

Neighbourhood Services & Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission Report

Ward Community Meeting Improvement Project: The Councillor Guide

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

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Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All wards
- Report author: Grace Williams
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- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

A key output of phase 1 of the Ward Community Improvement Project was the creation and development of the Councillor Guide (appendix A). The guide was created to provide key information to all councillors regarding the purpose and associated processes of ward community meetings. Initial feedback has already been received and noted from both officers and councillors. The guide will remain in draft format until the end of the pilot, Once the pilot has completed the guide will then be refreshed and handed over to Community Services to implement to all councillors in April 2014.

2. Recommendations

Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission is asked to note the report and to make any comments or recommend further action as appropriate on the draft Councillor Guide.

3. Background

3.1 The Councillor Guide

Purpose and aims of the guide

Throughout the first phase of the pilot we received a large amount of feedback to suggest both councillors and officers were unclear about the purpose and remit of Ward Community Meetings and their associated processes. Suggestions were made that this was particularly the case for new ward councillors. Feedback was also raised surrounding the lack of clarity regarding the level and type of support resource available, as well as an absence of any suggestions about how to make ward meetings more effective.

Therefore one of the key outputs of phase 1 was to develop a guide, which could provide new councillors with the clarity, and information they require, as well as providing information for all councillors and sign posting to individuals and services available to them.

We also used some of the good practice learnt from phase 1, i.e. room layouts, use of action logs and the creation of the community engagement officer role, to create the guide. Once the 2nd phase of the pilot has been completed and evaluated

lessons learnt and positive good practice will be captured and entered into the guide.

All phase 1 pilot councillors were asked to provide comment and feedback on the guide before it was formally implemented to phase 2 councillors. There was limited feedback received at that point therefore we felt that it would seem sensible to share the guide with all pilot councillors and look to receive feedback when appropriate throughout the second phase of the pilot.

As part of a wider update to Operations Board, the guide was also shared with Divisional Directors for their comment and consideration, particularly in view of any additional information that could be included.

Analysis and feedback received to date.

The following feedback is based on information and comments received by both officers and councillors.

- The guide provides a valuable tool that enables relevant information to be captured in one place
- If the purpose of the guide is specific for new and inexperienced councillors then it was felt this was positive. However it was recognised that for seasoned councillors it doesn't necessarily provide a large amount of additional/unknown information
- At the front of the guide there is an element that includes ward profile data. Some councillors expressed that this data is very valuable, however its needs to be consistently updated when new data is made available. There was a suggestion to remove the information and just signpost councillors to the relevant contact within the Research and Intelligence Team who would have a clearer and up to date picture of this type of data
- Potential to further consider how partners can contribute to the guide, i.e. health watch and police etc.
- There is a need to keep the guide constantly up to date with key contacts and officer's information.
- We need to consider how often the guide would be refreshed. To make sure that it remains meaningful. A suggestion of an annual refresh has been made.
- Consideration given to make the guide more tailored to specific ward arrangements and less generic, so the document is more relevant for individual councillors.
- Potential to include a shopping list of key LCC items/services that could be used for the funding bids (i.e. grit bins, benches, planters etc.)
- The current guide is largely focused on the structure of the ward meeting. A suggestion has been made that councillors might like to see a specific focused ward guide that articulates developments in the ward, areas of good practice and sign posts councillors to appropriate council officers.

A number of small, specific detailed comments were also received. These will be fed into the wider evaluation.

What happens next

From the feedback so far, the guide in its current format, doesn't really seem to meet the overall needs of all councillors and wouldn't be seen to be effective if rolled out to all councillors. However there is still a need for the guide if it was to be predominately for new councillors. Before this route is progressed further feedback will be sought and the final decision made in conjunction with Community services. Any arrangements for implementation will then be included within the wider plan for transition.

4. Details of Scrutiny

Previous updates have been presented to the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

There are no significant financial implications arising directly from this report. Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081"

5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Kamal Adatia, City Barrister and Head of Standards.

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 benefits of local engagement would apply to all protected characteristics

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:

Appendix A – Draft Councillor Guide (Evington Ward)

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

