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Michael Laing Chief Executive

11th September 2007

Dear Councillor,

I hereby give you Notice that a Meeting of the **COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, CROOK** on **WEDNESDAY 19th SEPTEMBER 2007** at **6.00 P.M.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To consider the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 18th July 2007 as a true record. Copies previously circulated
3. To receive a presentation from Youth Workers D. Hill and L. Oliver regarding the funding of Youth Workers.
4. To consider the Community Department's service leaflets. 1 - 4
5. To consider the Community Department's service standards. 5 - 9
6. To consider the development of a Citizens' Panel for the Community Department. 10 - 20
7. To consider proposals for the delivery of the Council's Capital Programme 2007/08. 21 - 23
8. To consider the Revenue Budget Action Plan. 24 - 26
9. To consider such other items of business which, by reason of special circumstances so specified, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully

Chief Executive

Members of this Committee: Councillors Mrs Bolam, Mrs Carrick, Gale, Mrs Hardaker, Harrison, Hayton, Kay, Kingston, Laurie, Murphy*, Miss Ord, Perkins, Mrs Pinkney, Seabury*, J Shuttleworth, Ward and Zair.

*ex-officio, non-voting capacity.

Chair: Councillor Kingston

Deputy Chair: Councillor Laurie

TO: All other Members of the Council for information
Management Team

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2007

Report of the Director of Housing Services

COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT – SERVICE LEAFLETS

purpose of the report

To seek Committee's endorsement of Community Department's service leaflets.

background

- 1 Service leaflets provide 3 key functions:
 - they describe for customers the minimum standards they can expect from Council services
 - they raise awareness about the Council's procedures; and
 - they provide an opportunity for staff to publicise their service and increase uptake.
- 2 The development of service leaflets is included in the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) for Culture, and Access and Customer Care.
- 3 The development of service leaflets is a key action in the Community Department's Service Plan 2007/08, and their production contributes to corporate objectives such as Organisational Excellence.

service leaflets

- 4 Service leaflets have been produced for the following services:
 - Allotments
 - Anti Social Behaviour
 - Arts Development
 - Cemeteries / Burials
 - Community Safety
 - CPAC
 - Dog fouling
 - Domestic Violence
 - Fly tipping
 - Grounds Maintenance
 - Health referrals
 - Homelessness Service
 - Parks

- Playgrounds
 - Refuse collection: includes bulky waste, recycling and refuse collections
 - Sports Club Development
 - Sports Facilities
 - Stanhope Town Hall
 - Street Cleansing / Graffiti
 - Street Wardens: includes abandoned vehicles and hypodermic needles
 - Wear Walking for Health
 - WOW
- 5 The Home Improvement Agency, as an 'arms length' organisation, has its own leaflet, designed by it's funding partners i.e. Wear Valley District Council, Teesdale Council, Durham County Council and Supporting People.
- 6 As the Tenancy Enforcement Team deals primarily with Dale & Valley Homes' tenants, they have been referenced in the Anti-Social Behaviour leaflet.
- 7 While dog fouling and fly tipping are referenced in the Street Wardens leaflet, a leaflet dedicated to each of these issues has been developed, as these are key issues for Wear Valley's residents.
- 8 The leaflets will be A5 sized, and all drafts will be tabled for your information.

consultation

- 9 Managers within the department drafted the leaflets for their respective services, in consultation with staff and drawing on examples of best practice from other authorities.
- 10 A customer focus group was held on 3 August 2007 to comment on the department's new service standards, which are a key feature of the leaflets.
- 11 Customers in the group praised the development of the leaflets, as it was generally felt that more publicity of the Department's services was needed.
- 12 The focus group participants were given an additional week to provide further comments.
- 13 The draft standards were also publicised on the Council's website. This consultation period was for a period of one week.

publication

- 14 The leaflets will undergo the accreditation process for use of plain language. At the time of writing, a quotation has been requested for this work to be completed.

- 15 The leaflets will be A5 sized and officers are working closely with colleagues within the Desktop Publishing section of the corporate centre to ensure corporate requirements in terms of accessibility, equality and design are met.
- 16 It is proposed that the leaflets will be printed by external sources, and quotations for this work will be sought in the near future.
- 17 The leaflets are expected to be available for customers in October 2007.

updating the leaflets: future plans

- 18 It is expected that the leaflets will be updated in April 2008, in line with plans to revise the department's service standards.
- 19 It is proposed that the leaflets will be updated at least annually.
- 20 The Citizens Panel, expected to be launched in January 2008, will provide customers with opportunities to comment on the Department's service standards and literature. This may be through focus groups or dedicated customer working groups; details to be confirmed.

human resource implications

- 21 There are no human resource implications.

legal implications

- 22 For services such as Homelessness, there is Government legislation that directs the actions of officers. This is detailed within the leaflets.

community safety implications

- 23 There are no community safety implications.

equalities implications

- 24 The leaflets contain the corporate equality statement, which publicises the availability of the document in alternative formats. There are arrangements in place for meeting such requests, when received.

financial implications

- 25 Costs associated with producing the leaflets are estimated as follows:
- Plain language accreditation: £4000; and
 - Printing through external sources: £8000
- 26 There are sufficient funds within the Service Development budget to cover these costs.

IT implications

27 There are no significant IT implications.

RECOMMENDED

1 Committee approves the publication of the Community Department Service Leaflets.

Officer responsible for the report
Michael Laing
Strategic Director for the Community
Ext 281

Author of the report
Alex Smith
Service Development Officer
Ext 461

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for the Community
COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT – SERVICE STANDARDS

purpose of the report

To seek Committee's endorsement of Community Department's Service Standards.

background

- 1 Service standards provide 3 key functions:
 - they describe for customers the minimum standards they can expect from Council services
 - they provide a benchmark for staff, who will know what is expected of them through the services they deliver; and
 - they are a tool for measuring the quality of service delivery and can be used to drive service improvement.
- 2 The development of service standards is included in the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) for Culture, and Access and Customer Care.
- 3 The Community Department established a new performance management framework in July 2007, of which service standards are part.
- 4 The development of service standards is a key action in the Community Department's Service Plan 2007/08, and their implementation contributes to corporate objectives such as Population and Organisational Excellence.

service standards

- 5 Service standards have been produced for the following topics:
 - Abandoned Vehicles
 - Allotments
 - Anti Social Behaviour
 - Arts Development
 - Bulky Waste collections
 - Cemeteries / Burials
 - Community Safety
 - CPAC
 - Dog fouling
 - Domestic Violence

- Fly tipping
- Grounds Maintenance
- Health referrals
- Home Improvement Agency includes Aids and Adaptations / Disabled Facilities Grants
- Homelessness Service
- Hypodermic needles
- Parks
- Playgrounds
- Recycling
- Refuse collection
- Sports Club Development
- Sports Facilities
- Stanhope Town Hall
- Street Cleansing / Graffiti
- Street Wardens
- Tenancy Enforcement
- Wear Walking for Health
- WOW

6 In addition to the above, there are generic customer care standards, as follows:

- Customer Care Statement
- Making Appointments and Interviewing You
- Staff code of conduct
- Writing to You and Speaking with You

7 The standards will be publicised in an A5 booklet. A draft will be tabled for your information.

consultation

8 Managers within the department drafted the standards for their respective services, in consultation with their staff and drawing on examples of best practice from other authorities.

9 A customer focus group was held on 3 August 2007, facilitated by the Department's Service Development Officer, along with the Department's two Assistant Directors.

10 Customers in the group praised the development of the standards, as it was generally felt that more publicity of the Department's services was needed.

11 The focus group participants were given an additional week to provide further comments.

12 The draft standards were also publicised on the Council's website. This consultation period was for a period of one week.

- 13 All customer comments were discussed with relevant staff. In the majority of cases, comments were accepted and the standards were amended accordingly.
- 14 All participants in the focus group have been sent a copy of the revised standards, including details of which comments were accepted and explanations where comments were not included.

publication

- 15 The standards will undergo the accreditation process for use of plain language, and at the time of writing, a quotation has been requested for this work to be completed.
- 16 The standards will be published in an A5 booklet and officers are working closely with colleagues within the Desktop Publishing section of the corporate centre to ensure corporate requirements in terms of accessibility, equality and design are met.
- 17 It is proposed that the final document will be printed by external sources, and quotations for this work will be sought.
- 18 The final document is expected to be available for customers in October 2007.

monitoring

- 19 It is proposed that 3 main methods of performance management are used to monitor the service standards:
 - Satisfaction surveys
 - Performance targets
 - Customer engagement tools
- 20 The service standards will be used as a basis for developing satisfaction survey questions, so that feedback can be analysed to demonstrate the level of adherence to the standards.
- 21 Satisfaction information will be collected across the Department from September 2007.
- 22 Within the service standards, there are a number of performance targets.
- 23 The monitoring of these will be integrated into the Department's performance management system and reported quarterly, from September 2007, to the Department's Departmental Management Team.
- 24 Work is ongoing to develop a 'Menu of Involvement Opportunities', due to be completed in January 2008.

- 25 This tool will detail a variety of engagement methods for customers, and is likely to include focus groups, on-line polls and mystery shopping.
- 26 These engagement methods will provide opportunities for officers to:
- supplement the feedback received from surveys and performance targets;
 - explore in detail the issues identified by the experiences of customers; and
 - identify quick wins and longer term service improvements.

human resource implications

- 27 For some services, staff may need to implement new systems to record performance information but they are confident that this will not cause capacity problems.

legal implications

- 28 For services such as Homelessness, there is Government legislation that directs the actions of officers. This is detailed within the standards.

community safety implications

- 29 There are no community safety implications.

equalities implications

- 30 The standards contain the corporate equality statement, which publicises the availability of the document in alternative formats. There are arrangements in place for meeting such requests, when received.

financial implications

- 31 Costs are estimated as follows:
- Plain language accreditation: £600; and
 - Printing through external sources: £650
- 32 There are sufficient funds within the Service Development budget to cover these costs.

IT implications

- 33 There are no significant IT implications.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee considers the Community Department's Service Standards.
- 2 Committee instructs the Strategic Director to monitor performance against the Service Standards and report back 6 monthly (March 2008), as set out in the department's performance management framework.

Officer responsible for the report
Michael Laing
Strategic Director for the Community
Ext 281

Author of the report
Alex Smith
Service Development Officer
Ext 461



COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for the Community
DEVELOPMENT OF CITIZENS' PANEL FOR COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT

purpose of the report

To seek approval of Community Services Committee regarding the development of a Citizens' Panel for the Community Department.

background

1. The development of a Citizens' Panels as a consultative body for local authorities is not a new concept, with the first Citizens' Panels being established in the early 1990's. The increased development of Panels over the last few years reflects the need for local authorities to consult more widely with residents about all aspects of council services.
2. In 2005, QA Research investigated good practice use of Panels operating in County, District and Unitary councils across the English regions and published their report, 'A snapshot of Citizens' Panels in England'. This report detailed that 68% of those authorities who responded to the investigation had access to a Citizens' Panel, either for their own use or as part of a consortium. Of the 66 respondents not using a Panel, a fifth indicated that they hoped to have access to a Panel in the future. These figures highlight the current and increasing popularity of Citizens' Panels as a consultation mechanism.
3. The development of Citizens' Panels is a common practice in the field of community engagement and in response, often, to the increased pressure placed on local authorities by government to consult more widely with residents and with a representative audience. The action to develop a framework for the establishment and management of a Citizens' Panel for the Community Department is detailed in the Community Department Service Plan 2007 – 2008 for which the Community Involvement Team is responsible.

what is a citizens' panel?

4. Citizens' Panels are comprised of a representative sample of the local population and can have a membership ranging from between 500 to 3,000 residents (dependent upon size of the geographical area served by the local authority). Citizens' Panels are used primarily by local authorities, to identify

local issues and as an overarching consultation mechanism to an already existing resident/community involvement service.

5. Citizens' Panels which are developed locally can be used and managed by a range of local agencies to establish an approach to joined up working between a local authority and other public sector organisations in the area. The aim of a joint Citizens' Panel is to provide a useful and practical means of sharing good practice on consultation matters.
6. The overall purpose of a Citizens' Panel is to provide a systematic and comprehensive approach to consultation for a local authority to inform their policy and service development.

recruitment to citizens' panels and representation

7. The main process in the development of a successful Citizens' Panel is the recruitment of local residents on to the Panel. Citizens' Panels are set up with the aim of being 'representative' of the local population and the recruitment process during the development stage is therefore crucial to this aim.
8. Potential participants are either recruited through random sampling of the electoral register, door to door recruitment or via a recruitment questionnaire. All recruitment methods must determine the gender, age, ethnicity and demographic information of the potential participants with the aim of recruiting Panel members who reflect the profile of the local area. Postal recruitment surveys supported by targeted face to face or telephone 'top-up' recruitment of harder-to-engage groups balance representation and offers value for money.
9. The aim of achieving broadly representative membership of a Citizens' Panel means that particular groups (hard-to-reach and under-represented), can be targeted specifically for their views on various issues.
10. How recruitment of members to a Citizens' Panel takes place needs to be considered carefully in terms of financial and human resource implications, and must offer the most diverse and wide ranging opportunities for local residents to register. Using an on-line registration form is an advocated approach which is cost-effective, this is therefore a recommended method of recruitment by the Community Involvement Team.

maintaining membership of the panel

11. Maintaining the membership of a Citizens' Panel is difficult but essential both in terms of replacing members who come off the Panel, constantly trying to keep the Panel representative, monitoring response rates and maintaining 'reserve lists' if this is a chosen option.
12. Citizens' Panel members in some cases are often allocated a maximum timescale on their membership to ensure the Panel is reviewed and new

members who would like to join the Panel also have a chance to express their views.

13. The maintenance of a Citizens' Panel could be costly and unnecessary if the Panel is not going to be consulted on a regular basis. This needs to be carefully considered when designing the Panels schedule of consultation activities.

advantages and disadvantages to developing a citizens' panel

14. It is imperative that the advantages and disadvantages of developing and managing a Citizens' Panel for the Community Department are outlined prior to the commencement of such a project. These are detailed below:

advantages

- Citizens' Panels are designed to contain a good cross section of the local population and can be used as a 'sounding board' for new initiatives;
- Panels provide us with details of local residents who are willing to take part in consultation activities and who are genuinely interested in the local council;
- On the whole, Citizens' Panels achieve high response rates, are fairly cost-effective (if used regularly) and are a reliable method of consultation;
- Particular hard-to-reach or under-represented groups can be targeted specifically for their views on issues;
- Panels can measure the views of a large body of people over a period of time; this can enable agencies to measure whether people's views are changing and to assess the impact of service developments;
- Citizens' Panels enable local authorities to facilitate communication with local residents; and
- A successful and well managed Citizens' Panel which utilises the feedback provided by its members adds credibility to the consultation process.

disadvantages

- Citizens' Panels are not always representative of attitudes. Research indicates that Panel members are more likely to exhibit 'pro-public service' attitudes and are generally more frequent users of council services;
- Members of Citizens' Panels become unrepresentative over time – the need for an on-going recruitment process is therefore imperative;
- The time and cost associated with constantly trying to keep the Panel representative can mean that some Panels are not cost-effective;
- It is often difficult to develop a Citizens' Panel that is indeed representative;
- Research indicates that there is difficulty recruiting young people to Panels;
- Citizens' Panels can become expensive (maintaining membership and recruiting volunteers); and

- Panel members can become fatigued (the schedule of consultation activities should be developed with this issue in mind).

The above information indicates that there is a balanced argument for the development and non development of a Citizens' Panel for the Community Department. It must be noted that the disadvantages to developing and managing a Citizens' Panel as outlined above can be overcome by choosing the most cost effective (but advocated) options for both recruitment and maintenance to and of the Panel.

good practice examples

15. There are number of Good Practice examples of the development, management and utilisation of Citizens' Panels across the county.
16. **Allerdale Borough Council, Bristol City Council and City of York Council** all have well established and successful Citizens' Panels, membership to each exceeding 2000 local residents. A minimum and maximum timescale for membership to each Panel has been agreed as 1 year minimum and 3 year maximum. All Panels have been used to consult on a wide variety of services and issues such as customer service points, complaints, recycling, crime and transport. Consultation has been undertaken via the methods of regular surveys and focus groups.
17. The above case studies, without providing an exhaustive list of their achievements and methods of managing the various Panels, have all utilised their Panels to shape their services, improve customer satisfaction and engage with the wider community.

citizens panel feedback and links to other involvement mechanisms

18. The development of a Citizens' Panel should not stand alone but should support and enhance already established involvement mechanisms; similarly, members of a Citizens Panel should be offered as part of their membership, the opportunity to participate in other methods such as focus groups on their specific topics of interest. It must be noted however that non-members of a Citizens' Panel should be approached primarily to ensure that consultation fatigue does not develop and to ensure that all local residents have an equal opportunity to participate in service design and improvement.
19. Feedback to members of the Citizens' Panel is instrumental in maintaining its success and in encouraging existing members to remain on the Panel as well as new members to join. Feedback to Citizens' Panels is most often provided by the development of a Citizens' Panel newsletter, detailing the results of Panel consultations and the outcomes of the feedback obtained. The frequency of newsletter development varies between different Panels although I would recommend that the Panel themselves determine how frequently they receive feedback which must be realistic in terms of the resources and funds available.

20. Feedback to members of a Citizens' Panel can also be provided via a dedicated webpage and regular Panel meetings (4 times per year is the average).

links to the wear valley customer panel

21. The Wear Valley Customer Panel is a well established, active and dedicated customer forum who meet on a monthly basis with officers from Dale & Valley Homes and Wear Valley District Council. The role of the Customer Panel has been one predominantly housing based but regular meetings with the Customer Panel indicate that they would like to extend their role as a consultative body and envisage being a part of the wider consultation programme on council delivered services.
22. The development of a Citizens' Panel for the Community Department aims to enhance and develop the role of the Customer Panel and not replace or detract from their already well informed approach. The Customer Panel will be fully consulted throughout the development of the Citizens' Panel and an initial meeting to discuss the Citizens' Panel and how the Customer Panel can contribute to this mechanism has already taken place. At this meeting the Customer Panel stated that:

'The Customer Panel support the idea of the development of the Citizens' Panel as a means of broadening their role and as a means of ensuring all residents across the district have an opportunity to have their say on all services'.

publicity and 'name the panel' competition

23. Publicity and promotion of a newly developed Citizens' Panel is crucial if recruitment is to take place and public awareness of the Panel is to exist. Publicity and promotion should be an on-going activity and would involve the development of the following:
 - Posters, flyers, leaflets
 - Dedicated webpage and on-line registration form
 - Panel Fact Sheet for potential members
 - Regular press releases
 - Promotion at local shows and exhibitions
 - Visits to local Residents Associations/Community Groups/Agencies
24. All Citizens' Panels developed across the country are named, whether this be by the officers of the local authority or local residents, it is hard to determine. Although much information has been gathered regarding the development of Panels and their ultimate management, no references have been found as to how these Panels were named.
25. If a Citizens' Panel is to be developed for the Community Department, it is appropriate that local residents choose a name for the Panel. A competition has therefore been organised to find a name for the Citizens' Panel and all

local residents are eligible to take part. Wolsingham Show formed a basis for the commencement of the competition which will run until recruitment for the Panel has ceased.

proposals

26. Based on the above information, proposals on the development of a Citizens' Panel for the Community Department are as follows:
- The Community Department to go ahead with the development of a Citizens' Panel for the department;
 - A detailed programme of publicity and promotional activities to be undertaken including regular press releases throughout the process;
 - The Community Involvement Team to investigate the various methods for recruiting Panel members including cost and human resource implications (to be reported to Departmental Management Team for decision);
 - Continuation of Name The Panel Competition;
 - Development of Citizens' Panel Fact Sheet including how the Citizens' Panel will work, frequently asked questions, how to register and our Citizens' Promises (standards for consultation with members etc); and
 - Regular reports provided to Community Services Committee on the progress with the Citizens' Panel including outcomes (quarterly).

next steps

27. The Action Plan contained at Annex 1 details the next steps in relation to the investigation of appropriate recruitment methods via either external consultants or the use of the in-house Snap Survey Tool.
28. A two month period has been allocated to the recruitment of volunteers utilising the chosen method of recruitment as a result of the above and a month to complete the analysis of the volunteer data to ensure representation on the Panel.
29. Once data received from the volunteers has been analysed, the aims, objectives, Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct and Schedule of Consultation activities can be devised along with a Citizens' Panel Introductory Pack – it must be noted that the development of these documents will be an on-going process throughout the initial stages of the development of the Panel and all new Panel members will be consulted fully on the content of these documents.
30. It is proposed that the Citizens' Panel be established between September 2007 and January 2008 as detailed in the action plan. These timescales are based on an urgency to begin the development of the Citizens' Panel which will ensure wider consultation for services provided by the Community Department.

financial implications

31. There will be financial implications in relation to the recruitment of volunteers for the Panel. The amount of expenditure will be determined by the method of recruitment chosen; using an external consultant will be very costly although their knowledge and experience of establishing previous Panels will be invaluable. The good practice examples previously outlined have utilised either external consultants or joint procurement between partnership agencies to set up their Panels.
32. Recruitment of volunteers can be undertaken internally using the Snap Survey Tool, using this method would reduce costs (postage being the main element of expenditure) but the human resource implications would be far reaching as this process is very administratively intensive. The capacity of the Corporate Development Unit in undertaking this task would need to be identified.
33. The development of a Citizens' Panel whether undertaken externally or internally is a costly exercise. However, partnership working with other local authorities and agencies to develop and manage a Citizens' Panel can reduce management and administration costs as well as increase the sharing of good practice.
34. Budgets remain to be identified to fund the development of the Citizens' Panel although a revenue growth bid has been submitted for £25,000. Transfers from other budgets are also possible and individual service managers utilising the Panel would be encouraged to contribute financially from their budgets to the development of the Panel.
35. Value for Money principles must be adhered to throughout the procurement of services relating to the development of the Citizens' Panel. Departmental Management Team will receive a further report detailing fully the quotations received during the identification of methods for obtaining/recruiting volunteers for the Citizens' Panel.

human resource implications

36. Human resource implications will exist throughout both the development and management of the Citizens' Panel. Both processes will be administratively intensive in relation to correspondence with the Panel members, photocopying of surveys, inputting of data, maintaining databases, refreshing Panel membership and the development of a Citizens' Panel newsletter (frequency to be determined). The use of an external consultant would reduce the pressure placed on either the Corporate Development Unit or the Community Involvement Team.
37. If the development and management of the Citizens' Panel is to be undertaken in-house, the potential to recruit a further member of staff to the Community Involvement Team to focus solely on the management of the Citizens' Panel once established should be considered but not at this point. It

must be noted however that an additional member of the Community Involvement Team does not feature in the current departmental staff structure.

38. Human resource implications will not fully be known until a method of recruiting volunteers to the Citizens' Panel has been investigated but will form either of the scenarios as laid out in paragraph 35 and 36.

legal implications

39. There are no legal implications in relation to this report although once recruitment of members to the Panel takes place legalities in relation to the Data Protection Act must be complied with regarding the holding of and the sharing of personal information. Advice will be taken on this from the Data Protection Officer for Wear Valley District Council.

it implications

40. The development and management of the Citizens' Panel will not draw on any additional IT related systems but would utilise the existing systems such as Microsoft Office and Lotus Notes. Any IT system utilised by an external consultant would be at their own discretion and any data would be formatted for use by Wear Valley District Council. The design of promotional literature will undertaken either in-house via Desk Top Publishing or via an external designer/printer.

crime and disorder implications

41. The wider involvement of residents living in the Wear Valley district in the design and improvement of services will seek to reduce crime and disorder in the district. Consultation activities to be developed for the Citizens' Panel will aim to educate and inform residents on a variety of issues, aimed at enhancing and promoting community cohesion.

equality and diversity implications

42. The Community Department and the Community Involvement Team is committed to ensuring all customers are treated equally and fairly and that all services are accessible. The development of an Equality and Diversity Strategy for the department will confirm this commitment.
43. The Citizens' Panel will provide complete geographic coverage and Panel membership will be representative in terms of age, gender, socio-economic background and ethnicity. The Panel will be representative of the district's adult population and its geographic distribution.

consultation

44. It is imperative that throughout the development of the Citizens' Panel, consultation between the Community Involvement Team, Corporate

Development Unit, other neighbouring authorities, the voluntary sector and local residents takes place.

45. Some Consultation on the proposed development of the Citizens' Panel has already taken place, details are as follows:
- Meeting with Victor Cadaxa, Community Network, on 23rd August 2007
 - Meeting with Customer Panel Officers on 28th August 2007
 - Promotion and competition at Wolsingham Show on 1st and 2nd September 2007
 - Meeting with full Customer Panel on 4th September 2007
 - Meeting with Corporate Development Unit on 12th September 2007
 - A further meeting with the whole Community Network on 20th September 2007
46. Further consultation must be undertaken with the wider body of local residents and with neighbouring local authorities. This will take place between September and October 2007 and will involve visiting/liasing with local Residents Associations and contacting local authorities in the county.

corporate links

47. The development of the Citizens' Panel will be primarily for the use of the Community Department as a coordinated approach to community involvement. However, the Panel, once established and embedded as an involvement mechanism, may be used council wide as a corporate consultation mechanism. Meetings held between the Corporate Development Unit and the Community Involvement Team will examine the potential for this to take place over time.

conclusion

48. Citizens' Panels are and will remain a significant consultation tool in the continuing work to improve the way local authorities consult residents. Experience of using Citizens' Panels shows that they need resources, should work to clear objectives and be regularly used.
49. Citizens' Panels are to many a new methodology but one which aims to enhance already existing consultation mechanisms. Citizens' Panels are a tremendous resource which can produce real outcomes for both local authorities and the communities they serve.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Community Services Committee notes this report .
- 2 Community Services Committee approves the on-going research into the development of a Citizens' Panel for the Community Department.

- 3 Community Services Committee approves a further report to be presented based on detailed financial data including quotations and the impact on current human resources.
- 4 Community Services Committee approves the regular reporting of progress with both the development and subsequent management of the Citizens' Panel once established.

Officer responsible for the report
Michael Laing
Strategic Director for the Community
Ext 281

Author of the report
Corinne Gardner
Community Involvement Manager
Ext 303



COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for the Community
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE 2007/08

purpose of the report

To consider proposals for the delivery of the Council's Capital Programme 2007/08.

background

- 1 Members agreed to the Council's capital programme for 2007/08 on 22 February 2007. Included within the programme was additional finance to support Dale & Valley Homes in achieving the decent homes standard. This was included in the event that Dale & Valley would not achieve two stars.
- 2 Dale & Valley were awarded the two star rating that enabled all additional capital of £27m to be accessed. Following discussions with Dale & Valley, they have indicated that the Council's proposed capital funding is now no longer required.
- 3 The values of the "Dale & Valley" capital funding is:-

	£
Structural repairs	77,000
Electrical upgrades	284,560
Demolitions	100,000
Asbestos survey	30,000
Stock Conditions Survey	143,500

	£635,060

- 4 There has been, however, some expenditure against the demolition and asbestos codes. Therefore it is necessary to set aside an amount of £100,000 to finance such work.

proposals

- 5 Officers have been in discussions with various organisations and stakeholders in establishing community aspirations and individual's needs. Listed below are a number of options available that will provide real outcomes to neighbourhoods and delivery of the Council's objectives.

population

- Extension and adaptations to 34 Gent Road - proposed additional funding for disabled grant to enable a family to remain together **£30,000**

environment

- Improvements to parks within the district – to address low satisfaction expressed by residents by improved signage, facilities and safety **£50,000**
- Replacement recycling vehicles – currently recycling vehicles are nearing the end of their useful and economic life **£80,000**
- Construction of a bus turning circle – to support the St Andrews Estate development and introduce regular, local transport services to vulnerable residents around Gent Road **£35,000**
- Estate improvements to Woodhouse Close Estate – continuation of the last year’s Proudfoot Drive scheme including landscaping and diversionary activities **£110,000**
- Environmental improvements, delivered in partnership with Groundwork West Durham, to various locations including:-
 - Willington **£25,000**
 - Aclet Gate, Woodhouse Close **£15,000**
 - West Auckland **£15,000**
 - Sunnybrow **£30,000**
 - St Helens **£35,000**

crime

- Installation of boulders to Leeholme – to prevent illegal trespass and encampment on Council owned land **£20,000**

health

- Investment into shared leisure facilities at Bishop Auckland – continuation of the Council’s involvement at St Johns School for jointly operated facilities **£50,000**
- Improvements to Glenholme Leisure Complex – including improved changing facilities and associated works **£40,000**

6 It is proposed that the £535,000 worth of capital is re-allocated to priority schemes as identified above.

financial implications

- 7 Under CPA Use of Resources the Council need to illustrate that resources are directed towards areas of priority that produce real outcomes. At present £535,000 is likely to be underspent out of this year's budget allocation. These proposals seek to ensure resources are properly allocated and spent within relevant timescales. The above schemes are affordable given the Council's overall capital resources.

crime & disorder implications

- 8 These proposed projects will be designed to ensure they are 'secure by design' by using Council staff and Police Liaison assistance.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 That the £535,000 allocated to 'Dale & Valley Homes' projects is re-allocated following the successful award of two stars.
- 2 Members agree to finance the projects listed in this report from the £535,000 capital budget previously allocated to Dale & Valley Homes.

Officer responsible for the report
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Ext 281

Author of the report
David Milburn
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COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for the Community
REVENUE BUDGET ACTION PLAN

purpose of the report

1. To inform Committee of expected over spends at the end of this financial year, along with action plans and planned reduction in spending elsewhere in the budget to neutralise the effect on the Council's financial position.

background

2. At the Central Resources Committee dated 25 July 2007, item 9 – Revenue Budget Monitoring, it was resolved by members that areas of over spend would be examined and action taken and reported back to members at the next relevant Committee meeting.
3. The report shows expected overspends and what action we are taking to attempt to correct the situation. Expected under spends have also been identified. Since the Committee meeting referred to above, figures included in this report have been brought up to date to reflect the current financial position.

over spends

4. Current major over spends are listed in Annex 2 together with the reason the over spend has occurred and an action plan prepared to attempt to correct the position.

under spends

5. In order to correct the financial impact on the Authority under spends have been examined and identified. These under spends relate mainly to staffing vacancies within other areas of the department due to the departmental restructure and staff turnover.

conclusion

6. Current major over spends within the department have been identified and an action plan prepared to rectify the position. Should an overspend still occur after the action plan recommendations have been implemented, department under spends have been identified to neutralise the effect on the Council's financial position.

RECOMMENDED

1. That Members note the report.
2. That relevant budget holders are instructed to implement the actions included in the report.

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Service and over spend	Reason	Action Plan
REFUSE COLLECTION - PAYROLL £40,000	More staff being payrolled than in the budget	The newly appointed District Services Manager is to examine the current levels of staffing and ascertain reasons for the overspend and implement appropriate action.
RECYCLING – PAYROLL £20,000	More staff being payrolled than in the budget	
TOTAL £60,000		