

**AREA COMMITTEES FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT:
OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND TOOLKIT**

**BRIEFING NOTE FOR CABINET ON RESOLUTIONS OF FINANCE,
RESOURCES AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

On 28th May the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Committee considered the Cabinet report on *Area Committees for Neighbourhood Improvement: Operational Framework and Toolkit*. The Committee made four resolutions. These are set out below together with officers' advice to Cabinet on them – particularly on resolutions 3 and 4.

Resolution 1: That the Committee express its support in principle for the Area Committees initiative

Resolution 2: That the Committee express its concern regarding the funding of the initiative to Cabinet.

We have no further advice to give on funding beyond the detailed information and risk assessment contained in the Cabinet report.

Resolution 3: That the Committee suggest to Cabinet that there should be a formal place on each Area Committee for a community representative under the age of 21.

Area Committees will not have delegated powers from the outset. We have therefore not included arrangements for co-option at this stage in the rules of procedure. This is because the co-option arrangement will need to reflect the functions that the Council decides to delegate, and we don't know what functions will be delegated yet.

Instead, we have suggested that the Area Committee have invitees – and these could be people who are invited to 'sit at the table' with Members for all the meetings in the area, and people who are invited to specific meetings because of the nature of the items being discussed.

If Cabinet wish to follow up this suggestion from scrutiny, **we suggest that we specify in the rules of procedure and toolkit that each Area Committee should ask a resident under the age of 21 to attend as an 'invitee'. It may be that we can come to an arrangement with the Young People's Council to help us identify young people who would like to be involved.**

The Young People's Council was recently reviewed and looked at the problem of engaging them in local democracy. One of the things we may be able to do is seek representatives from the YPC to take part in the Area Committees.

However, the scrutiny resolution reflects a wider issue around the problem of how to engage young people in local democracy. Our advice is that having an invitee under 21 to Area Committee may well help – but that Area Committees will need to do more to engage young people. The full toolkit will provide full advice and support on engagement, and this will help Area Committees engage young people as effectively as possible. We also intend to review how well the phase 1 Area Committees have done in involving young people when they are evaluated in Autumn 2005.

Resolution 4: That the Cabinet consider creating an Area Committee for the City Centre at the earliest opportunity.

On 24th November 2003 Cabinet resolved:

that there will not be an Area Committee for the city centre, but a consultative forum made up of businesses, residents and other stakeholders in city centre issues. That Councillors will have a key role in the forum

This resolution was made on the basis of officer advice. One of the key reasons for suggesting that we do not include the city centre in the arrangements is because of its special nature. 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.

The issue 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.

The Council resolved that the purpose of Area Committees will 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

These issues can be tackled in other ways:

Decisions by Members: The Cabinet will be receiving a report called 'Command and Control – Project Management arrangements for the City Centre and Cultural Quarter' This report will recommend the setting up of a

City Centre Cabinet sub group to strengthen political input into city centre decision making.

In addition, residents in the city centre will obviously continue to have access to their ward Councillors.

Community engagement: In November Cabinet agreed to the development of a city centre consultative forum – which would have Member involvement. The key Members to involve could be the members of the Cabinet city centre sub group and ward members for the city centre.

It was envisaged the consultative forum would be developed by building on the existing business based City Centre Forum of city centre businesses which is part of the City Centre Management arrangements, by including residents (both of the city centre and of Leicester as a whole). It was also intended that we would do some more general work around improving consultation on city centre issues – particularly to try to involve people who are traditionally excluded from city centre issues.

This work was part of the remit of the City Centre Neighbourhood Coordinator post that was deleted under the review of Revitalising Neighbourhoods. However, in order to pick up on the work, officers in Regeneration and Culture are looking at possible alternative sources of funding to create a post to deliver this work in the future.

**Cathy Carter, ext 6719
Chief Executive's Office
For Director of Resources, Access and Diversity**