



INFRASTRUCTURE, GOVERNMENT AND HEALTHCARE

Leeds City Council

Review of Area Based Working

November 2006

AUDIT

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

Nationally area based working is continuing to evolve. Making it operate effectively is a challenge facing many local authorities. Leeds City Council established 10 Area Committees in June 2004 and as part of this the Council agreed that certain executive functions should be delivered at an area level. In addition the Council also agreed that Area Committees would have revenue and capital budgets to support the well being initiatives in each area.

1.2 Key findings

The Council developed Area Delivery Plans for 2005/06 and 2006/07 and is in the process of delegating more responsibilities to Area Committees. The key findings of this review are:

- Area Committees have developed Area Delivery Plans which are coherent with Leeds Vision and the Council's Corporate Plan and contain a significant number of local actions. (Section 3.3)
- Community engagement and assessing area profiles take place to identify the needs of areas, however, the Area Delivery Plans do not clearly document how this feeds into the action in Area Delivery Plans. (Sections 3.4 and 3.5).
- There is evidence to suggest there has been a significant level of increased local knowledge as a result of Area Committees. (Section 4.3)
- Area Committees have not been able to demonstrate how they have significantly tailored local services within Streetscene and Youth Services. Whilst in Community Safety there has been more closer working arrangements established. (Section 4.4)
- Area Committees do not receive performance information which is tailored to their Areas. (Section 4.5)
- 82% of actions in the Area Delivery Plans have been completed showing significant delivery on the ground. (Section 5.2)
- The Council and Area Committees have not developed a performance framework to review whether Area Management is a success. Further to this, Area Committees do not review performance against the initial strategic objectives of Area Management. (Section 5.3)

Executive summary *(Cont.)*

1.3 Key learning points

The key learning points are:

- Area Committees need to formally evaluate the community engagement activities that have taken place to identify whether it is sufficient.
- Area Committees need to consider the mix of services they receive from Streetscene and Youth Services and consider if this is adequate to meet the local needs.
- Area Committees and Council Services must continue to work together to identify and produce key performance indicators which can be reported on an area basis.
- The Council and Area Committees need to develop a performance framework to measure the success of Area Management. This framework should also consider the strategic objectives of Area Committees.

1.4 Way forward

We will discuss the findings of the review with officers to agree an action plan to address the key issues going forward. In addition, we shall continue to work with officers to constructively challenge the delivery of action plans.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Nationally area based working is continuing to evolve. Making area based working operate effectively is a challenge facing many local authorities. Leeds City Council established 10 Area Committees in June 2004 and as part of this the Council agreed that certain executive functions should be delivered at an area level. In addition, the Council also agreed that the Area Committees would have revenue and capital budgets to support the well being initiatives in each area.

The Area Committees have the following strategic objectives:

- to enhance the representative role of the Councillors;
- to improve the quality and value for money of local authority service delivery;
- to improve the quality of democracy and find new ways to facilitate citizen participation in local government; and
- to coordinate policy and service delivery between the local service providers.

The Area Committees have initially concentrated on improving council services in the following areas:

- Streetscene - keeping the streets clean, emptying bins, maintaining roads and grassy areas.
- Young people - providing activities and support for young people.
- Community Safety - helping make the area safer through the presence of Neighbourhood and Street Wardens, Police Community Support Officers, CCTV schemes, preventing burglaries.

Area Committees are also responsible for ensuring that different organisations work together effectively. To enable this there is a link with the District Partnerships of the Leeds Initiative. The District Partnerships were established in April 2004.

Introduction *(Cont.)*

2.3 Objectives and scope of our review

This review covered the effectiveness of the area based working arrangements. Our review specifically considered the extent to which:

- Actions within area based working are coherent with the Council's Corporate Plan (Section 3).
- Views of service users, local residents and the needs of areas have been considered and the degree to which these have been incorporated in area based working (Section 3).
- All parties involved in area based working are aware of their respective roles and the degree to which the Area Committees are prepared to deal with changes in public sector structures (Section 4).
- Area Committees have been incorporated in the existing structures of the Council (Section 4).
- Actions and changes brought about by the area based working arrangements have resulted in changes in service delivery and service improvements (Section 5).

2.3 Audit approach

Our approach has been to:

- review key documents including the Area Delivery Plans for each of the 10 areas;
- interview key officers, including all Area Managers and a selection service managers for key services linked to the Area Committees;
- interview Area Committee Chairs; and
- apply various audit tools assessing specific issues.

2.4 Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those staff at the Council who have supported this review.

3 Area Committees and the Public

3.1 Introduction

This section covers:

- the extent to which actions within area based working are coherent with the Council's Corporate Plan; and
- the degree to which the views of services users, local residents and the needs of areas have been considered and incorporated in area based working.

3.2 Background

The Council has geographically divided the city into 10 areas which each have an Area Management Committee. The Area Management Committee is chaired by one of the elected members from the electoral wards within its boundaries. Each Area Management Committee is supported by an Area Management Team which is headed by an Area Manager.

Each area has an Area Delivery Plan which is approved by the respective Area Management Committee and is also approved by the Council's Executive.

3.3 Area Delivery Plans and strategic aims of the City

The Area Delivery Plans identify a number of actions arranged into themes. The themes are different for different areas as the priorities/needs of areas are not the same. This shows good practice as Area Delivery Plans are tailored for local circumstances. However, a number of the recurring themes are listed below:

- Children and Young People;
- Regenerating Areas;
- Community Involvement;
- Cleaner Neighbourhoods; and
- Reducing Crime.

The Area Delivery Plans identify how their plans fit in with the Leeds Vision and the Council's Corporate Plan, therefore demonstrating coherent policy making.

Area Committees and the Public

A detailed review of the action plans has highlighted that they are based on local actions which citizens/users should be able to identify the impact of at a local level. Again, this is in accordance with good practice which states that dealing with local issues improves community engagement.

3.4 Community Engagement

Community engagement is part of the remit of area working but not a formal function devolved to areas. The area delivery planning process has involved a number of community engagement events in the different areas. Some of these events have been around single issues, others have been general local forums. Where areas also contain Parish or Town Councils within their boundaries, there is an on going dialogue between the Parish/Town Councils and the Area Committees. This has also been confirmed by a number of the elected members concerned.

The Area Committees also have available to them the opportunity to use the existing forums of partner organisations such as the residents groups. Area Managers are aware that other partner forums are available to Area Committees, although there is no evidence of them using these to inform the priorities of Area Committees. However this may be because other engagement activity is sufficient. One opportunity for improvement here is that Area Committees have not formally evaluated whether the community engagement activities undertaken to date are sufficient and adequate.

Recommendation 1

Area Committees should formally evaluate the community engagement activity that has taken place to date and assess whether further action is needed.

Positively we noted that the Area Committees have their own space on the Council's website including reference to Area Delivery Plans, meeting agendas and minutes.

Area Committees and the Public *(Cont.)*

3.5 Community Needs

Area Delivery Plans consider the needs of areas by assessing the profile of areas via a range of factors including:

- Indices of Deprivation;
- Employment rates;
- Benefits up take;
- Housing;
- Education and Skills;
- Health; and
- Crime and Disorder.

Such analysis is important as area profile factors that may be underlying local issues do not always arise through community engagement activity.

However, Area Delivery Plans do not clearly show how the consideration of this data impacted on the production of the plans and actions within them. This is also true of the community engagement activities.

Recommendation 2

Area Committees need to ensure that they are clear how community engagement activities and the review of area needs through area profiles feed into the actions that have been developed in Area Delivery Plans.

4 Area Committees in operation

4.1 Introduction

This section considers the operation of Area Committees and their impact on other council services and the District Partnerships.

4.2 Background

This is a particularly important area because one of the Area Committee strategic objectives is stated as *co-ordinating policy and service delivery between the local service providers*.

4.3 Local knowledge

In Section 3.3 we commented that our review of the Area Delivery Plans identified that actions were rightly at a local level. Our discussions with Area Managers, Area Chairs and Service Managers of services such as Community Safety and Youth Services have revealed the vast majority feel there is now greater knowledge by all, of the issues that are affecting users of services/citizens in particular areas and greater awareness of the other services in the area. For example, in West Leeds the Youth Services Manager was able to identify a contact in local schools and identify an event with the Fire Service that could help Youth Services through the West Leeds Management Team. This improved local knowledge is important as it can be used by all to improve service outcomes.

4.4 Impact on devolved Council Services

Area Committees have not been able to demonstrate how they have significantly tailored local services within Streetscene and Youth Services. Here there was an expectation in the way Area Committees were set up to see that within the existing budget, Area Committees working with Streetscene and Youth Services would alter the mix of services/activities that Area Committees were receiving from Streetscene and Youth Services.

Community Safety services have integrated with Area Management Teams, during this period they have been able to work closely with the Area Management Teams and link into the multi agency joint working.

Area Committee in operation (Cont.)

Recommendation 3

Area Committees need to consider the mix of services they receive from Streetscene and Youth Services and consider if this is adequate to meet the local needs. If not, Area Committees need to address this with services.

Some service managers have identified that whilst there are benefits of Area Management they feel there are additional reporting requirements. This to some degree is inevitable. Although the Council and Area Committees need to consider this when considering value for money of council service delivery.

Area Committees have been able to influence services within the Council by using their Area Well Being Budget. A number of payments have been made from Area Committee budgets to other Council services such as Youth Services, Learning and Leisure and City Services (Streetscene). A more detailed consideration of such payments is made in Section 5.4 of this report.

4.5 Reporting by Services to Area Committees

Area Committees receive reports from services which detail the activity taking place in their areas. This is one of the processes that has helped improve local knowledge as indicated in Section 4.3. However, a significant amount of the performance data that is taken to Area Committees is about the city wide position and not about the area in question or the electoral wards within the area. Performance information is important as it enables a picture of performance to be developed and this can be used to track how well resources have been used and identify issues that require further attention.

Recommendation 4

Area Committees and services must continue to work together to identify and produce meaningful performance indicators on service performance which can be reported on an area basis.

Area Committee in operation (Cont.)

4.6 Other partners and District Partnerships

Links with the District Partnerships and other partners are important particularly for the well being objectives. Positively we noted that all District Partnerships are now reporting to Area Committees. Discussions with officers and elected members have not identified any significant concerns in respect of these links. In addition, as the District Partnerships and Area Committees have the same Area Manager as the key officer and Area Chairs sit in the District Partnerships, links are expected to be good.

The use of the well being budget with payments being made to partners such as West Yorkshire Police, Education Leeds, the ALMOs also indicates a working relationship with Partners. However, it is important that other partners also contribute fairly to area based initiatives. A more detailed consideration of such payments and contributions of partners is considered in Sections 5.4 and 5.5 respectively.

One emerging risk is that there are potential changes in a number of partner organisations, such as the Primary Care Trusts, Police Divisions and ALMOs. The Council needs to ensure working on an area basis is still effective.

Recommendation 5

The Council and Area Committees should raise the importance of area based working arrangements in partner organisations to ensure it is not lost in the changes that are made.

5 Area Committees' Actions, Service Outcomes and Performance Management

5.1 Introduction

This section considers the extent to which actions and changes brought about by Area Management have resulted in changes in service delivery and service improvements.

5.2 Actions in Area Delivery Plans

The actions in the Area Delivery Plans and the progress against these actions in the year show significant work has taken place within areas. The *2005/2006 Year End Regeneration Service Annual Review* has reported 481 (82%) actions are complete or progressing as expected. Examples of these actions are:

- Security improvement to homes;
- Youth arts festival;
- Operation Apollo (high profile joint agency action targeted at specific neighbourhoods);
- Crime reduction advice; and
- Re-launch particular Youth Clubs.

Importantly, within the Area Delivery Plans the Area Committees have identified outputs to measure the action and indicators to measure the service outcomes. For example, for security improvements to homes, the output measure is the number of properties with improved security and the outcome measure is reduced burglaries. However, neither of these measures have actual numeric targets, therefore it is difficult to judge success.

Recommendation 6

Area Committees should ensure all output and outcome measures have measurable targets, therefore allowing success to be demonstrated.

Area Committees' Actions, Service Outcomes and Performance Management (Cont.)

5.3 Measuring success of Area Management

Area Management has now been in place for two years. Beyond the work completed on Area Delivery Plans, the Council and Area Committees do not have an overall framework to assess whether Area Management is a success. Such a framework should be focused on service outcomes for users of services and citizens. It is important that this framework is developed early in the Area Management process to allow performance to be monitored over a period of time and allow Area Committees to demonstrate improvements from an initial baseline. Also, if improvements are not taking place, a performance framework will allow Area Committees to modify their actions to achieve more success.

Further to this, the Council has identified four strategic objectives of Area Committees. However, there is no performance measures for these objectives.

Recommendation 7

The Council and Area Committees need to develop a performance framework to measure the success of Area Management. This framework should also consider performance measures for the strategic objectives of Area Committees.

5.4 Use of resources

The Area Committees incurred £2,171,134 of revenue expenditure and £2,037,928 of capital expenditure in 2005/06 from their Well Being Budgets. We reviewed a number of payments made to third parties for schemes and initiatives to identify whether the objectives of schemes/initiatives were considered and how the success of the schemes/initiatives were measured. This is important as resources should be focused on achieving the areas' priorities/objectives.

Our work has identified that in accordance with good practice for all the schemes/initiatives reviewed the objectives of those schemes/initiative were identified and reviewed to see how they fitted the area's priorities/objectives.

Area Committees' Actions, Service Outcomes and Performance Management *(Cont.)*

However, when it comes to measuring the success of schemes/initiatives the performance is more mixed. For example, one of the schemes was around CCTV. The benefits of the scheme were identified and a success measure was also identified upfront (reduced crime in the area). However, the mechanism to review the success of the scheme needed to be more formalised. For example, agreeing in advance when the benefits will be measured and how much of an improvement is required for the scheme to be a success.

Recommendation 8

Area Committees should consistently ensure where payments are made to third parties to run schemes/initiatives, mechanisms are in place to review the success of schemes/initiatives.

5.5 Contribution of partners

Significant amounts of well being funds are passed to third parties to run schemes/initiatives. Some Area Chairs felt other partners did not contribute as readily as the Area Committees. Area Committees need to ensure other partners also contribute to schemes as there are often benefits for all partners. One useful mechanism to do this is through the District Partnerships, although evidence from the District partnerships is that other partners do contribute to schemes/initiatives.

Recommendation 9

Area Committees should ensure all partners are contributing fairly to schemes/initiatives which they fund through the well being budgets.

Appendix 1 - Recommendations and action plan

Recommendations and action plan

***	<i>Significant residual risk</i>	**	<i>Some residual risk</i>	*	<i>Little residual risk</i>
	Recommendation		Priority	Management response	Responsibility and timescale
1	Area Committees should formally evaluate the community engagement activity that has taken place to date and assess whether further action is needed.	**		The area management review will be looking at neighborhood based engagement activity and seek to bring clarity on the role of area teams and committees. Mechanisms for evaluating local engagement activity will be considered as part of this work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Management Review Board – Spring 07
2	Area Committees need to ensure that they are clear how community engagement activities and the review of area needs through area profiles feed into the actions that have been developed in Area Delivery Plans.	**		Staff will be asked to ensure that this is more explicit in the Area Delivery Plans being prepared for 07/08. In reports to area committees officers will be asked to ensure that links to area delivery plans and local consultation is highlighted. The timing of the Council's annual residents survey has been changed so that this can be a more useful tool in area delivery plan development in the future. This is an issue which will also be explored in the context of the potential to develop neighborhood Charters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Managers – Dec 06

Recommendations and action plan (Cont.)

***	<i>Significant residual risk</i>	**	<i>Some residual risk</i>	*	<i>Little residual risk</i>
	Recommendation	Priority	Management response	Responsibility and timescale	
3	Area Committees need to consider the mix of services they receive from Streetscene and Youth Services and consider if this is adequate to meet the local needs. If not, Area Committees need to address this with services.	***	These issues are being addressed as part of the Area Management Review. Some of the existing service delegations are not sufficiently clear or meaningful to the Area Committees and we will be seeking to make them clearer and more outcome focused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Management Review Board – Spring 07 	
4	Area Committees and services must continue to work together to identify and produce meaningful performance indicators on service performance which can be reported on an area basis.	***	These issues are being addressed as part of the Area Management Review. Some of the existing delegations are not sufficiently meaningful and this will need to be addressed in order to produce meaningful performance indicators. Area Management Indicators also to be considered. Scope here to consider the Local Area Agreement as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Management Review Board – Spring 07 	

Recommendations and action plan (Cont.)

	*** <i>Significant residual risk</i>	**	<i>Some residual risk</i>	*	<i>Little residual risk</i>
	Recommendation		Priority	Management response	Responsibility and timescale
5	The Council and Area Committees should raise area based working arrangements in partner organisations to ensure it is not lost in the changes that are made.		**	Opportunities will be taken through discussions at the Leeds Initiative level and in District Partnerships to do this. This is an element of the Area Management Review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Management Review Board – Spring 07
6	Area Committees should ensure all output and outcome measures have measurable targets, therefore allowing success to be demonstrated.		**	Targets and intended outcomes need to be better quantified as area management develops. There are opportunities to do this through improvements to Area Delivery Plans and linkage to the Local Area Agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Managers
7	Area Committees need to develop a performance framework to measure the success of Area Management. This framework should also consider the strategic objectives of Area Committees.		***	These issues are being addressed as part of the Area Management Review. Some of the existing service delegations are not sufficiently clear or meaningful to the Area Committees and this will need to be addressed in order to produce meaningful performance indicators. Area Management Indicators also to be considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Management Review Board – Spring 07

Recommendations and action plan (Cont.)

	*** <i>Significant residual risk</i>	**	<i>Some residual risk</i>	*	<i>Little residual risk</i>
	Recommendation		Priority	Management response	Responsibility and timescale
8	Area Committees should consistently ensure where payments are made to third parties to run schemes/initiatives, mechanisms are in place to review the success of schemes/initiatives.		**	Review and development of procedures to take place once future budgetary responsibilities of the Area Committees have been determined through the Area Management Review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Managers – Summer 2007
9	Area Committees should ensure all partners are fairly contributing to schemes/initiatives which they fund through the well being budgets.		**	District Partnership Plans being reviewed and this provides a mechanism for doing this. There are also opportunities to develop commissioning approaches (with/without partner contributions).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Managers – Spring 2007