

Briefing Note: Issues Raised in Member Workshops

6th and 7th October 2010

What can we be getting on with now?	What could we do in the pilot?
<p>1. Providing more interesting meetings: Chairs exerting more influence on content of agenda and being more active in reflecting back community issues through meetings?</p> <p>Themed meetings around topics usually draw more people to meetings. We need to reverse the recent slide of dropping attendance.</p>	<p><i>1.1 Chairs are given more support to develop agenda through improved links with local community development staff and officer coordination.</i></p> <p><i>1.2 This could involve changing our conceptual model (point 11) of what an Area Committee is about?</i></p>
<p>2. Reaching out to people beyond meetings: Developing dedicated Area Committee web pages that allow local people to submit questions/issues online for consideration at the meetings. Also to include tracking of actions so that people don't have to attend meetings to find out what is going to happen or happened?</p>	<p><i>2.2 Use more interactive media, to allow discussions to take place about issues outside of meetings and actions to be followed remotely</i></p> <p><i>2.3 Use of text alerts and availability of Twitter feed from meetings so they can be followed virtually.</i></p>
<p>3. Setting out a vision for an area: Start to discuss what might form the basis of a vision for an area and identify local issues that might be included in a local community plan to help guide an Area Committees work?</p>	<p><i>3.1 Hold workshops with local people, similar to the sustainable communities workshop, to identify local issues. Prepare a basic community plan and use this to shape agenda and influence decision-making.</i></p>
<p>4. Devolving more decisions and increasing capacity:</p>	<p><i>4.1 Improve the capacity in meetings to accommodate greater flow of</i></p>

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<p>Develop a principle of “every decision in an area goes to an Area Committee” – review Scrutiny Committee papers to assess the extent of decisions that would flow to Area Committees?</p>	<p><i>decisions.</i> <i>The meetings are more frequent to deal with the additional business.</i></p> <p>4.2 Planning applications and any other quasi-regulatory matters are dealt with in separate Area Committee meetings to clarify the roles of councillors and local people - to avoid confusion with more participative parts of agenda.</p>
<p>5. Make meetings more welcoming: Make meetings more welcoming so that people feel less intimidated and find it easier to contribute?</p> <p>Could include changing order of business, seating arrangements, venue, “the meet and greet” role, etc. To help soften the different stages of meetings – as the public find the transition difficult – we could loosen the constraints about speaking about planning applications and improve the display of plans, etc.</p>	<p>5.1 Look at seating arrangements for meetings – officers and members sit amongst the audience at the start to discuss local issues and allow some networking to take place.</p> <p>5.2 Officers and members hold surgeries at the start of meetings to deal with matters affecting individuals and to pull out any case work?</p> <p>5.3 Need to engage with a wider range of people and build a network of community activists by making their attendance worthwhile – perhaps more grants available.</p>
<p>6. Greater delegation of services: Start to negotiate with County Council about delegation of services, especially some of the matters dealt with at AJC.</p>	<p>6.1 The Area Committee can take decisions about local traffic schemes, play areas, open space, nature reserves, etc.</p>
<p>7. Increase level of officer support: Improve the level of senior officer support in meetings to reduce the number of responses that have to be deferred?</p>	<p>7.1 Senior officers, preferably at Head of Service level, attend meetings and oversee action planning and work programme.</p> <p>7.2 Junior officers should be given the opportunity to develop – and attend the Pilot. Look to empower officers, so they can take local</p>

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	<i>decisions.</i>
<p>8. Improve the brand: Start to work on the branding of Area Committees making them central to everything that the Council does in communities. Possibly calling the meetings something else, such as Your Place, Your Time, Make a Difference?</p>	<p>8.1 <i>Dedicate sections of Cambridge Matters to Area Committees and highlight community events and activities.</i></p> <p>8.2 <i>Use other community newsletters, such as Kings Hedges News, to promote Area Committees and invite Chairs to “mingle munches” and other events so that our engagement activities are pulling in the same direction.</i></p>
<p>9. Make connections: Start looking at making connections with local resident and tenant groups and have a presence in local events, such as community fairs. Local grant aided organisations promote Area Committees as condition of the grants.</p>	<p>9.1 <i>Local resident and tenant group representatives actively participate in meetings and have slots where they can give updates about their work.</i></p> <p>9.2 <i>The Pilot sponsors local community fairs to help showcase local groups and improve networking. Councillors could be assigned roles to reach out to different communities.</i></p> <p>9.3 <i>The Pilot “piggy-backs” on other local initiatives and events such as Arbury Community fair.</i></p> <p>9.4 <i>Links with local schools will extend participation.</i></p>
<p>10. Effective meetings: Run meetings more effectively by planning agenda with Chair in advance, time meetings so that they never last longer than 2 hours,, hold single briefings and “wash-up” sessions to clarify action points. Reducing referrals back to Scrutiny Committees so that Area Committees have the final say.</p>	<p>10.1 <i>Prepare an outline of how the first meeting might be run – perhaps launched with a community fair to bring community activists together, an informal mingle session and then setting out a vision for what the pilot will achieve and its work programme over the next six months. This meeting could focus on participation and engagement and a few key decisions.</i></p>

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<p>Avoid making structure too tight to constrain contributions.</p> <p>Start to consider the skills members and officers will need to run different types of meetings.</p>	<p>10.2 <i>The approach could be confirmed in a Neighbourhood Charter.</i></p> <p>10.3 <i>Being clear about what the Pilot is doing and how it is making a difference.</i></p>
<p>11. Change the conceptual model: Move away from the concept that Area Committees should be entirely about the holding of meetings and expecting people to come to them. Explore ways of going to where local people are, especially to groups who don't usually get involved, such as young people.</p> <p>Value the difference between Area Committees but provide a framework for them to operate in.</p>	<p>11.1 <i>This might include a "walking meeting" of the Pilot and visiting community centres to talk to people using services.</i></p> <p>11.2 <i>If people end up as passive observers, watching other people speak, the meeting has failed.</i></p> <p>11.3 <i>Members may choose to visit groups as a delegation, representing the Area Committee, and run their own workshop events in these settings or set up Task and Finish Groups with residents.</i></p>
<p>12. Handing over a greater share of budgets: Investigating increasing the delegation of grants and other budgets to Area Committees. Look at top-slicing grant budgets.</p> <p>Involving local people in reducing budgets or identifying the least-worst cuts.</p>	<p>12.1 <i>A higher proportion of Community Development grants flow through the pilot, which may include city-wide grants. Recipients are tied into the pilot and give updates on what they are doing with their grants.</i></p> <p>12.2 <i>The Pilot could investigate a form of Participatory Budgeting, using interactive-media to ascertain priorities.</i></p>
<p>13. Developer's Contributions: Preparations are made for Area Committees to decide how Developer's Contributions are invested in communities to mitigate developments.</p>	<p>13.1 <i>Pilot starts to identify the community facilities it wishes to invest in.</i></p>
<p>14. Giving partners what they want: Support is given to</p>	<p>14.1 <i>Pilot could use a workshop approach to engage local people</i></p>

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<p>police and other partners to reach out to local people, moving beyond representatives to engagement with local people. The danger is the Police will set up their own arrangements if they are still unhappy with the way we do our business. .</p>	<p><i>about community safety issues and allow county officers a forum for consultation.</i></p>
<p>15. Reviewing boundaries</p>	<p>15.1 <i>Looking at what makes up natural communities within Pilot area.</i></p> <p>15.2 <i>Assess appropriateness of boundaries over the longer-term.</i></p>
<p>16.Allow enough time to evaluate the Pilot</p>	<p>16.1 <i>Be clear about what we want to achieve, strike the right balance between decision-making and participation – explore alternative approaches and be radical with the Pilot rather than tweak what we have.</i></p>