the Council and comply with certain regulations as to how they operate.

So that we give the Council scope for making these arrangements, we have set up Area Committees in Leicester in accordance with these regulations.

In November 2003 the Council decided that one of the roles of the Area Committees would be to make decisions themselves. The Council agreed

that six criteria would be used to decide which Council functions to delegate to the committees.

Six criteria for deciding which functions to delegate to Area Committees

- The service or issue is of importance to the public
- There is scope for local choices (for example 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 of more importance than a consistent approach across the City
- The catchment area for the service is clear
- Other councils have successfully delegated this function to Area Committees

Currently, officers are testing the six criteria on two services:

- Street Cleansing; and
- Family Support Services

Officers are developing a detailed method for using the six criteria, by looking at these pilots. When the method is finalised, officers will use it to present a list of Council functions that 'pass the criteria' for Members to choose from.

Influencing decisions made by other people or organisations

Regardless of whether the Area Committee is a formal committee of the Council with delegated functions or not, it will spend much of its time influencing decisions made by other people. Even if it does have delegated powers, it is likely that most of the change it brings about will be from influencing others rather than making executive decisions itself.

Area Committees can influence service provision through making recommendations about:

- the local delivery of specified services
- specifications and local management of contracts
- variation of contract specifications to provide services better than an agreed minimum standard if there is sufficient money
- funding needs / submitting proposals
- the use of Council owned facilities

They can also influence services by:

- contributing to the development of Council strategies and policies
- developing Area Community Plans
- responding to proposals such as planning applications and licensing applications
- contributing to the Best Value process and performance management by:
 - challenging local service provision
 - consulting with local people

Depending on the recommendation it wants to make, the Area Committee will involve influencing a range of people and other organisations. These are:

- Full Council
- Cabinet
- Council officers who have delegated decision making powers
- Scrutiny Committees
- Other local, regional, national or international organisations

Officers will be able to advise Area Committee members on how to make their recommendation and whether it should be done formally or informally. Making a recommendation could involve an Area Committee officer or Member writing or speaking to the lead officer or Council member for the body concerned (e.g. the lead Cabinet member). Influencing outside organisations could involve officers or members arranging meetings with them or writing to them.

Decision Tracking Log

Area Committees will need to keep a log of what they have decided / recommended, how they did it, and what progress has been made on the issue. It is suggested that officers supporting the Area Committee take responsibility for keeping this record for the Committee and reporting on progress as required by Committee Members.

8. Preparing area community plans

Councils now have legal duty to develop a community strategy. The Council wants 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.

The main benefits of developing Area Community Plans are to:

- **Support the city wide Community Plan** Leicester's first Community Plan was produced in 2000. The next one is due in 2005-06 and the process for developing it is now underway – and being lead by Leicester Partnership. This plan will be a combined Community Plan and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. The Community Plan for 2005-06 would be considerably strengthened if it was informed by local area plans – giving a local perspective.
- **Create goals** A plan can give shape and purpose to the work of the Area Committee and the work of local partners. It can help ensure that actions taken by people in the area are strategic and not just piecemeal – and it can help ensure that there is long-term as well as short-term thinking going on.
- **Build consensus** it can be used as a way of building consensus about the key priorities for the area, both within the Council and between ourselves and other service providers. This in turn will strengthen the Committee's ability to influence the decisions made by the Council in the area and by partners too. In turn it gives strength and purpose to local partnership working.
- **Use information** By acting on hard information, area community plans could be the key way in which we turn around negative situations in communities on issues like crime, education and health.
- **Engage the community** Area Community planning is an excellent way of focussing public interests and talent on local problems. It could help us turn passive consumers of services into active citizens, so they don't just complain about services, but take a hand in identifying local problems and help to decide on the solutions.
- **Evaluate the Area Committee** The Council and others will need to be sure that Area Committees are earning their keep. One good way of measuring this would be to include in any evaluation of Area Committees an assessment of whether the Committee has produced an effective area community plan using effective processes, and whether it is achieving the goals set out in the plan.

Stages in developing area community plans

STAGE 1: Collect data Area community plans need to be ‘evidence-based’ i.e. based on reliable data and information about the area concerned. The first stage is therefore to create an Area Profile. A project to produce Area Profiles for all of the areas in the city is now near completion. A sample Area Profile is included in the toolkit folder, and copies of the other profiles are available from officers.

STAGE 2: Involve the community Area Committees will have to make sure they make the best use of local people’s knowledge and experience in developing the plan. The process used for developing the plan must follow the guidelines for consultation set out elsewhere in this toolkit.

STAGE 3: Write the plan The plan will be a mixture of things that we need to do over the whole city – translated into local action (see *features of an area community plan* below).

STAGE 4: Communicate the plan The plan should be able to be understood by everyone, so it should be attractive, written in clear language, and easily available.

STAGE 5: Carry out the action This is where the Area Committee can focus its decision-making and influencing – to take forward the actions agreed in the plan.

STAGE 6: Monitor and inform The Area Committee will have to monitor progress on the actions in the plan and report on progress to the Council, partners and the community.

Features of an Area Community Plan

- Succinct, clear and accessible to ordinary people
- Produced through and with existing area based plans and initiatives
- Action plans for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), to comply with the city’s NRF strategy in priority areas
- The product of close consultation and involvement from local partners and the local community
- Integrated with the Local Development Framework
- Includes a vision for the longer term of what the area should be like in several years time

- Evidence based – i.e. based on a balanced assessment of the characteristics of the community and local needs and priorities
- Addressing the major elements of any social exclusion, inequality and poor community cohesion present in the area
- Taking into account the major themes of the Community Plan for Leicester and include action to achieve the goals in the Community Plan for that area. The next city-wide community plan (in 2005-06) will in turn partly draw on the area community plans themselves.
- Containing a list of actions to be achieved in the area that are ‘smart’ (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed). This could be linked to neighbourhood renewal ‘floor targets’, PSA’s and/or regeneration ‘outputs and outcomes’.
- Used as one of the tools for evaluating the effectiveness of the Area Committee itself.

Area Community Plans could have two parts. The main plan setting out the goals in a clear, attractive and accessible way for the public, and a more detailed document needed, for example by professionals to ensure clarity about who does what and for monitoring purposes.

9. Partnership working

Area Committees could be a way of bringing partners in the area together to work jointly on local problems. Members of Area Committees will need to decide which other organisations need to be involved in the Committees.

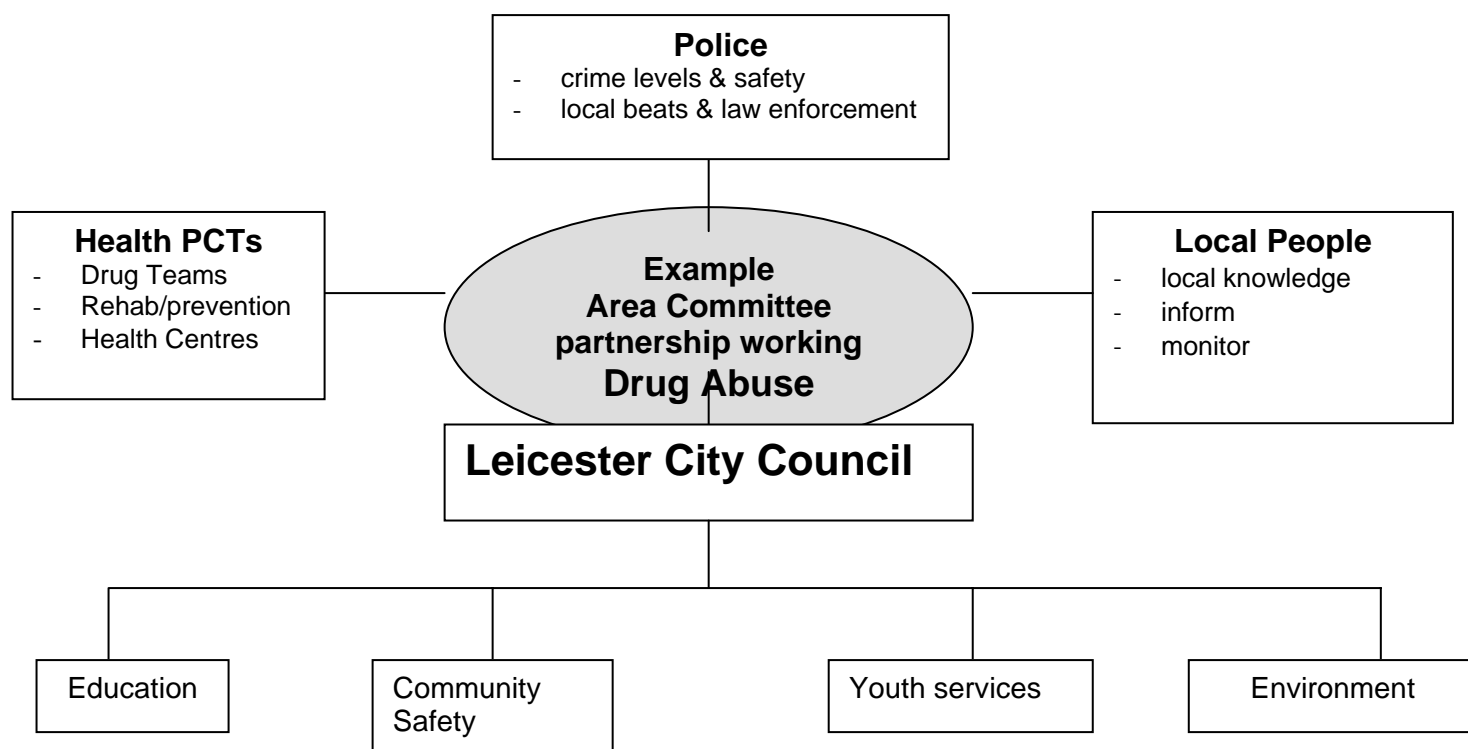
Potential partners include:

- Police
- Primary Care Trusts
- Representatives from local community groups
- Representatives from local businesses
- Voluntary Action community representatives (providing a community link to the Leicester Partnership)
- Representatives of local Tenants and Residents Associations
- Representatives of local regeneration programmes

Ways of including partners:

- standing invitation to attend all the Area Committee meetings
- provide them with a regular slot at meetings for their service
- invited on a needs basis for example when a relevant issue comes up
- variations or combinations of the above

An example of relevant partnership links to a specific issue:



10. 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.

11. Best value and performance management

An area based approach could provide an important new dimension to best value and performance management.

Top down

Area Committee may want to look at the performance of key services in their area and compare them with figures for other areas and Leicester as a whole. In time, setting and pursuing area targets could become an important activity for area committees – especially if it links into priorities set out in an area plan.

Leicester's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (see next section) identifies 68 key actions to take forward neighbourhood renewal in the city. Many of the actions are linked to targets, which can be monitored on an area basis.

Bottom up

Area Committees could set their own local performance indicators and monitor performance against them.

12. Neighbourhood renewal

The Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal emphasises the importance of tackling deprivation on an area basis. As part of this the Government has set two goals for neighbourhood renewal:

'in all the poorest neighbourhoods , to have common goals of lower worklessness and crime, and better health, skills, housing and physical environment'

and

'to narrow the gap on these measures between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country'

This section tells you how we are trying to meet those goals in Leicester, and what role area committees could play to take forward neighbourhood renewal.

Leicester's Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal - 68 Key Actions

Leicester's Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal was produced by the Leicester Partnership – a body of people representing all of the key service providers in the city. The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is part of a wider Community Plan for Leicester, produced by partners and in consultation with the public, to represent the overall strategy for the city. There are important links between the Community Plan for the city as a whole and the idea of having Area Community Plans, and these are explored in the section on Area Community Planning.

The two national goals for neighbourhood renewal (see above) are the starting point for Leicester's own Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which contains 68 key actions. Many of the actions need to be taken forward on an area by area basis, and this work would be well suited to Area Committees, who could take steps to drive forward the key actions in their areas and monitor the progress on the actions in the area.

Government floor targets

Some of the key actions are associated with floor targets – minimum targets set by the Government to tackle some of the basic deprivation issues across the city. There are 11 floor targets covering jobs, crime, education, health and housing and the environment. Area Committees could also look at how their area is doing in relation to the floor targets and take measures to try to achieve them, if necessary.

Monitoring and implementing Leicester's Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Plan could provide a useful strategic focus for Area Committees and could form the basis for Area Plans (see Area Plans section below). This is particularly so in areas with high levels of deprivation.

So potentially, the neighbourhood renewal strategy gives a common framework for all Area Committees. Area Committees could take this as a starting point for their Area Community Plan, and then also build in priorities and targets that are specific to the area concerned.

The toolkit folder contains a copy of the Leicester Community Plan and the Leicester Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

13. Community Cohesion

Area Committees could have an extremely important role to play in building the confidence of and sense of belonging within and between communities in Leicester.

Research carried out by the Council in 2003 shows that residents felt that more local activities for local people were needed to help instil a sense of pride in the area.

Area Committees can take a lead role in bringing people together from different communities to learn from each other, share problems and find solutions, as well as to celebrate success.

What is Community Cohesion?

The broad definition is that a cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

What is happening about Community Cohesion?

Key Action 55 in Leicester's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy commits us to *develop a community cohesion strategy for the City with a clear action plan.*

In 2002 the Leicester Partnership studied community cohesion in Leicester. Following the publication of a report *Taking Forward Community Cohesion in Leicester* the Partnership established a Community Cohesion Project Team. The Project Team guides the development of the City's vision and strategy for community cohesion, and ran public workshops in Autumn 2003 to develop the strategy. The workshops included a wide range of community groups, young people, the faith sector and Leicester residents.

This work has helped to identify five community cohesion specific themes and four broad interlocking issues:

Community Cohesion Themes

- Supporting the social integration of communities in Leicester
- Supporting Young People
- Building confidence and a sense of belonging about living in Leicester
- Addressing the immediate social tensions in the city
- Improving communication and information activities

Broad interlocking issues

- Delivering better services and tackling broad social problems
- Developing collaborative relationships with other agencies – i.e. greater partnership and cross-sectoral working
- Tackling inequalities, prejudice and discrimination
- Addressing economic and social disadvantage through regeneration programmes

The draft strategy and a detailed action plan is included in the toolkit folder and will be taken to the Leicester Partnership in March 2004 for approval.

How can Area Committees take community cohesion forward in Leicester?

The main responsibility for Area Committees will be to plan and influence services in ways which promote and encourage inter-cultural contact and understanding. This will be important both in the area they represent and in making links with other areas across the City. The community cohesion action plan provides more detailed information on the types of activities that Area Committees could get involved in to strengthen community cohesion.

14. Learning from and evaluating the Area Committees

To develop effective Area Committees we will have to make sure that we are continually learning from what works and what doesn't work. This is particularly important if we are to set up the Committees in a few areas first because we need to make sure that we learn from these before rolling them out to the other areas of the city.

Set out below are some initial ideas for evaluating the Area Committees. Officers will develop a detailed method for evaluation in consultation with Members when it is time to evaluate them

What aspects of Area Committees could we evaluate?

The evaluation could look at two main groups of issues:

- Is the committee effective – for example has it added significant value to change in the area it serves, has it delivered what it planned to do, does it help the Council and other agencies to deliver best value?
- Is the committee working well – for example is it efficient and inclusive?

Suggested key features of a successful area committee:

- attracts a good range of different types of people from across the area
- involves and consults a wide range of people, in the area
- has an area community plan that:
 - has been developed in an inclusive way
 - has been communicated effectively
 - is both visionary and achievable
 - is backed up by effective arrangements for implementation and monitoring
- regularly makes recommendations to service providers to improve local services.
- has had a measurable positive impact on the area.

How could we evaluate Area Committees?

There are number of ways in which we could evaluate Area Committees:

From Members' point of view:

- Continuous evaluation by Committee Members (see evaluation log below)
- Annual Member review – survey and or focus group of Members
- Evaluation forms for Members to fill in at the end of each meeting
- Discussions about the key learning points at the debrief meeting with officers after each Area Committee meeting

From the public's point of view:

- Have evaluation forms at each meeting
- Ask the People's Panel for their views
- Ask people through Link magazine
- Questionnaire on the internet

From partners' point of view

- Write to partners asking their views
- Officers meet with partners to get their views

From officers' point of view

- Continuous evaluation by officers (see evaluation log below)
- Survey of officers working with Area Committees

Area Committees Evaluation Log

Use this space to record any problems you notice about the Area Committees, and record your ideas about how to improve them. We will use this information as part of an evaluation of Area Committees.

15. Checklists

A: Council standards for Area Committees

These are the things that the Council has decided will be standard across all Area Committees.

- To be inserted*
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B: Arrangements that Area Committees must decide for themselves These are the things that Area Committees must do, but each committee can choose how to do them.

- To be inserted*
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Additional material for the toolkit folder	Included in this draft
A Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure for the Area Committees – excerpt from the Constitution	●
B Map of Areas with areas numbered and showing city centre clearly	
C A checklist for chairing effective public meetings	●
D The Ladder of Community Engagement – Checklists for Effective Working.	
E Leicester Learning Disability Partnership Board: A good practice example of inclusive agenda and notes	
F Procedure for public questions	●
G Procedure for petitions	●
H Audit Commission paper <i>Listen Up! – Effective Community Consultation</i> . Chapter 4 of the paper – entitled ‘The Principles of Good Practice’ together with chart listing some of the main consultation techniques, their advantages and disadvantages, what issues they are best suited for and their relative cost	
I Example of an Area Profile	
J Community Plan 2003	
K Leicester Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal	
L Community Cohesion: Draft Strategy and Action Plan	