

Report to Bentley and Darlaston North and Darlaston South Area Panel
25 June, 2013
Devolution Through Area Partnerships - Update

1. Context

- 1.1 At Council, held on 22 May 2013, a report on Devolution Through Area Partnerships was approved. The report set out seven proposals, which will further develop the Area Partnership model. This report sets out progress against each of the proposals.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Area Panel is recommended to note the progress against each of the seven proposals for devolution through Area Partnerships.

3. Devolution of Budgets / Resources and Participatory Budgeting

- 3.1 This initiative will be piloted in each of the six Area Partnerships, to empower local people to influence where resources are directed at a local level. Two service-specific pilots have been proposed – Clean and Green, focussing on street cleansing and grounds maintenance and Highways Maintenance, focussing on road safety, parking and maintenance.
- 3.2 It is proposed to undertake this process using ‘Participatory Budgeting’ (PB), which informs residents of what budget / resources they are able to have an influence on, discussing what services they would like to see delivered at a local level, these proposals being considered by services to ensure that they are viable, presenting the viable proposals back to residents and then for residents to choose which services they want to be delivered. The most favourable is chosen to be implemented (following consultation and ratification) by Elected Members at the relevant Area Panel.
- 3.2.1 It should be noted that these pilots will run alongside a set of core services that the Council undertakes to ensure the Authority meets its obligations to local communities.
- 3.3 It is proposed that a series of events across Area Partnerships, to engage residents to discuss potential options available and the implications of them, so that they are more able to make an informed choice of which services they want to see delivered. Consultation will take place during the summer and it is anticipated that by September, alternative service options, where decided, will begin to be delivered.
- 3.3.1 Information to residents will include any statutory responsibilities the Council has to deliver and, therefore, what resources can be influenced.
- 3.4 A review of what events are already scheduled will be undertaken, so that any gaps (in terms of engaging with communities) can be identified. Where there is a gap, arrangements

will be made to ensure that that community is engaged. Other opportunities will be utilised, for example, use of the First Stop Express. All opportunities for residents to engage will be promoted and officers from Area Partnerships and the relevant service areas will be available to discuss service options.

- 3.5 In late August, an event will be held where residents can 'vote' on their preferred option. A variety of methods will be used to ensure as many residents can take part in this process, including social media, telephone, e-mail, internet and in writing.
- 3.6 Preferred options will then be presented to the second round of Area Panels (early September / early October) for consideration and approval.
- 3.7 It is proposed to devolve decision-making for grass verges to be converted to parking bays, to a local level.
- 3.8 Our Highway maintenance term contractor, Lafarge Tarmac, have offered access to supplies and services in order to deliver localised projects. Whilst there is no specific budgetary provision, they are able to provide a degree of labour, access to plant, and supplies in order to deliver projects that might otherwise be unaffordable. The contractor has already made contact with Area Managers in order to identify potential schemes.

4. Greater Alignment of Teams

- 4.1 At Council on 22 May 2013, 'The Walsall Plan 2013 - 2016' (the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Bough) was approved. This sets out a three year vision for Walsall as a "great place to live, learn, work and invest". The Walsall Plan identifies four strategic priorities:

- Economic development, employment and improving employability
- Improving health, including well-being and independence for older people
- Creating safe, sustainable and inclusive communities
- Improving learning and life chances for children and young people

For each strategic priority there is a theme lead who has had responsibility for drawing up a Delivery Plan to deliver the objectives agreed within 'The Walsall Plan'. This is further strengthened by the development of Area Partnership Delivery Plans, by identifying how the activity taking place at a local level is helping to deliver the strategic priorities and the vision for Walsall.

5. Strengthening Local Accountability and Support to Scrutiny Through Area Partnerships

- 5.1 With effect from 22 May 2013, Area Community Meetings are now 'Area Panels', with authority to approve decisions relating to funding that is delegated to the Panel and are a formally constituted Committee of the Council. Membership is made up of the Elected

Members from the Wards that make up that Area Partnership area. Co-opted members can be identified, with agreement from Council.

5.2 The agreed functions of Area Panels are:

- i) To make decisions on Area Partnership funding, where allocated to an Area Partnership area, by the Council. This is a change from the previous arrangement, where Area Managers had the authority to make such funding decisions
- ii) To agree Area Partnership Area Plans
- iii) To agree representation to bodies where an Area Partnership decision-making presence is required
- iv) To agree the outcomes of any participatory budgeting / resource exercise, as described earlier in this report

5.3 These functions will be reviewed in 12 months time, in line with the term of the Municipal Year.

5.4 Area Panels will provide support to the Scrutiny function by providing comments / feedback to Scrutiny and Cabinet on service delivery within localities.

5.5 The first round of Area Panel meetings takes place over the last week in June and first week in July and will meet approximately every eight weeks.

6. Community Hubs

6.1 Two pilot projects are currently under way - one in Moxley and the other in Ryecroft. The objectives of the Hubs are:

- i) Build capacity within communities to improve services for residents
- ii) Strengthen the sustainability of local community organisations and their ability to support Council objectives
- iii) Reduce dependency on public services, by supporting self-sufficiency and independent living

6.2 Moxley

6.2.1 A number of partners are already aligned to this pilot, including The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country, Public Health, Moorcroft Wood Primary School, Moxley Peoples Centre, Darlaston Surestart, Moxley Medical Centre, local residents, Patient Participation Group, and Walsall Housing Group.

6.2.2 There are a few small projects in place, including development of youth activities in the area, developing Moxley People's Centre (MPC) to ensure that the revenue is robust, increasing activities on the site and increasing numbers of volunteers, discussion with Walsall College on delivering training and potential for students to act as mentors /

volunteers, increased activities from the Moorcroft Wood site and a renewed chiropody service, which has been entirely taken up.

6.3 Ryecroft

6.3.1 A consultation event was held on 24 April 2013, to identify what services local residents would like to see delivered - both sessions were well attended by residents and partner organisations.

6.3.2 The following priorities have been identified: Health, Crime, Children and Young People, Community and Elderly, Jobs and Enterprise.

6.3.3 Discussions are under way regarding moving from the Resource Centre to the Dartmouth Centre, as this has more up-to-date facilities.

6.4 For both pilots, a robust business case is being developed, which will also assist with applying for other funding sources.

7. Local Area Co-ordinators (LAC)

7.1 Local Area Coordination will be a key piece of work during 2013/14. Now that the principles have been agreed, three key phases to getting started are proposed for this municipal year:-

Phase 1 - Design

Early design, development and implementation of LAC in Walsall:-

- Understanding Local Area Coordination - developing a shared understanding and vision of LAC, strength-based approaches and reform.
- Development of a local "business case" and strategy.
- Governance - Supporting local leadership and accountability via a representative steering group (across service types) and project management arrangements.
- Building connections and joint working / shared responsibility and commitment across service types.
- With a local "Project Lead" co-designing a local project plan
- Ensuring that the necessary policy and operational infrastructural issues are addressed and resolved.
- Considering choice of initial site(s) – getting started, planning for success and outcomes.
- Supporting the "Steering Group" to identify the range of options for long term funding and expansion of the LAC programme within existing resources.
- Contribution to reform – LAC as single, accessible point of contact (new "front end" of service system across service types and age groups).

Phase 2 – Citizen Led Recruitment

- Co design of job descriptions, person specifications, job evaluation (salary setting).
- Advert and shortlisting with Project Lead (and local citizens).
- Co-design interview process and questions/approach with local citizens.

- Recruit LACs.
- Linking with and contributing to other national LAC sites and developments.

Phase 3 – Implementation

- Building positive relationships with statutory and community partners.
- Supporting development of induction and training.
- Supporting Project/Line Manager through initial supervision processes.
- Connecting with other developing or operating LAC sites – at LAC, Line Manager and Director / Leadership levels.
- Problem solving.
- Connections to LAC Network.

8. Pilot Work to Enhance the Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector

8.1 Three pilots are underway in Darlaston, Aldridge and Beacon and Willenhall.

Darlaston - A Community Lunch has been organised for 28 June 2013, where a number of voluntary and community sector organisations will be in attendance to discuss how they would like to see capacity within the sector support and what form of network they would like to see develop. Key partners will also be in attendance.

Aldridge and Beacon - A series of networks have been developed based in each Ward. These have seen over 50 organisations (per Ward) identified and have attended a series of networking events to learn what services each provide and where they may work together.

Willenhall - A consultation event has taken place to begin to identify how the sector can work together locally and possibly have a Forum that brings organisations together locally.

8.2 Work to further strengthen central infrastructure support for the Voluntary and Community sector with key organisations such as Walsall Voluntary Action (WVA) is progressing, alongside research that is considering the work of the sector, alongside Council support..

9. Support for Attracting Funding for Key Local Initiatives

9.1 On 15 April 2013, a Strategic Resource Officer (Alex Boys), joined Walsall to support the Council, its partners and the voluntary and community sector in identifying appropriate funding sources for projects / service delivery. The role is primarily looking at the larger funding streams, eg, Big Lottery. An external funding strategy has been drafted,

Jo Lowndes, Partnership Manager
Communities and Partnerships
(01922) 653703 / 0773 952 7034
lowndesj@walsall.gov.uk