

Overview & Scrutiny Management Board Task & Finish Group 11/12 July 2011

The overall impression of Locality Working has been likened to a black hole – everything goes in but nothing comes out.

Witness statements included in the agenda report are based on the neighbourhood area of Turnchapel, Hooe and Oreston and attending meetings in the locality of Plymstock.

Experience has shown that Locality Working is an ineffective replacement for Area Committees in holding the council and councillors to account.

Issues raised at meetings do not receive answers and ward councillors fail to obtain a response from Locality Managers and Service Co-ordination Teams or get back to the questioner.

The role and functions of the Neighbourhood Liaison Officer in Locality Working is not known.

Previous PACT meetings were well attended and the police response to issues was good and continues to be effective under Locality Working.

Neighbourhood meetings are not well advertised or set up and it is not clear as to how answers are to be provided.

Administration of Locality Working is not open, transparent nor accountable and fails to engage with local people. It has a narrow remit covering just (1) Community Safety; (2) Children and Young People; (3) Health and Adult Social Care and (4) Street Services. It fails to address people's wider concerns for the environment, housing, planning and transport, etc. The inward looking administration is more concerned with collecting statistics rather than dealing with people's concerns.

There is no reference in the agenda report for gathering feedback from

- Third sector groups including voluntary groups;
- Community and charitable organisations;
- Web-based feedback;
- Community meetings;
- Engagement with schools and youth groups;
- Questionnaires / surveys;
- Analysis of existing consultation by Neighbourhood;
- Access points via existing buildings/groups;
- Feedback from councillor surgeries.

The administration is selective in dealing with the issues raised at meetings. Questions about the closure of the South West Coast Path and Locality Working have been ignored.

There is a need to clarify and confirm the role of ward councillors in Locality Working as being at the heart of a process which engages communities in their Neighbourhoods. It would enhance Councillors' roles as advocates amongst different agencies, and encourage improved joint working at Locality level across the city.

Proposals in the agenda report supplement, Para: 8.6, 8.7, and Para: 9.1.1 are of paramount importance to improve the engagement of local people in the decision making process.

What considerations are being given to the provisions of the Localism Bill that is now going through parliament?

John Emery

Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Joint Task and Finish Group

Scrutiny Review – Report

November 2009

8.6 One Councillor from each neighbourhood would expect to be able to meet with their Locality's Service Co-ordination Team a few times during a year; but over time, working relationships based on problem resolution outside meetings should become more common place. Councillors would have a role in feeding back on progress to communities. This would put Ward Councillors at the heart of a process which engages communities in their Neighbourhoods. It would enhance Councillors' roles as advocates amongst different agencies, and encourage improved joint working at Locality level across the city.

8.7 To support Localities Working, information should be available covering local issues. This should include feedback from community engagement and consultation, as well as data on city-wide priorities, all disaggregated at neighbourhood level in a way that would inform decision-making and service responses.

9.1.1 The Best Way of Joining up Services in Localities and the Proposals to have Locality Service Co-Ordination Teams in each Locality

Service Co-ordination Teams are formed for each Locality reflecting proposals put out for consultation, i.e. as a minimum, with representatives from four key services, street scene and environment; community safety; health; and children and young people, across partner agencies. This would not preclude a limited number of additional services being represented permanently or on an ad hoc basis, in line with individual Locality requirements. Each team should be pulled together by a senior person (Locality Lead) and this role could be shared across different partners by mutual agreement.

City-wide minimum service standards should be developed to assist Locality Service Co-ordination Teams and standard Terms of Reference should apply to all Teams.