



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

## COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER FOR NIEGHBOURHOOD, SOCIAL COHESION AND HOUSING STRATEGY 1 December 2006

Report of the Community Commission

### Derby's Area and Neighbourhood Agenda

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To a) i) note that the Community Commission welcomes ward members involvement in the weekly tasking meetings, a) ii) take any necessary steps so that confidentiality is not seen as a reason to exclude ward members from such meetings and b) consider the Commission's request that a portion of the budgets devolved to neighbourhoods be allocated to ward members to spend on issues raised by constituents.

#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 At its meeting on 2 October the Commission received a briefing from Andy Thomas on the implementation, roll out and governance arrangements of the developing Area and Neighbourhood Agenda. This was followed by a dialogue between the Commission and Mr Thomas and Cllr Nath.
- 2.2 The Commission later concluded that ward member attendance at the weekly tasking groups, which was reportedly occurring in some neighbourhoods, was to be welcomed. This is an essential prerequisite if the local leadership role of ward councillors is to be raised.
- 2.3 It was also reported that in some other neighbourhoods this was being resisted on the basis of confidentiality. The Commission do not consider it to be a logical argument that agencies can pool confidentiality among staff – including staff in various council departments – about ward residents but exclude elected members.
- 2.4 Regarding budgets, a logical consequence of devolving decision making below area level would be to devolve a proportion of delegated budgets to each of the 51 members to respond flexibly and swiftly to constituents needs. This might offer a fast track outcome when an issue is locally perceived as a priority but might not rank as such, for example, to senior managers responsible for a city-wide service and unaware of the local situation.

- 2.5 A pro forma decision record could be created to be e-mailed to the finance function; a short delay of perhaps two working days could be built in to enable a nominated accountant to check for any issues of legality or probity. Ward members would anyway need to comply with Article 13, the principles of decision making. If delegation to individual non-cabinet members is not lawful, the same end can be achieved by decisions being formally delegated to an appropriate officer. In this case the pro forma would be a member request document.

<b>For more information contact:</b>	01322 255596 e-mail <a href="mailto:rob.davison@derby.gov.uk">rob.davison@derby.gov.uk</a>
<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Implications

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

1. Overall there would be no net increase in expenditure as the individual member budgets would be top sliced.

**Legal**

- 2 The views of the Chief Legal Officer will be sought.

**Personnel**

- 3 None directly arise.

**Equalities impact**

- 4 It is not possible to predict this. It might be that ward members using local knowledge may be able to respond to the needs of currently excluded groups, particularly those who are discouraged by the paperwork associated with applying for grants or making calls for service. A countervailing influence might be that the most articulate and organised sections of the community are successful in accessing a further funding route.

**Corporate Priorities**

- 5 Devolving budgets to individual members has potential to 'Improve the quality of life in Derby's neighbourhoods' and to 'Build healthy and independent communities'.