

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE: 6th September 2007
REPORT OF: The Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Review of Ward Co-ordination

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of a review of Ward Co-ordination and to give the Committee an opportunity to give views on the proposals before they are submitted to the Executive in October.

RECOMMENDATION

That the views of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposals outlined be considered and reported to the Executive.

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

None.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

WARDS AFFECTED

All

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members views on the outcome of a review of Ward Co-ordination.

1.2 The terms of reference for the review were:

- To consider the effectiveness of Ward Co-ordination.
- To explore the feasibility of different options for organising Ward Co-ordination
- To clarify the relationship between Ward Co-ordination, Public Agency Forums, the Public Service Board and thematic partnerships
- To consider the implications for Ward Co-ordination of changes to other public sector structures in the city, e.g. the creation of a single Primary Care Trust, neighbourhood policing and the creation of new organisations to manage social housing
- To explore options to strengthen support to all Ward Members in their role as local leaders and to develop stronger, more robust arrangements for community engagement through Ward Co-ordination.

1.3 The review needs to be considered in context. On its own Ward Co-ordination will not deliver full integration of public services at neighbourhood level. Important developments that go alongside this review are:

- Work to help all public services providing services in Manchester to support their staff to develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to work in neighbourhood focussed ways. The Public Service Board has begun work on a People Strategy to achieve this.
- The development of District Public Service Boards will be an important new support for Ward Co-ordination (see paragraph 2.4 below). More generally the work of Strategic Directors, working closely with Regeneration Managers in leading the Boards will bring additional leadership focus to neighbourhood working within the mainstream of public services.
- The development of Neighbourhood Services will be key to the further development of the neighbourhood focus.

1.4 There were three elements of the review:

- Structural Arrangements. The review looked at how Ward Co-ordination could be better joined up with other ward or district arrangements in the context of the emergence of new structures within the PCT, Children's Services, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks.
- Research from other Authorities. The review examined area focused working in Birmingham, Liverpool, Wakefield, Newcastle and Leeds. There was a visit to Leeds to discuss their model of area focused working.

- Strengthens and Weaknesses. A range of focus groups and individual questionnaires were used to gather perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of Ward Co-ordination. This included a questionnaire to all elected members.

1.5 From this research a number of strengths and weakness were identified which can be summarised as follows:

Strengths

- Ward Co-ordination is successful in fulfilling its primary purpose of facilitating the ward representative role of Councillors
- Ward Co-ordination has had some success in holding services to account for the quality of the services that they deliver in an area.
- Ward Co-ordination is generally effective in joining up services and helping them to focus on neighbourhoods, although this is not consistent across all services.
- A degree of forward planning for services and regeneration has been introduced across the whole City. There are now three year ward plans in place linked to service improvements
- Ward Co-ordination has facilitated and supported innovative community engagement in some wards such as targeted engagement with young people and older people

Weaknesses

- Ward Co-ordinators are from limited service backgrounds, mainly Housing and regeneration with the Housing pool diminishing due to stock transfer to other social landlords
- The role of Ward Co-ordinators is an additional duty for officers. This is becoming untenable, as we have sought to extend the influence of Ward Co-ordination beyond Council Services to cover other public services and partnerships.
- Ward Co-ordination is not yet effectively acting as the hub joining up other ward/neighbourhood structures
- Departmental engagement in the Ward Co-ordination process is patchy and issues raised are not always resolved quickly and effectively. There is insufficient feedback to Ward Councillors on the issues raised through ward Co-ordination.
- Although there are many examples of good practice, engagement with residents is inconsistent across the City
- The evidence base underpinning ward plans is weak and inconsistent

The remainder of this report presents proposals to build on the strengths and tackle the identified weaknesses.

2.0 Reporting Structures and Accountability

- 2.1 A key issue for Ward Co-ordination is that it is not always clear who is responsible for taking issues that arises at the Ward Service Co-ordination Group forward and ensuring that a response is received.
- 2.2 To improve the reporting structures and accountability a new standardised structure will be introduced for Ward Service Co-ordination Group meetings with a core membership of named officers for each ward with responsibility for their department's input to the ward. This will ensure that officers responsible for issues that most often arise at ward level would be present. In addition to the three Ward Councillors the core group would include the Ward Co-ordinator, the Community Safety Co-ordinator, a representative of the main Registered Social Landlord in the area (where there is one), the Street Environmental Manager for the area plus other representatives from Neighbourhood Services as necessary and other co-opted members as necessary.
- 2.3 As not all services are represented by the core membership of Ward Service Co-ordination Groups, there will be named staff that are responsible for an individual ward. Collectively, these staff, together with the core group, will form a virtual ward team for each ward. This principle has been discussed with the Wider Leadership Team. It will important that Health Services are included in this. District working arrangements for Children's Services and Health Services are emerging and it will be essential that there are clear lines of communication to and from the Ward Service Co-ordination Group to these district structures.
- 2.4 As a mechanism to co-ordinate the delivery of services in a district, all areas of the city will by September have in place a District Public Service Board. These will replace the three Public Agency Forums in place already in North and East Manchester and Wythenshawe. New boards will be created for the South and Central. These boards will co-ordinate the delivery of services. They will not be policy-forming bodies. The policy framework within which they will operate is the Ward Plans for each ward, the Community Strategy and the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks. The Boards will be accountable to Members through Ward Service Co-ordination Groups and to the Public Service Board.
- 2.5 Issues raised through Ward Co-ordination or other neighbourhood structures should ordinarily be dealt with through the operational management arrangements, the core group of officers at the Ward Service Co-ordination Groups or the named contacts in the virtual ward team. However, where problems are intractable, crosscutting or have wider significance than a ward issue, the District PSB will provide the vehicle for issues to be referred upwards, for it to be considered and a response sent back to the Ward.

3.0 Performance Information

- 3.1 Each ward will be provided with a State of the Wards report showing how outcomes for that ward compare to other wards in the City and city and national averages. These will be circulated for discussion at the next cycle of Ward Service Co-ordination Group meetings. The State of the Ward report contains quantitative data on outcomes and service performance. Each ward also has ward level analysis of the annual survey of residents' perceptions.

- 3.2 Wards Service Co-ordination Groups will be able to add to this, qualitative information from feedback from local engagement, the perceptions of Ward Councillors and service managers.
- 3.3 This performance information will be developed to support and form the basis of the ward planning process. The three-year ward plans will continue. Ward Co-ordination will be supported to strengthen the quality and consistency of these plans. Short term action planning will be used by the Ward Service Co-ordination Group to ensure that meetings are sharper, more business-like and focus on exception reporting and ward priorities.

4.0 Community Engagement

- 4.1 Community engagement through Ward Co-ordination is variable across city and that the role of the Ward Support Officer has evolved to take on community engagement activity over time.
- 4.2 In some areas Ward Co-ordination is seen to be the main vehicle through which engagement is delivered as opposed to co-ordinated. Currently Ward Support Officers are at the forefront of making community engagement activity happen in the ward and there is an issue of their capacity to continue to deliver this. Engagement is often not co-ordinated or streamlined across the ward and the results of engagement are not routinely fed into the ward planning process or the service improvement process.
- 4.3 The direct involvement of residents and tenants associations and representatives of community groups at meetings of Ward Service Co-ordination Groups or other meetings linked to the Ward Service Co-ordination Group is only one way of engaging local residents. The Ward Service Co-ordination Group needs to know the views, interests and priorities of all residents across the whole ward. The task for Ward Co-ordination is to both engage people directly but also gather existing evidence from a range of engagement activities by services, by Councillors and by partnerships to compile a rounded and comprehensive picture.
- 4.4 With the increasing diversity of Manchester's communities it is essential that community engagement activity in wards is accessible to all sections of the community. Through this staff are able to understand the different needs of the community while promoting the common values and interest all have to making neighbourhoods places that people want to live in.
- 4.5 There is a requirement for some form of direct engagement of residents in ward Co-ordination. This might be through residents or representatives of tenants, residents or community groups attending Ward Service Co-ordination Group or it might be through a separate forum or other engagement activity linked to the Ward Service Co-ordination Group. Ward councillors will agree how that engagement will take place and will always be invited to attend any meetings or other engagement activity with residents.

5.0 Improved Staffing Structure

- 5.1 There is a need to consider the staffing of Ward Co-ordination because Ward Co-ordinators are from an increasingly limited range of services, mainly housing and regeneration. The role of Ward Co-ordinator is an add on to existing senior

managements posts and this makes it difficult to recruit Ward Co-ordinators. This needs to be seen alongside the development of our ambition for Ward Co-ordinators to move beyond the co-ordination of council services to influence other public services as they affect the ward.

5.2 The review considered a number of options, to increase capacity. These included: -

- full time district managers to co-ordinate services and develop partnerships at district level with Ward Support Officers each covering approximately four wards.
- full time area co-ordinators to carry out an amalgamation of the duties currently undertaken by Ward Support Officers and Ward Co-ordinators.

Both of these were rejected because of the expense of creating full time posts would leave insufficient resources for ward support which would detract from the core purpose of Ward Co-ordination i.e. supporting the local leadership and ward representative role of Councillors

5.3 A further option considered was a combination of regeneration staff as Ward Co-ordinators with full-time Ward Co-ordinators in areas with less regeneration capacity. On reflection this has been rejected having regard to Members' views that the range of services provided by the Council means that we should be able to retain the principle of having co-ordinators who also have a mainstream management role

5.4 The review considered the arrangements for Ward Co-ordination that exists in North Manchester, where an officer from the regeneration management team carries out the function of the Ward Co-ordinator. It is an expansion of this option where there is significant regeneration capacity together with a new approach to input from mainstream council services that is put forward for Members' consideration. Specifically this would be: -

- In parts of the City where there are significant levels of regeneration activity (eg where local or neighborhood plans are being developed / in place), the Ward Co-ordinator roles should be filled by regeneration staff
- Where there is more limited regeneration activity the Ward Co-ordinator posts should be filled by senior managers from council services.
- Where Ward Co-ordinators are drawn from services they should cover no more than one ward.
- There is currently one Ward Co-ordinator that is continuing in the role of following their transfer to Northwards Housing. We should seek to replicate this arrangement with other public sector partners where appropriate.
- Having a regeneration or mainstream management role as well as their Ward Co-ordination role will give the officers concerned more influence in their relationship with service managers than if they were only co-ordinators.
- There may be a need to enhance the usual level of co-ordination by putting in full-time support (at a more senior level than Ward Support Officers) for temporary periods into areas requiring more intensive intervention. The

purpose of this more intensive support will be to galvanise public services input to a particular issue or set of issues in an area. The new District PSBs provide the means to direct and manage this type of activity. An individual officer would be backed up by a team of officers who remain in their normal roles but bring additional contribution to the issue/area.

- Whether Ward Co-ordinators are regeneration staff or service based staff, greater emphasis will be placed on their line managers giving them support and space they need to carry out their Ward Co-ordination duties as well as their regeneration or service management duties.
- Officers will work with each directorate to review how each service will: -
 - be represented at each Ward Service Co-ordination Group or have a named officer available to each Group,
 - contribute to the provision of part time Ward Co-ordinators and
 - contribute to more intensive time limited co-ordination in particular areas as the need arises

Officers will also work with the Wider Leadership Team to promote this way of working as the norm for Managers in Manchester

- The Ward Support Officer will be the single point of contact for ward matter as these are full time posts
- There will continue to be support from the Area Co-ordination Team, in the Chief Executive's department, including ensuring consistency across the city, production of newsletters, administration of CAS:H Grants and the development of ward plans. The Area Co-ordination Team will also continue to develop the area focus within departments and the Manchester Partnership. The team will also work with Ward Co-ordinators and Ward Support Officers to develop robust community engagement methodologies and practices across all wards to ensure the maximum consultation and participation of Manchester residents in the development of ward priorities.
- The Ward Co-coordinators posts and the Ward Support Officers posts will need new job descriptions and person specifications to reflect the needs for clearer responsibilities and accountabilities. The Ward Support Officer posts will then need to be evaluated to establish grades and therefore final costs. These posts are funded by NRF.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Committee is invited to comment on the proposals set out in this report.

- 6.2 These proposals with views from this Committee will then be considered by the Executive and then the Public Service Board to secure awareness and buy-in from our partners.
- 6.3 Subject to the above process, implementation would be from the start of the next Municipal Year.
- 6.4 It is further suggested that there should be a review of the new arrangements once they have been in place for twelve months. This will enable the emerging arrangements for Health and Children's Service to be in place and the governance arrangements to be embedded.