

Neighbourhood Services & Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission Report

**Update Report Transforming Neighbourhood
Services Programme**

4th December 2013

Assistant City Mayor, Councillor Sarah Russell
Lead director: Liz Blyth

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: 1.2

1. Purpose & Summary

The first aim of this report is to provide an update on the Transforming Neighbourhood Services (TNS) programme and the engagement work that is being carried out in the South area of the city.

The second aim is to outline the timeline that will be carried out for the next steps of activity to be undertaken by the TNS programme in relation to the South area.

2. Recommendations

That the Scrutiny Commission note the progress made to date and early feedback and lessons learned regarding the engagement activity in the South area.

That the Scrutiny Commission note the outline timetable for the next steps regarding the South area.

3. Background:

3.1 Community Engagement Experience

3.1.1 South Area Activity to date

The TNS programme has commenced engagement activity with key stakeholders and members of the public in the south area of the city (Knighton, Aylestone, Eyres Monsell and Freeman wards) in order to help develop ideas for how services / buildings can be reconfigured in line with the overall objectives set for the programme.

There are several streams of engagement work that have taken place and these are detailed below:

Meetings & Drop-in sessions

A number of meetings and drop in sessions have been held with key stakeholders and members of public to allow them to express their views. The first meeting to be held was on the 26th September 2013 and representatives from key stakeholder groups in the south area were invited.

Following this a series of drop-in sessions have been held at various locations in the south area. The list of these sessions is as follows:

- Tuesday 8th October at The Linwood Centre 12-2pm
- Wednesday 9th October at Eyres Monsell Community Centre 4-7pm
- Thursday 10th October at Aylestone Baptist Church 4-6.30pm
- Friday 11th October at Southfields Library 12-2pm
- Monday 14th October at Stoughton Rd Scout Hut 6-7pm
- Tuesday 15th October at St Hugh's Church 4-6pm
- Thursday 17th October at Samworth Academy 8.15-9 am
- Thursday 17th October at Aylestone Leisure Centre 4-7pm
- Further drop in outside Tesco on Saffron Lane

The principles behind the scheduling of drop in sessions were:

- They should cover all areas of the neighbourhood
- They should be held both in council and non-council owned properties
- They should be at different times in a day to allow as many people to attend as possible
- Where possible they should coincide with existing events to maximise potential audience
- Be flexible in responding to requests for new locations for drop ins

Method for feedback / Leaflet distribution

A form was designed to collect feedback during the engagement period. This was packaged as a part of a leaflet which also contained key messages and information on the schedule of drop-in sessions to be held. This form has been included as Appendix A to this report.

The feedback form has also been placed on-line to allow responses to be collected in this manner. The deadline for completion and submission of these forms was the 28th October 2013.

The leaflets have been widely distributed around the south area into locations as follows:

- GP Surgeries
- Dentists
- Children's Centres
- Youth Centres
- Community Centres
- Libraries
- Churches
- Housing Offices
- Children's / Community Homes
- Leisure Centres
- Elderly Person's Homes

3.1.2. Emerging Themes and Responses

In total 110 completed forms were received. The emerging themes from these meetings and the responses received are as follows:

- The approach has been received well and feedback received has been of a positive and constructive nature. A number of people commented on how the honest and upfront nature of stating the issues facing the council and showing willing to engage the stakeholders and public early on in the process, i.e. before any decisions have been made, is the correct approach
- Attendees requested to have regular updates from the programme to inform them of progress, the first of these is scheduled into the timetable for next steps
- Support for the idea of delivering multiple services from fewer locations. It is felt that this would improve usage of the sites, creating busy places with lots of activities and services being provided
- Support for the increased use of Southfields Library. This building not was the only one that was mentioned specifically when it came to discussing potential locations for merging services together. Overall responses were more general around merging service provision without naming particular locations from which to do this, however, some support for retaining Linwood Centre if refurbished and improved is evident
- Positive responses to the move of Aylestone Library into Aylestone Leisure Centre
- Some support for local people running the services on behalf of the community
- Easier access to information about services and what is going on in the community to improve take up of services/ participation in community activities.
- Keep the services that are provided going. The majority of responses were more focussed around protecting the services that people receive rather than the buildings that they are provided in, however public transport links are also an important factor.

3.1.3. Lessons Learned from Engagement Activity

The lessons learned from this period of engagement activity are as follows:

- Positive reaction was gained through being honest and upfront with the challenges facing the council
- Engaging the key stakeholder groups early proved a great success as it allowed the messages to spread in the correct manner
- Timely briefing and engagement of ward members
- Other relevant services within the council have been engaged (children and young people's services, Housing etc.)
- Providing on-going feedback to people would be welcome
- Use the success of the Aylestone Library move to demonstrate the positive

outcomes that any proposed transformational activity can bring

- Production of the materials should be planned in earlier to avoid potential mistakes and to provide stakeholders and public as much notice as possible to attend events and meetings

While the approach has been intensive, it has proven to be a success and has been received well by stakeholders and the public. It is intended that this approach will be used for the engagement work that will be carried out across the other areas of the city as the programme progresses.

3.2 Outline Timetable for next steps for South Area work

The engagement activity described in the previous section concluded on the 28th October 2013. Following this the feedback has been collected and is currently being analysed in order to produce a set of proposals for change in the area, which will be impact assessed to judge the feasibility and to identify any potential risks and undesirable implications.

Following completion of this the following timeline has been prepared:

- Brief City Mayor, Assistant Mayor for Neighbourhoods and Executive Members to present model and gain feedback –December
- Commence Equalities Impact Assessment on model – December 2013
- Brief ward members through a series of meetings being arranged with Assistant Mayor for Neighbourhoods to present report and gain feedback – week commencing 6th January
- Feedback to stakeholder group with an update on progress, outline model and early notice of the upcoming stakeholder and ward meetings planned –week commencing 6 January
- Present outline model to Ward Community Meetings and hold drop-in sessions – week commencing 13th January 2014
- Refine options / model into proposal (including EIA) for the south area - to end of January 2014
- Present refined proposal (including EIA) to City Mayor and Executive for proposed decision – end January 2014
- Scrutiny to consider and provide response to proposed Executive decision – February meeting (subject to outcome and timing of the final decision)
- Executive decision announced - February
- Commence implementation of the transformational activity

4. Details of Scrutiny

This report is being considered by the Neighbourhoods Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission on 4th December 2013

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The gross spending on the four services directly within the scope of this review is circa £14m per year. After allowing for income from charges and external funding (in particular funding for Adult Skills and Learning), the Council's annual net spending is circa £6m per year. The TNS programme is one of the reviews within the Council's spending review programme, which takes place in the context of very significant reductions in the funding received by the Council from the Government as a contribution to the cost of local services.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081.

5.2 Legal implications

"Legal advice on consultation principles has been disseminated through departments. DCLG Statutory Guidance on Best Value and the Leicester Compact create similar obligations on the Council to: "... consult widely and early enough to make a difference, allowing at least 12 weeks' consultation ... giving feedback on the outcomes; and "... give at least three months' notice of the actual reduction to both the organisation involved and the public/service users."

In addition, although they do not have legal force, Cabinet Office guidance issued in July 2012 suggests principles that the Council should adopt to engage stakeholders in policy developments. The governing principle of the guidance is that the type and scale of the consultation is proportionate to the potential impact of the proposal or decision being taken. In particular, the guidance states that:

- Longer and more detailed consideration will be needed where smaller organisations could be affected by the proposals.
- Consultation should begin when the policy development under consideration is at an early stage. The timeframe for consultation should be proportionate and realistic to allow stakeholders a sufficient period of time to respond and, depending on the nature and complexity of the proposal, may vary between two and 12 weeks (currently specified to be 12 weeks as the standard minimum).
- The information that is provided as part of the consultation should be useful and accessible and the objectives of the consultation should be clear.
- Consideration should be given to more informal ways of engaging with stakeholders, for example e-mail or web-based forums, public meetings, working groups, focus groups and surveys."

Gregory Surtees, Senior Solicitor – 37 1421

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment

Good practice as set out in case law, emphasises the important role consultation plays in identifying potential impacts of any proposed changes to those affected by them and the importance of articulating those impacts at the time a decision is taken. This is to ensure that decision makers pay 'due regard' to their public sector equality duty. Therefore, an equality impact assessment will be undertaken on the proposed model for neighbourhood services as described in the process presented in paragraph 3.2.

Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead

5.4 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

Environmental Impacts

There are no significant climate change implications directly associated with the consultation process. However, the Council has a corporate carbon dioxide (CO₂) reduction target of 50% of the 2008/09 level by 2025/26 and the consolidation of neighbourhood buildings and the co-location of services will contribute towards this target. The exact carbon dioxide savings from the Transforming Neighbourhood Services Programme cannot be established at the moment. The savings will however be significant and could be further increased by investing in energy conservation measures in the retained buildings. This will also reduce operating costs.

Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team (x372251)

6. Background information and other papers:

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A – TNS South Area Leaflet

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a "key decision"?

No