

Cabinet – 24 April 2013

Devolution through Area Partnerships

Portfolio: Councillor Ian Shires, Community Engagement & Voluntary Sector

Related portfolios: All

Service: Communities & Partnerships

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

This report initially considers the agreed objectives for Area Partnerships as set out by Full Council on 28 January, 2010 and is informed by work in other localities, in addition to Walsall, in order to provide seven proposals for "devolution". Through this work it is intended that the Area Partnership model is further developed and this report seeks Cabinet's support in progressing the proposals made by adopting them for implementation through Area Partnerships.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet adopt the proposals for devolution provided within this report and recommend to Full Council to create the Area Panels (Area Committees) as detailed in this report and amend the constitution accordingly.
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegate the powers as set out in paragraph 3.16 to Area Panels.
- 2.3 That the Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services) be given delegated authority to determine the pilot sites for Local Area Co-ordination in consultation with the portfolio holder for Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector.
- 2.4 That a one off allocation of reserves of up to £120,000 be made available to support the development of Local Area Co-ordination in Walsall.

3. Background

- 3.1 As Cabinet Members are aware the Borough has six Area Partnerships which are serviced by multi-agency activity at a locality level tackling matters from litter and anti-social behaviour through to tackling health inequalities and support for children and young people.

3.2 Each Area Partnership has an Area Manager who is responsible for an Area Plan which commits to addressing local community concerns. The role of Area Partnerships as set out in the report to Full Council on 28 January, 2010 was stated as to:

- i) Focus on Areas that people identify with and that partners can logistically operate in.
- ii) Create proper accountability for results with an Area Manager for each of the six Areas.
- iii) Produce an Area Plan for each Area which will combine the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy with other local priorities.
- iv) Give people a forum to discuss the utilisation of some mainstream budgets in their Area
- v) Increase Community engagement. Walsall needs to improve its performance in terms of people believing that they can influence decisions affecting them in their Area.
- vi) Adopt a partnership approach with the partners jointly resourcing the staff team, including some Area Managers being employed by partner organisations.
- vii) Recognise the role of elected members as leaders within their communities. Elected members leading, and empowering others to lead, Community Meetings.
- viii) Localise tasking by convening Area Partner Meetings on a monthly basis.

3.3 The proposals in this report have been informed by the Walsall experience of area working to date and research into what has worked well in other local authority areas, including work that has taken place in Sheffield, Stockport and Derby and learning from their experiences. In summary the view formed is one that reaffirms that area-based working delivers improved results for communities by offering for example:-

- A recognised forum for local people to bring forward their concerns but also their ideas for local improvements.
- Improved accountability providing in localities a platform for Members to make decisions (where this has been agreed through Council with appropriate constitutional arrangements put in place) in the places where the impact will be felt.
- Improvements in organisational reputation and relations between partner agencies.
- An agreed, open and transparent, co-ordinated approach to resolving local issues through partnership working.
- An opportunity to share resources across agencies in a planned/structured way leading to the achievement of longer-term objectives.
- Solutions to complex local issues that may not always feature on the "strategic radar" as a borough-wide issue (or have become a longstanding issue that is managed but not completely eradicated) but fester and thereby drain resources slowly over a long period of time, the cumulative impact of which is significant. For example issues such as the handling of scrap metal on housing estates, long-standing issues of anti-social

behaviour or potential for community tensions through to matters such as prostitution and drug and alcohol misuse.

- An opportunity for local people to become more involved in civil society and the solutions to the problems that impact on their lives.

Example of lessons learned include:-

- To only devolve things to the right level, or not all where decisions need to be made at a local authority-wide level.
- To manage the aspirations of communities honestly with a "can do attitude" but recognising area working is effective for certain issues but not everything.
- To continuously adapt the model for area working in accordance with local circumstances but in a co-ordinated way that ensures bureaucracy, meetings and new structures are only in place for a purpose and do not develop outside of the agreed framework for partnership working.
- For strategic leaders to champion the approach to area working and challenge siloed working at all levels.
- Community engagement is a continuous process that takes place through a range of contacts that can be formal and informal. Council and partner agencies should support such mechanisms but recognise there are always inherent challenges in ensuring the views of all are heard. The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in helping to reach everyone is crucial.

3.4 A clear message from the work that has taken place is that Area Partnerships are effective but could be enhanced through greater levels of devolution that further put the citizen at the centre and seek to minimise the use of resources as individuals and communities become more enabled and empowered to act for themselves.

3.5 Section 3.6 of this report provides proposals to further develop Area Partnerships through devolution and by building on the understanding gleaned from the Council's and others experiences.

3.6 Detail

3.6.1 It is important to confirm at the outset that these proposals are founded on a principle that **key strategic matters for the borough as a whole should remain to be dealt with at a borough-wide level**, for example key spatial planning decisions **but** what is proposed is that **more detailed concerns for local communities** such as where specific street cleansing services take place offer potential to be **decided/more closely informed by the community that receives them and therefore benefit from a greater sense of community ownership**. In this way understanding between what is to be devolved and what isn't is clear from the beginning.

3.6.2 It is also important to state that in providing these proposals they have been developed within the context of the Council's agreed commitment to Area Partnerships referred to at point 3.2 of this report. **Appendix A illustrates how the proposals strategically fit together, within the Council's agreed**

framework for locality working, reinforcing the Council and partner agencies' intentions for co-ordinated area based partnership work.

3.6.3 The following proposals and activities are provided in order to deliver "devolution through Area Partnerships". In considering these proposals please note that proposal (c) which includes the establishment of Area Panels will require a further report to Council to bring them into being, subject to this proposal being agreed by Cabinet . Others, if agreed by Cabinet, are suggested to proceed as outlined in this report, noting proposal (d) already has Cabinet's consent . At the outset criteria for evaluating the success of each proposal (against intended outcomes) will be fully detailed prior to initiation:-

- (a) Devolved Budgets/Resources and Participatory Budgeting
- (b) Greater Alignment of Teams
- (c) Strengthening Local Accountability and support to Scrutiny through Area Partnerships
- (d) Community Hubs (Please note this proposal is already progressing following Cabinet's decision of 25 July, 2012).
- (e) Local Area Co-ordinators
- (f) Pilot work to enhance the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector
- (g) Support for attracting funding for key local initiatives

(a) Devolution of Budgets/ Resources and Participatory Budgeting

3.7 Under this initiative local people within each Area Partnership area are empowered to make certain choices about where resources that relate directly back to service budgets are used. To test this two service-specific pilots are proposed, one which looks at Streetpride, focussing on street cleansing and grounds maintenance and the other which looks at Highways Maintenance (Engineering and Transportation).

3.8 Essentially the process would involve the community in each Area Partnership area being informed of the budget/resources for these areas of work and then being asked what their priorities are for service delivery. Having established those community priorities practical options for service delivery are developed and the community with local Members are given the chance to vote on their favoured option. The option that comes out on top is then chosen for implementation (following appropriate consideration/ratification by elected members, please see proposal c of this report) and future monitoring by the Area Partnership.

3.9 A framework for how this is practically managed is set out in **Appendix B** of this report.

3.10 Noting these are pilots it's important to be mindful that they will run alongside a set of core services that the Council will continue to offer to ensure the Authority meets its obligations to local communities.

(b) Greater Alignment of Teams

- 3.11 It is proposed that team working across the Council and between agencies is enhanced through the Area Partnership structure. Area managers already have key contacts in a number of services who is the lead for that area. However this practice is not universal. It works best in services which have typically been most involved in area partnership activity (e.g. community safety, parks, cleansing). A review of partnership structures and Area Partnership meetings is underway, supported by a locally led "Peer Review", and aligned to this is the need to ensure good governance arrangements are in place in order to help strengthen local accountability and as appropriate local decision making. To this end it is important to ensure clarity of purpose under the current arrangements and to consider where other groupings feature within the partnership landscape, for example project reference groups, children's area partnerships, locality family teams, etc. Where it is decided they do feature then they should do this with **strong linkages with Area Partnerships**.
- 3.12 It is suggested under this proposal that an allegiance to Area Partnership structures becomes more engrained to ensure Council and partner agency services are more able to respond to this agenda for devolution.

(c) Strengthening Local Accountability and support to Scrutiny through Area Partnerships

- 3.13 It is intended that by putting "devolution" into practice, as illustrated for example, by proposal (a) above, that local accountability will be strengthened. However, under the current Area Partnership model such decisions would require ratification at Cabinet. This effectively may be seen as undermining the purpose of the proposals. It is therefore proposed that Area Panels that would have the functions of a constituted Committee, whose membership would be the elected Members from the wards that make up that Area Partnership Area be established based on the Area Partnership areas. Effectively, it is suggested that Area Partnership Community Meetings become such Area Panels.
- 3.14 Full Council has the power to set up Area Committees (referred to as Area Panels in this report), that comprise of those elected members for the wards covered by the Area Committee and such nonvoting non elected members as Full Council decides. Cabinet has the power to delegate to those Area Committees (Area Panels) such powers as they wish as long as they are Cabinet Executive Functions, and are within budget and policy of the Council. Further Area Committees cannot have a scrutiny role that in any way replicates the statutory Scrutiny Function but can of course refer any issues they to any Scrutiny Committee for review.
- 3.15 The Executive (Cabinet) has authority to delegate any of its powers to Area Panels which are area committees (along with subcommittees of those committees) established to discharge executive functions in respect of part of an area of the authority.
- 3.16 At this point in time the functions suggested to be carried out by Area Panels are:-

- To make decisions on Area Partnership funding where allocated to an Area Partnership area, by the Council. This would be a change from the current arrangements where Area Managers have the authority to make such funding decisions.
- To agree Area Partnership Area Plans.
- To agree representation to bodies where an Area Partnership decision making presence is required. For example, the emerging new format for the Borough's Community Safety Partnership which is developing into becoming a Local Police & Crime Board.
- To agree the outcomes of any participatory budgeting/resource exercise as described through proposal (a) of this report.

3.17 It is proposed that the above functions will be reviewed after twelve months which will also be the first term for Area Panels commencing in the new municipal year. This would all be part of a delegation of executive functions which would need to be created by the Council's Legal and Democratic Services department to accommodate the above and would be the subject of a report to Council.

3.18 In addition to the above it is also suggested that such Area Panels would not be Scrutiny Committees of the Council but they could support the Scrutiny function by providing comments/feedback to Scrutiny and Cabinet on service delivery within localities. This would assist local people in their ability to influence improvements in services.

3.19 The proposed model therefore would therefore be as follows:-

- a) The establishment of Area Panels covering each of the six Area Partnerships. The membership of which would consist of the Elected Members of the wards contained within the Area Partnership area. Chairing arrangements would be agreed through appointment at Annual Council or in the first year of their being, the most suitable Council following that meeting.
- b) The Panels would have the ability to make decisions as described in section 3.16 of this report.
- c) Area Panel meetings are proposed to be every eight weeks at which members of the public can attend.
- d) Separate to the above there will be Partnership Tasking Meetings for officers of the different agencies involved in the Area Partnership to deal with operational matters in accordance with the Area Plan as agreed by Members.
- e) In addition to the above there will be timetabled meetings/events to enable progress against specific matters in support of the proposals contained within this report, for example the proposals relating to Participatory Budgeting/Resources at which members of the public will be encouraged to be involved in.

3.20 Please see **Appendix D** which provides further information regarding establishing Area Panels/Committees.

(d) Community Hubs

- 3.21 A proposed model of community hubs - community-based organisations delivering a variety of service through local venues was put forward to Cabinet Executive on 25 July, 2012.
- 3.22 The objectives of community hubs are that they will:-
- 3.22.1 Build capacity in local communities to improve services for residents
 - 3.22.2 Strengthen the sustainability of local community organisations and their ability to build council objectives
 - 3.22.3 Reduce dependency on public services by supporting self sufficiency and independent living
- 3.23 In order to develop the model further Moxley Peoples' Centre and Ryecroft Neighbourhood Resource Centre were chosen as pilot sites. It is anticipated that through this work where resources are devolved to the locality through "community hubs" the local community, through local Community Centre Management Committees, will have a greater say in decision making that focuses on local service provision channelled through the "hubs."
- 3.24 Progress on this initiative is following the below process, including dialogue with local Ward Members:-
- i) The Council (and other partner organisations) are to assessing the type of services and activities which, if offered at local community scale, would have maximum impact on achieving significant change to key outcomes
 - ii) A scoping exercise is underway to review what change the pilot hubs may need to make to their activities and services to make substantial impact on outcomes for residents
 - iii) An initial scoping exercise with both centres management teams identified that they can learn from the practical experience of the other and exchange visits between centre managers have taken place. Scoping work with property services is also taking place in terms of the current use of community assets.
 - iv) Work to support a detailed business case setting out the investment needed to achieve substantial and measurable change
 - v) The business case will then be reviewed to assess how it contributes to the aims of the area plan.
 - vi) Following the above steps the Council will then need to decide what level of investment to make on the basis of the business case.
 - vii) As appropriate the Council and the community organisations enter an agreement specifying the service provision and level of grant and the arrangements for measuring and evaluating impact.
- 3.25 A separate report on how the Community Hubs initiative is progressing towards a model that provides a greater network of community support than originally considered in July, 2012 is to be provided to Cabinet.

(e) Local Area Co-ordinators

- 3.26 Local Area Co-ordination was originally developed in Western Australia in 1988 to build individual, family and community self sufficiency so that individuals with intellectual disability can choose to live with their families, or in their local community without compromising their quality of life. It has a strong person centered value base and works with individuals and families in communities. Through LACs it is envisaged that individuals that are supported become more able to engage in civil society to the same level enjoyed by others. It is also envisaged that through LACs, those supported become less dependant on external agency led support/public services. Investment in a Local Area Coordination approach therefore offers the potential for reducing long term costs.
- 3.27 LACs support a number of identified individuals (up to potentially 50) and their families and are based in their local communities as a local, accessible, single point of contact for people of all ages who may be vulnerable due to age, disability or mental health needs. This enables the support provided by LACs to be personalised, flexible and responsive, within the context of their family and community life. It is proposed that such individuals work within Area Partnership structures (but are not an addition to the role of the Area Manager) noting it will be important that LACs add value alongside complementary arrangements operating in other services/agencies. To fully establish the potential of Local Area Coordination in Walsall it is suggested that an initial design phase for the programme is utilised to identify any related work and whether there are opportunities to benefit from any existing practice.
- 3.28 Following the design phase, and following establishment of the full potential of Local Area Co-ordination in Walsall, alongside other initiatives, a pilot programme for Local Area Co-ordination is proposed to take place in two locations in the borough (to be decided). The pilot sites where they are to be introduced are to be determined following consideration of criteria such as deprivation across whole Area Partnerships but also where pockets of deprivation exist, and other factors such as where there are opportunities from developments in other services. Delegated authority for the Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) to determine these sites in consultation with the portfolio holder for Community Engagement & Voluntary Sector is requested through recommendation 2.2 of this report.
- 3.29 It is suggested to trial LACs for a period of one year to be reviewed. This would involve the recruitment of two Local Area Co-ordinators, one for each pilot site and the support for six to nine months of an organisation called “Inclusive Neighbourhoods” who are currently trialing this work elsewhere in the country. A budget allocation of £120,000 is requested to enable this initiative to move forward. **Appendix C** of this report provides further detail on progressing Local Area Co-ordination in Walsall.

(f) Pilot work to enhance the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector

- 3.30 The voluntary and community sector in Walsall like all sectors is challenged within this current austere climate. Beyond this local voluntary and community sector infrastructure is believed to lack borough-wide capacity. Despite this the sector offers great potential and it is proposed as plans to further develop central infrastructure emerge, work within localities can progress.

- 3.31 A “hub and spokes” model for future VCS activity potentially offers a robust framework for the sector to increase its resilience and ability to deliver to the needs of local communities. Within this it would allow the sector to develop within localities, sufficient critical mass for communities to feel more able to have a say and articulate more clearly their views on local concerns, thereby facilitating community engagement with the sector at a locality/Area Partnership level.
- 3.32 A pilot programme has been initiated in Willenhall based on the Area Partnership structure. The ambition is that the pilot will establish the vision for the sector within the Area Partnership area, current levels of VCS activity and an action plan to deliver against the vision and key ambitions for the area. This work will assist the sector in utilising existing community assets to their full potential whilst enabling the concept of consortia development to be further explored either through an Area Partnership based approach or more centrally. Consideration of a future consortium would seek to harness the Voluntary and Community Sector’s unique skills, expertise, diversity and commitment. This strength, combined with the cost efficiencies a consortium provides, would give the sector greater ability to be successful when potentially competing for public service contracts in the future.
- 3.33 Representatives from the third sector operating within Willenhall and across the borough, with partners (Walsall Council, Walsall Housing Group) have developed the following framework to build their action plan on:-
- a) Increasing opportunities - (Increase choice & diversity)
 - b) Consortium funding – (Better opportunities to draw down external funding)
 - c) Community Voice – (Local champions for the sector)
 - d) Communication – (Sharing good news & showcasing events)

The above will seek to:

- e) Embed a robust vibrant Voluntary & Community Sector at a neighbourhood level

(g) Support for attracting funding for key local initiatives

- 3.34 Within the West Midlands region there is great difference in success levels for obtaining funding when applying for and securing external funding. The Big Lottery Regional Manager reports that there is considerable room for improvement in Walsall, noting the authority area is currently ranked the third worst in the west midlands region for securing lottery funding and sliding slide down to the bottom of this ranking.
- 3.35 The majority of the funding that Walsall is eligible for relates to opportunities for the Voluntary and Community Sector. Unfortunately support from within the sector is currently challenged and therefore it is proposed that Walsall Council recruit a Grants Officer who is able to facilitate the acquisition of strategic resources i.e. funding by enabling successful bids to be put together.
- 3.36 The post of Strategic Resources Officer (Grants Officer) has been appointed to and the new post holder has commenced work with Walsall Council.

- 3.37 The new post holder will work with the Voluntary and Community Sector and other key partners to pull together significant funding bids and will ensure Walsall Council and its partners are fully sighted on future funding opportunities for the borough.

4. Council priorities

- 4.1 The proposals in this report will positively contribute to the Council's priorities contained within the Corporate Plan and the new Sustainable Community Strategy, which also align with the Marmot objectives.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 In taking forward the proposals in this report any associated risks and mitigating action will be included in the Neighbourhood Services Directorate Risk Register and as appropriate the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Walsall Council needs to save upwards of £80m over the next 4 years per the medium term financial strategy. Any move to delegate decision making to local areas needs to ensure that budgets do not increase and the capacity for potential budget reductions is acknowledged.
- 6.2 For clarity, the budget within the direct control of Area Partnerships will relate to any funding previously made available to Area Managers. With reference to the proposal for participatory budgeting/resource allocation, the budgetary responsibility will remain within the existing services however, the decisions on the deployment of resources will be made as set out in proposal (a) of this report, against a criteria agreed with the budget holders and relevant portfolio holders. If the scope of delegation was wider then there would need to be robust financial advice with the increased autonomy. The financial advice would be to ensure that decisions did not have wider impact.
- 6.3 There is currently no budget allocated to fund local area co-ordination. To manage financial risk, employing local area co-ordinators would need to be on a fixed term contract to ensure minimal exit costs should the pilot not continue.
- 6.4 The additional costs of the fixed term contracts can be accommodated from a one off allocation of general reserves of £120K. Any ongoing financial commitment required following the review of the pilot will need to be included for consideration in the 2014/15 budget setting process.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The proposed Area Panels would be in law formal Area Committees of full Council albeit vested with any executive statutory powers delegated to them by

the Executive (Cabinet). This mean the full rigour of Local Government law applies to those Area Committees, including access to information requirements, publishing of agenda, notice of meetings, formal decision making and public records of the same. In addition to the Standards regime, and members Code of conduct which would also apply to non elected members.

The relevant legislation is:

- Section 102 (1A) Local Government Act 1972 – power for Full Council to set up a Area Committee for the purposes of discharging executive functions delegated by the Executive to the Area Committees.
- Section 9E (9(b)) Local Government Act 2000 – Councillor membership of the Area Committee is made up of councillors for the wards covered by the Area Committee.
- Section 103 Local Government Act 1972 – non Councillors may sit on the Area Committee.
- Section 13 (1) Local Government and Housing Act 1989 – Non councillors do not have voting rights.
- Section 15 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 – Duty to allocate seats to political groups.
- Section 9E Local Government Act 2000 – Delegation of executive functions by the Executive to an Area Committee Functions.

7.2 A key matter considered in this report is the establishment of Area Panels with further detail provided through proposal c (sections 3.13-3.20) and **Appendix D**.

8. Property implications

8.1 There are no direct property implications through the recommendations made in this report. From the seven proposals made with respect to "devolution", the community hubs proposal has strong linkages to property however, such matters are being dealt with through separate reports to Cabinet.

9. Staffing implications

9.1 The proposals within this report will impact on the way services are delivered and organised, however, where they are of significance they will be covered through a separate report to Cabinet.

9.2 The proposals include the proposed introduction of two Local Area Co-ordinator posts.

10. Equality implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out. It is worth noting there is acknowledgement that there are two key views on resource allocation one based on all areas receiving equal portions, the other reflecting there are greater demands in some areas as opposed to others. See also Section 11.2 (K) of this report.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 Consultation work has taken place through Area Managers, the Area Partnership Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting of 22 January 2013 and the Community Services and Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 14th February, 2013. Area Managers have discussed the proposals within their Area Partnerships and where requested they have held specific focus meetings with Members. Political Groups have also been offered briefings and a further meeting of the Community Services and Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel is scheduled for 22 April, 2013, where required a further update will be supplied to Cabinet at its meeting of 24th April to inform on any additional feedback.

- 11.2 The key feedback points to date are:-

- a) In order for Area Community Meetings to make certain decisions they would need to become Council Committees.
- b) Wider and more inclusive engagement of the public would be required to gain the views of local people. This would require the design of events to encourage local people to get involved.
- c) Links to local democracy and local decision making are positive.
- d) The community may be reluctant to get involved in decision making due to the consequences of those spending decisions and the communities priorities may be different to those of Street Pride or Highways especially if criteria for spend is tight.
- e) Details of the services provided are needed by the public. For example, for Street Pride how often is the grass cut, how often are pathways maintained etc?
- f) If devolution is going to support capacity building then services provided by the local voluntary sector central infrastructure organisation will need to assist.
- g) There was some concern around duplication through the role of Local Area Co-ordinators and costs at a time of reducing budgets. They would need to add value alongside other initiatives and they should not be in conflict with the role of Area Managers.
- h) It was noted that often Area Partnership boundaries and work routes, for example litter picking, were not co-terminus and in the devolved budgets/resources proposal new arrangements would need to be considered as appropriate.
- i) The appointment of a Grants Officer to assist local voluntary and community sector groups apply for external funding was welcomed.

- j) There was a request for greater consultation on the proposals and to channel this through each political group as requested by the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel (as described in Section 11.1).
- k) Equality of resources/funding and the size of Area Partnership areas has been raised as an issue for consideration as the proposals for devolution further progress. The difference between areas is a characteristic of Walsall and this is suggested as a factor to be considered where there is an approach that ensures each area receives the same. This needs to be considered within the context of "Proportionate Universalism" (Marmot Review) and how this will be used to help tackle inequalities.
- l) The locations where the Community Hubs initiative is being progressed provide a wider community assets base than focussing on individual buildings.
- m) Elected Members would like a greater say on Area Partnership funding decisions.
- n) The opinions of the community will need to be listened to by Members on the Area Panels to show empowerment in practice.
- o) Area Partnership meetings need to meet sufficiently to progress matters. It has been reflected that further meetings may be required?

Background papers

Area Partnerships: A developing model for Neighbourhood Management - report to Full Council on 28 January, 2010.

Author

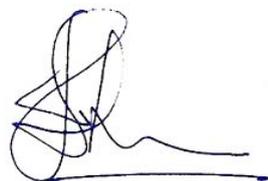
John Leach
Head of Communities & Partnerships
☎ 653702
✉ leachj@walsall.gov.uk

Jamie Morris
Executive Director



15 April 2013

Councillor Ian Shires
Portfolio Holder



15 April 2013

Appendix A: Delivering against the role of Area Partnerships as agreed at Full Council on 28th January, 2010

Key:

Colour	Meaning
RED	Need for significant improvement.
YELLOW	Need for improvement.
GREEN	No key further action

Role of Area Partnerships as agreed by Full Council on 28th January, 2010	Current Position	Recommended Action
i. Focus on Areas that people identify with and that partners can logistically operate in.	There are currently six Area Partnerships covering the Borough. The Areas chosen are of sufficient size and scale for partners to operate in and currently do operate in. Local people are able to identify the areas and the communities that live within them. (GREEN)	Having considered previous arrangements at a neighbourhood level and reviewed other activity by other local authorities (for example in Sheffield and Stockport) it is proposed to continue with the existing Area Partnership structures. (GREEN)
ii. Create proper accountability for results with an Area Manager for each of the six Areas.	Each Area Partnership has an Area Manager. (GREEN)	No additional action recommended. (GREEN)
iii. Produce an Area Plan for each Area which will combine the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy with other local priorities.	Each Area Partnership has an Area Plan which fits with the current Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The SCS is being refreshed and once completed/agreed, to continue to comply will require the Area Plans to be realigned to the new SCS. (GREEN)	Once the new SCS has been agreed align the Area Plans to the Strategy. It is proposed that the new SCS is agreed by March, 2013 with refreshed Area Plans to follow. Area Managers are aware and ready to respond. (GREEN)
iv. Give people a forum to discuss the utilisation of some mainstream budgets in their Area.	Area Partnerships have had a budget of £40,000 each however, they do not discuss the utilisation of mainstream budgets. (YELLOW)	See section 2a of the report (Devolution of Budgets/Resources and Participatory Budgeting) which introduces the proposal to achieve this. Two pilot services are suggested - Streetpride (Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing) and Highways Maintenance. (GREEN)

Role of Area Partnerships as agreed by Full Council on 28th January, 2010	Current Position	Recommended Action
v. Increase community engagement. Walsall needs to improve its performance in terms of people believing that they can influence decisions affecting them in their Area.	Current opportunities for local people to influence local decision making are focussed on traditional routes ie local elections, engagement with local councillors, the opportunity to participate in ad hoc surveys etc. Turn out for elections is as experienced elsewhere in the country, relatively low. (RED)	<p>Proposals 2a (Devolution of Budgets/Resources and Participatory Budgeting), 2c (Strengthening local accountability and support to Scrutiny through Area Partnerships), 2d (Community Hubs), 2e (Local Area Co-ordinators), 2f Enhance the role of the Voluntary & Community Sector (linked to proposal 2g).</p> <p>These proposals give people a greater say on specific service budgets, on services delivered locally either by the Council or by the third sector, help enable everyone to be able to participate in civil society and seek to strengthen the voice of local communities.</p> <p>This recommendation is coloured yellow recognising a number of the proposals are pilots and it will be the outcome of the pilots that further inform progress on this objective.</p> <p>It should be noted however, that through Area Partnerships a whole host of community engagement mechanisms are utilised from "Family, Fit and Fun Days" through to use of newsletters and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc). (YELLOW)</p>
vi. Adopt a partnership approach with the partners jointly resourcing the staff team, including some Area Managers being employed by partner organisations.	Fully compliant. One Area Manager is employed with the NHS and two with WHG. There is however, a potential vulnerability to be considered where staff are employed by other agencies. (GREEN)	Consideration of how any potential vulnerability associated with seconded staff can be minimised whilst further encouraging the commitment of resources from partner agencies. (GREEN)
vii. Recognise the role of elected members as leaders within their communities. Elected members leading, and empowering others to lead, Community Meetings.	Elected Members currently meet within Area Partnership Community meetings. There are opportunities within Area Partnership meetings for others to participate. (GREEN)	See section 2a of the report (Devolution of budgets/Participatory Budgeting) - no further action recommended, although Community Meetings within each Area Partnership may wish to consider how empowerment of members of the local community may be further enhanced at Community Meetings? (GREEN)
viii. Localise tasking by	Monthly Area Partnership Tasking meetings currently take	Section 2b provides proposals to reinforce what was agreed by Full

Role of Area Partnerships as agreed by Full Council on 28th January, 2010	Current Position	Recommended Action
<p>convening Area Partner Meetings on a monthly basis.</p>	<p>place in all six areas but there are other potentially similar meetings which also take place which may lead to confusion? (YELLOW)</p>	<p>Council. It is suggested under this proposal that an allegiance to Area Partnership structures becomes more engrained to ensure Council and partner agency services are more able to respond to the agenda for devolution. This is supported by a current review of Area Partnership meetings. (GREEN)</p>

Devolution of Budgets/Resources and Participatory Budgeting

1.1 Two service specific pilots are proposed, one which looks at Streetpride, focussing on street cleansing and grounds maintenance and the other which looks at Highways Maintenance (Engineering and Transportation).

1.2 The proposed model is suggested as follows:-

(a) Streetpride (Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance)

1. The Area Partnership/local community is informed of the street cleansing and grounds maintenance resources for their area and informed of certain criteria including relevant statutory responsibilities. They are then asked about their priorities for these services locality using this criteria. In other words where should resources be deployed and in what way.
2. These priorities are then taken away to be considered by the Area Manager and relevant Service Manager/Head of Service, in order to be developed into options for future service.
3. Options for future service are then brought back to a future community meeting to be voted on and Elected Members then consider the outcome of this exercise in accordance with proposal c of this report, through Area Panels or Cabinet as appropriate.
4. The chosen service is then put into practice with regular liaison between the Area Manager and the relevant Service Manager.
5. Regular reports on progress etc are then made to the Area Partnership meetings with a review after a year and as appropriate further consideration for the following year.
6. Please note this model would include a reactive element to ensure it was responsive enough to issues as they occur.

(b) Highways Maintenance

1. The Area Partnership/local community are presented with the budget for Highways Maintenance and informed of certain key criteria including relevant statutory responsibilities. Under this proposal those works which must be under taken are then made known along with a suite of those works where there is an element of choice. In addition to this the Area Partnership/local community is then asked to identify their local priorities for the service.
2. All of the information from the above is then taken away to be considered by the Area Manager and relevant Service Manager/Head of Service, in order to be developed into options for future service.
3. Options for future service are then brought back to a future community meeting to be voted on and Elected Members then consider the outcome of

this exercise in accordance with proposal c of this report, through Area Panels or Cabinet as appropriate.

4. The chosen service is then put into practice with regular liaison between the Area Manager and the relevant Service Manager.
5. Regular reports on progress etc are then made to Area Partnership meetings with a review after a year and as appropriate further consideration for the following year.
6. Please note this model, as in the case for Streetpride would include a reactive element to ensure it was responsive enough to issues as they occur.

Local Area Co-ordination

- 1.1 Local Area Co-ordination was originally developed in Western Australia in 1988 to build individual, family and community self sufficiency so that individuals with intellectual disability can choose to live with their families, or in their local community without compromising their quality of life. It has a strong person centered value base and works with individuals and families in communities. Through LACs it is envisaged that individuals that are supported become more able to engage in civil society to the same level enjoyed by others. It is also envisaged that through LACs, those supported become less dependant on external agency led support/public services. Investment in a Local Area Coordination approach therefore offers the potential for reducing long term costs.
- 1.2 It combines a range of activities and delivers them very locally as a single, local point of contact these include elements of:
 - Information
 - Self advocacy and advocacy
 - Personal network development
 - Community linking
 - Community building
 - Supporting self direction
 - Planning for the future
 - Brokerage
 - Developing local partnerships and leadership
 - Supporting access to services
- 1.3 LACs support a number of identified individuals and their families and are based in their local communities as a local, accessible, single point of contact for people of all ages who may be vulnerable due to age, disability or mental health needs. This enables the support provided by LACs to be personalised, flexible and responsive, within the context of their family and community life.
- 1.4 They take time to get to know and build positive, trusting relationships with individuals, families and local communities and develop a more personal relationship with a wide range of vulnerable people and their families.

Design Phase

- 1.5 It will be important that LACs add value alongside complementary arrangements operating in other services/agencies. To fully establish the potential of Local Area Coordination in Walsall it is suggested that an initial design phase for the programme is utilised to identify any related work which could inform the pilots.

The Pilot Areas

- 1.6 Following the design phase, and following establishment of the full potential of Local Area Co-ordination in Walsall, alongside other initiatives, It is proposed that a pilot programme for Local Area Co-ordination takes place in two localities to be decided. It is suggested to trial LACs for a period of one year to be reviewed.

This would involve the recruitment of two Local Area Co-ordinators, one for each pilot site.

- 1.7 The Pilot it is suggested would be supported by “Inclusive Neighbourhoods” noting that consideration of matters relating to procurement need to be fully established. The first part of the pilot would be designing the pilot in each locality based on the principles described above, including how it would be evaluated after the first year.

Establishment of a Leadership Group

- 1.8 It is suggested that in order to ensure the project is appropriately designed, managed and evaluated that a steering group/leadership group is established from a range of service roles and community. The steering/leadership group members would have responsibility for ensuring the timely, effective and relevant (to Walsall) design/implementation of the programme and ensuring effective collaboration across service types to build partnerships and reform opportunities.

Funding for Local Area Co-ordination

- 1.9 Part of the project design phase would include setting LAC pay grades, considering possible costs around equipment, office, small discretionary budgets etc - these, plus initial design support costs, will form the bulk of the initial costs.
- 1.10 Support through “Inclusive Neighbourhoods” is suggested to be around 6-9 months (1-2 days per week of Ralph Broad’s time, supporting to build local skills, capacity, expertise and connections with other sites). As described above, a steering or leadership group would be established and a project lead appointed. “Inclusive Neighbourhoods” would support the project lead to develop the local project plan that will drive the effective design, development, integration and implementation of the LAC programme.
- 1.11 One key role of the steering/leadership group and project plan would be to identify a range of sources of potential long term resourcing (within existing resources) of the LACs - this (and the design of LAC roles) will act as a catalyst for identifying and acting on systems change/reform opportunities.
- 1.12 A budget allocation of up to £120,000 is requested to fund this initiative.

Area Panels

Establishing Area Panels

- 1.1 Full Council has the power to set up Area Panels/Committees; these committees are for a particular area of the Council (unusually defined by ward boundaries). The Executive (Cabinet) has authority to delegate any of its powers to Area Committees which then become committees (along with subcommittees of those committees) which can discharge executive functions in addition to any powers of full Council statutory that are delegated by the full Council at the time of resolving to set up the committees in respect of the part of an area of the authority that committee covers. This can be done by resolution of full Council as well as Cabinet following receipt of a detailed report by full Council and Cabinet setting out the grounds for setting up of such committees, together with requirements that cabinet is fully informed of all the implications including financial implications of that decision.
- 1.2 To set up an Area Panel/Committee **there is a requirement to designate clearly not only what area of the borough (Wards) that committee has authority over to make decisions but also what explicit decisions it is entitled to make**, i.e. a delegation of executive functions would need to be created. In addition its term (duration) must be made clear at the time of resolving to create the committee, this does not mean that the committee can only be temporary it just means it will (as with all committees of the Council) in effect be re created every municipal year by resolution. It is important to note that there are restrictions of what can be delegated to Area committees, mainly around the regularity statutory powers that Councils hold.

Membership of an Area Panel/Committee

- 1.3 Membership of an Area Panel/Committee can be from Council members as well as the general the public. There is however a number of restrictions in respect of those two types of membership:-
 - **Elected councillors - only ward members from the Wards** (or part thereof) that the committee covers are entitled to sit on the committee (Cabinet members are permitted but must be form the relevant Ward), and
 - **Non-elected members** (referred to in law as co-opted members i.e. members of the general public), appointed to sit on the committee **do not have voting rights**. There are a few exceptions that apply to the lack of voting rights, where the public members can vote such as on local land management, tourism and festival management issues.
- 1.4 **Note:** co-opted members are not permitted on certain regulatory committees and committees that are specifically assigned with regulating and/or controlling the council's finances. This latter point does not mean that they

cannot sit on the committee that has budgeted to spend; just they cannot sit on committees that control or regulate Councils budget.

Status of Area Panels/Committee and its members

1.5 As a Committee of the Council, making decisions in relation to the exercise of statutory functions of the Council, they become subject to the full statutory rigour and regime as imposed by the local government legislation:

- All meetings have to be formally called upon public notice through democratic services, together with agendas having been prepared and published in advance, also formal detailed reports of officers will be required to assist in decision-making from the relevant service area affected by the decision.
- Meetings will have to be fully serviced by council officers, including clerking arrangements, all committee meetings of the Council are required by law to be fully recorded which is done by committee clerk who understands the statutory regime and its requirements in relation to the decision-making process.
- Where decisions are to be made by an Area Committee, full detailed reports have to be prepared by officers, this includes going through the consultation process with the primary support services such as HR, Finance, legal, and any other relevant areas the Council and equality impact assessment is being made.
- Any co-opted members will become subject to the full standards regime as imposed upon councillors. This means that they would have to comply with the code of conduct, including declarations of interests. This includes upon them taking the office they have to declare personal details such as their employers, any property they own, shares they have businesses etc. Also the continuing duty and obligation to declare the same at any meeting including that of any spouse and/or partners there is.
- Co-opted members will also be subject to the potential criminal sanctions that can be applied to members of the council who fail to comply with the code conduct and/or declare appropriate interests, all of this would need to be made aware to any potential co-opted members as a regime, its onus upon its requirements to declare personal details to the public, and remove themselves from meetings where conflict-of-interest rises. As well as the potential for a criminal offence where breach occurs of these requirements occur.
- Co-opted member does not entitle them to have the full rights of a elected member of the Council i.e. they cannot attend any other Council Committee in a membership capacity they are subject to all the requirements to publically disclose interests, compliance with the council's code of conduct etc as well as be subject to the sanctions such as being liable to be prosecuted for breaching the same.

Examples of Area Committees elsewhere

1.6 In the limited examples of where Area Committees have been set up those committees have usually been restricted in their capacity, from the examples reviewed the delegations/decision making powers are restricted to a limited

number of Wards and includes limited capacity to make decisions on certain matters. On some occasions very small budgets are assigned to the Area Committee, that the Area Committee can spend as deemed appropriate by the committee within the defined area for the committee; subject to a restriction that those decisions and/or spending cannot be contrary to any decision of the Council/Cabinet, be contrary to any policy of the Council/Cabinet and in any event is subject to the right of the Cabinet to overrule the decision.