

## Report to Cabinet

**Subject:** Neighbourhood Working  
**Date:** Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012  
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### Wards Affected

Borough Wide.

### Purpose

This report outlines to Cabinet proposals to introduce coordinated walkabouts on a ward basis with local elected members and service providers. The introduction of neighbourhood working in this way is to enable ward members to be able to raise issues of local concern directly with service providers and support community development throughout the Borough. Service providers can be held to account for performance of services against key local priorities. Cabinet will be asked to approve the proposal, protocol and involvement of partner organisations.

### Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

### Background

- 1.1 In July 2012 following a period of formal consultation, revised staffing arrangements were put in place to implement a new approach to engaging local residents and to deliver the following objectives:-
    - 1.1.1 To make increased use of social media and new technology to engage residents and businesses for the purposes of providing information, collecting data and communication and consultation.
    - 1.1.2 To gather customer insight to improve services to residents.
    - 1.1.3 To raise the profile of Elected Members and build the capacity of Elected Members to enable them to fully fulfil their representative and community leadership roles.
    - 1.1.4 To improve the co-ordination between council services and partner organisations to engage and empower local communities in problem solving at local area and street level.
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- 1.2 A great deal of work has already been developed in 2012 to encourage community engagement, such as the formation of a Developers' Forum, a Landlords' Forum, liaison with Parish Councils, and the introduction of the Gedling Conversation to gain customer insight. In addition, to a new Community Leisure Service has been established which will look to make greater use of community events as an interactive means of engaging residents and additional resources are being put into Communications to increase the use of social media. The Members' Services team has been strengthened to support member development and two new members of staff have been appointed to work in the priority wards of Netherfield and Newstead, to coordinate partner activity, lead regeneration activity, support local ward councillors in consultation and identify gaps in service provision.
- 1.3 Following the implementation of revised community engagement arrangements, there has been an outstanding commitment to give consideration to further developing the role of elected members at ward level in addressing issues of local concern. Specifically, how;
- local ward councillors could become more actively engaged in their communities;
  - more information and support could be given to ward councillors to inform decision making;
  - additional support could be given to ward councillors to fulfil their role as community champions; and
  - more opportunities could be provided for ward councillors to challenge and hold service providers to account for their performance at ward level.

The following proposal for the implementation of ward walkabouts has been developed to meet these objectives.

## **Proposal**

2. It is proposed to offer ward walkabouts in every ward on a twice a year basis.
- 2.1 Consultation has taken place with Nottinghamshire Police, Gedling Homes and Parish Councils as well as colleagues from the County Council's highways department on attending a coordinated walkabout with local ward members. All partner organisations have been invited to provide a named officer who will attend the ward walkabouts. Currently Nottinghamshire Police Service have given a commitment and provided a named officer for each ward as have Gedling Homes. At a recent Parish Liaison meeting Parish Councils were consulted and also invited to be a part of the walkabout. Following consultation with County Council's highways department, while they would be unable to attend the walkabouts, a commitment has been given to developing a "fast track" reporting system following ward walkabouts so the Environmental Wardens can pass issues relating to County highways directly to the managers of that service.
- 2.2 The ward walkabouts will be attended by the ward members, service providers from within the Council's direct services providers represented by an Environmental Warden, a named officer from Nottingham Police, a named officer from Gedling Homes (where applicable), and a representative from the Parish Council (where applicable.) The ward members will be supported by a member of Council's Senior Leadership Team. (Appendix 1)

- 2.3 The local ward members will be provided with any service performance data in advance of pre-arranged dates and local ward members will identify which parts of the ward are to be included in a particular walkabout. Arrangements for dates and times and liaison with partners will be coordinated by the Senior Leadership Team's PAs. The Council's Environmental Wardens will keep a master record of any issues raised by ward members but each partner organisation will take responsibility for feeding back to the warden, progress in resolving the issues. The protocol is attached (Appendix 2)

### **Alternative Options**

- 3.1 Consideration has been given to doing nothing; however this will not support the corporate objectives of the Council.

### **Financial Implications**

- 4 There are no financial implications arising from this report. It is expected that this work will be contained within existing resources.

### **Appendices**

- 5 Appendix 1 – Proposed Allocation of Officers to Wards  
Appendix 2 – Protocol for Ward Walkabouts

### **Background Papers**

- 6 None

### **Recommendation(s)**

**THAT** Cabinet approve the introduction of ward walkabouts as proposed in the report and the suggested protocol for managing the process.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 7 It is considered that implementation of the recommended proposals will;
- 7.1 enable the gathering of local customer insight to improve services to residents,
- 7.2 raise the profile of Elected Members and build the capacity of Elected Members to assist them fulfil their representative and community leadership roles,
- 7.3 encourage council services and partner organisations to focus on local needs and priorities.