

# Neighbourhood Services & Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission Report

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## **Ward Community Meeting Improvement Project: Phase 2 progress update**

Assistant City Mayor, Councillor Manjula Sood  
Lead director: Miranda Cannon

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4<sup>th</sup> December 2013

## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All wards
- Report author: Grace Williams and Carine Cardoza
- Author contact details: 37 4124
- Report version number: 1

### 1. Summary

Overall 10 wards are now part of the pilot and objectives/outcomes have been set for each ward. These developments will be evaluated and reported at the end of the pilot. Changes have been made to the funding process, however due to tight timescales significant changes will be implemented in April 2014. Work is currently progressing regarding engagement with young people and a further detailed report will be presented to the Commission in January 2014. The next step is for a milestone plan to be produced and implemented that will outline the transition arrangements moving forward.

### 2. Recommendations

Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission is asked to note the report and to make any comments or recommend further action as appropriate.

### 3. Background:

#### 3.1 Phase 2 Progress update

As well as the existing wards, Eyres Monsell, Charnwood, Westcotes and Freeman, the project has also successfully agreed the inclusion of the following wards Coleman, Thurncourt, Evington, New Parks and Braunstone and Rowley. The Community Engagement Officer, with support from project members, has now engaged with all pilot wards to understand their issues and concerns and to consider a short list of objectives to be achieved /considered during the pilot. These are as follows

#### Thurncourt

- Develop proposals with Youth Involvement Team to include/engage young people in WCM process
- Use targeted communications and publicity; locating new venues to encourage/increase resident attendance figures
- Organise tailored community walkabouts (using Eyres Monsell model) with involvement from key partners and LCC officers
- Develop a database of key community groups/activities in the ward
- Organise targeted publicity in LINK/Leicester Mercury to increase profile of ward meeting activities

#### Coleman

- Develop proposals with Youth Involvement Team to include/engage young people in WCM process
- Use targeted communications and publicity; trialling new venues to encourage/increase resident attendance figures
- Develop and implement a Community First Panel, which aims to bring together a small group of local residents (chaired by Cllr Sangster) who will implement government funds to assist/support communities in the Coleman ward and to plan events/activities, to improve community cohesion and resilience.
- Develop a directory of community groups and organisations in the ward
- Organise a tailored community walkabout (using Eyres Monsell model) with involvement of key partners and LCC officers
- Organise a community walkabout (wider remit) to replace the fourth quarter ward meeting
- Develop a Coleman Community Plan, which will profile key data and outline long-term priorities for the ward. This plan will be sent out for consultation to community groups/organisations and to all households in the ward.

#### Freemen

- Develop proposals with Youth Involvement Team to include/engage young people in WCM process
- Use targeted communications and publicity to increase resident attendance and continue to monitor figures.
- Gain on-going feedback from key officers in attendance to look for options for improvement
- Develop a resident database combining a variety of email address from various sources to use a basis for communication and engagement.

#### Westcotes

- Use targeted communications and publicity to increase resident attendance and continue to monitor figures.
- Organise a tailored community walkabout in April 2014 (using Eyres Monsell model) and involve key partners and LCC officers

#### Eyres Monsell

- Continue to support the community walkabouts, which includes reviewing and evaluating the current model
- Introduce a new model for managing community budgets

#### Spinney Hill

- Develop community intelligence and networks and consider mechanisms for joint working and information sharing across the ward
- Produce an annual events calendar and improve existing publicity contacts
- Design and introduce a new model for managing community / funding bids.
- Redesign ward meeting agenda pack and meetings to include wider developments in the local community.

#### Braunstone and Rowley Fields

- Develop a localised ward action plan with clear ward priorities
- Design publicity & communication strategies specific to Rowley Fields, to encourage greater participation and attendance.
- Integrate Rowley Fields residents with the ward strategy and delivery plans, with particular emphasis on older isolated people within the area.
- Support the development of 'summer's café', in undertaking a mini consultation on the introduction of children's play equipment within the centre.

#### Evington;

- Stream line and simplify WCM process - which includes refocusing agenda meetings to planning meetings which have a wider remit.
- Develop ward action plan with clear priorities
- Assist Ward Councillor's in developing a quarterly ward news and information letter

#### Charnwood;

- Develop a publicity and communications plan to help increase resident attendance figures
- Develop ward action plan with clear ward priorities
- Support the development of a ward Facebook account to promote ward meetings and keep residents abreast of information in their local area.

#### New Parks;

- Develop processes and procedures to merge ward community meetings with the community panel (this include meetings and funding streams)
- Support the Neighbourhood Manager to deliver workshops and consultations on merging community based meetings.
- Develop draft terms reference

These developments will continue to be tested throughout the pilot and will be evaluated at the end of the pilot. The aim is to also conduct a progress review in December with pilot Councillors to review arrangements and be in a position to share good practice to other pilot wards for their consideration for the qrt4 meetings.

Changes have been made to the administration process of community funding, to enable quicker and efficient processing of payments. This includes ensuring all BACS payments, once approved and processed, being paid within 1 day. Due to the timing within the financial year, we have agreed to prepare new draft guidance and an application process, which will be implemented in April 2014. Though the draft processes will be shared with pilot councillors for their comment and consideration, early in the new year. Work is also underway to ensure a higher turnover of evaluations forms. This includes a process for regular chasing and review. Progress is being made on ensuring budgets are spent more effectively and evenly across the year, to prevent large amounts of carry forwards at the end of the financial year. The introduction of ward plans and priorities in some wards has helped this to be run smoothly and effectively.

Work is continuing on developing a communications matrix, which articulates 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. Early feedback suggests that targeted leaflets are working effectively, however further research and evidence will continue to be gathered to fully understand their impact.

Pilot ward meetings are continuing to be promoted via the Leicester City Councils corporate twitter and Facebook pages. However anecdotal evidence suggests that this hasn't made a huge impact on attendance figures. Unfortunately at the moment due to the large amount of time and effort required to manage and maintain personal Facebook and Twitter accounts we have not been able to fully test and evaluate the concept. However we are still committed to trialling the idea, in order to be able to provide evidence on its impact. Therefore further conversations will be held with ward Councillors who are already successfully using these techniques to see what lessons we can learn.

The councillor guidebook has been developed and shared for each pilot ward and will remain in draft format until the end of the pilot. The guide has also been shared with Divisional Directors for their comment. The aim is to bring the draft councillor guide back to the commission in January for a detailed discussion and review. Once the pilot has been completed the guide will then be finalised and shared to all councillors as part of the wider roll out and implementation.

### **3.1.2 Young People Involvement**

The Young People's Council (YPC) is the recognised formal structure for the involvement of young people in Local Authority decision-making. They have a mandate from their peers to engage in dialogue with both elected members and officers. To get YPC reps engaging at a local level, it was proposed that the ward improvement project would arrange a meeting to discuss the YPC role at local ward committee meetings. This meeting was held on Thursday 26 September 2013. Carine Cardoza chaired it and in attendance were Cllr Cutkelvin, Cllr Naylor, Bez Killeen and members of staff from the Youth Involvement team.

The outcome of the meeting was that Bez Killen and the Youth Involvement team will prepare a plan to implement the following actions by December 2013:

- Explore proposals for joint surgeries – ward councillors and young people
- Provide local young person's voice: research young people issues and concerns, in particular for Freeman and Braunstone wards
- Representatives of young people to attend pilot ward meetings and provide feedback from a young person's perspective
- YPC members to promote the ward committee meetings to other young people through their school and youth centre networks.
- Representatives of young people to comment on redesigned ward bid forms and criteria currently being developed by the pilot WCM
- Representatives of young people to present a progress report to NSCI Scrutiny Commission in January 2014.

The overall aim of YPC attendance at ward committees is to raise the profile of the

work of the YPC at ward level, to enable YPC reps to advocate on behalf of young people's issues at a local level and to promote the ward committee meeting structure to young people across all wards.

### **3.2 Transition Arrangements and next steps**

A key focus over the next few months will be to work closely with Community and Democratic Services to agree the transition and handover arrangements for all wards.

In December there will be a series of planning workshops that will be held with the Head of Community Services, Head Administrative & Corporate Support, project lead for the WCM, Scrutiny Support Manager, Neighbourhood Managers and Community Engagement Officers. Conversations have already started, however these workshop will aim to develop a detailed plan, which will involve all the relevant tasks and approvals needed to be undertaken in order to transition effectively.

Once the detailed plan is prepared this will be implemented in January 2014 and monitored via the project team. Key milestones include:

- Brief Cllr Sood and Cllr Russell on detailed transition/transfer arrangements and Vision (Jan 2014)
- Seek approval from the Executive on (Feb 2014)
  - Future vision
  - Transition arrangements
  - Evaluation and closure of the pilot
- Brief NSCI scrutiny commission on (March 2014)
  - Future vision
  - Transition arrangements
  - Evaluation and closure of the pilot
- Communicate arrangements and vision to all Councillors (late March 2014)
- New management and delivery arrangements in place (April 2014)

## **4. Details of Scrutiny**

This report is to be presented to the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

## **5. Financial, legal and other implications**

### 5.1 Financial implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from this update report, however the cost and funding of particular initiatives should be fully evaluated before implementation. Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

### 5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications from this report.

Kamal Adata, City Barrister and Head of Standards x37 1401

### 5.3 Equality Impact Assessment

The main equality impact is increased participation, influence and voice in local community affairs by local residents through the ward community meetings. The report describes how participation and inclusion is being promoted with accessible information and actions targeted at engaging under-represented groups, such as young people. The benefits of local engagement would apply to all protected characteristics.

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?)

None.

### **6. Background information and other papers:**

None

### **7. Summary of appendices:**

None

### **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