

Neighbourhood Services & Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission  
3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013

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**Ward Community Meetings (WCMs) Improvement Project:  
Evaluation of Phase 1 and Phase 2 next steps**

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Lead director: Miranda Cannon

## **Useful information**

- Ward(s) affected: All
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### **1. Summary**

At the July 4<sup>th</sup> Neighbourhood and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission meeting a request was made by the commission to receive evaluation feedback from all councillors involved within the first phase of the project and to be provided with regular progress updates on the implementation arrangements for Phase 2.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Neighbourhood Services & Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission receives the phase 1 evaluation feedback and the update on progress currently being made with phase 2.

### **3. Supporting information**

#### **3.1 Report**

The Ward Community Meeting improvement project was conducted as a pilot in three wards across the city: Freeman, Charnwood and Westcotes. Eyres Monsell was subsequently included as it was taking an innovative approach to replace its ward meetings with community walkabouts. The outcome of the project is to enable more effective and less bureaucratic ward meetings, improved communications and marketing, a streamlined process for community ward budgets and the recruitment (six month secondment) of a community engagement officer to achieve a more consistent good practice and dedicated resource across all wards. It is very much recognised as a key principle within the project that there is a need for flexibility in the approach and it is not seeking a one size fits all approach. The project is now entering its 2<sup>nd</sup> phase with the inclusion of a further 6 wards.

At the July 4<sup>th</sup> Neighbourhood and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission meeting a request was made by the Commission to receive evaluation feedback from all councillors involved within phase 1 of the project. In order to capture feedback a simple questionnaire was developed (appendix 1) and sent to pilot councillors within the Charnwood, Westcotes and Freeman Ward. Due to the nature of the Eyres Monsell pilot a different approach was taken to gather feedback. Due to time constraints this report only provides written evaluation results from three of the pilot wards. (A verbal update regarding the Eyres Monsell pilot will be given at the meeting.)

#### **3.2 Analysis and Findings**

The findings and results are drawn from three completed evaluation forms received from the Westcotes, Freeman and Charnwood Ward.

- Agenda meetings worked well and enabled useful discussion. It was positive that they were set in advance
- Cutting the information fair helped to prevent confusion, however the potential to re instate this if the attendance improved.
- The concept of an action log was good; however they didn't seem to be used correctly.
- Cafeteria style seating arrangements worked well and enabled better dialogue with residents
- Most initiatives worked ok, although there wasn't a massive impact on attendance
- Most councillors felt the options for phase two were positive, however one councillor requested the possibility of a walk about option to be considered moving forward
- Overall councillors felt the support received from officers was good, however there was some recognition to the role of the MSO not always being clear and front line Officer presentations varied depending on the service and individual
- Many of the councillors liked the layout and format of the posters; however they didn't feel that it had a huge impact on attendance.
- All councillors wanted to continue exploring the use of social media.

Overall the feedback suggests the small changes that were made were positively received. However there was limited impact on attendance. This is clearly something that needs to be addressed as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase.

### **3.3 Resident feedback**

Residents who attended pilot ward meetings were asked to provide feedback by completing an evaluation form; however returns were patchy and were not consistent across the four pilot wards. Officers will therefore be asked in the pilot's second phase to encourage residents to complete evaluation returns and to make a note of the number of people attending ward meetings, new faces, etc.

### **3.4 Phase 2 Progress update**

The project has successfully agreed the inclusion of a further 4 wards, Coleman, Thurncourt, Evington and New Parks, and we hope to soon have a decision from the Belgrave and Latimer Wards. We have also approached the Braunstone and Rowley Fields Ward to ask them to be included.

The new Community Engagement Officer started on the 29<sup>th</sup> July and is currently undertaking a handover of duties from the existing Members Support Team. Her immediate priority over the next month is to engage with the all pilot wards to understand their issues and agree a short list of outcomes for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase pilot. These outcomes will differ depending on the nature and needs of each of the wards. Many of these discussions have already started.

As part of the current development work a workshop was held to review the existing bid application process and criteria. This highlighted a number of suggested areas for change; these include the application form, manual processing of bids, multi ward bid guidance, criteria and the evaluation process. These improvements are currently being drafted and will be shared with pilot councillors for review in early September.

With regard to other proposals i.e. consultation with young people, a further meeting has been held with a Youth Development Worker to explore options for inclusion. We are aiming to hold a development session at the beginning of September with Youth Services and Cllr Cutkelvin to suggest options for engagement. These will then be shared to the wider pilot for consideration. We are currently awaiting further information from Children's Services regarding the Young People's Council to assess their work programme and potential involvement.

We have also undertaken further development work regarding publicity and communications and have recently shared a series of poster and leaflet templates with all pilot councillors (Appendix 2). We are in the process of receiving responses, so far all feedback received has been positive. We are also currently developing a communications matrix, which will enable us to successfully evidence and review the pros and cons of a variety of communication tools. Throughout the lifecycle of the pilot evidence and information will be gathered to ensure a robust matrix moving forward. The councillor guidance is currently being developed for each pilot ward and will remain in draft format until the end of the pilot. Once the pilot has been completed it will then be finalised and shared to all councillors as part of the wider roll out.

Unfortunately due to us still not having full sign up to the pilot we have not yet written out to all councillors to advise them on phase 2. However we aim to be in a position to do so at the beginning of September. We will also be inviting any councillors not involved within the pilot to express ideas/good practice and issues for us to consider within phase 2.

**Summary of appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Evaluation Form

Appendix 2 – Poster and leaflets ideas