

Name of meeting: District Committee – Kirklees Rural Public Meeting
Date: 13th November 2014

Title of report: District Committees and Devolution

Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	No
Is it in the Council's Forward Plan ?	No
Is it eligible for "call in" by Scrutiny ?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Director</u> & name	Yes - Ruth Redfern
Is it signed off by the Director of Resources?	Yes - David Smith
Is it signed off by the Assistant Director (Legal Governance and Monitoring)?	Yes - Julie Muscroft
Cabinet member portfolio	Leader of the Council (Cllr David Sheard)

Electoral [wards](#) affected: All
 Ward councillors consulted: All
 Public or private: Public

1. Purpose of the report

This paper provides a suggested model for future area working and devolution for consultation.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Cabinet has made a commitment to a new way of working which will create local capacity and move some resources, responsibility and decision making closer to the geographical area where they are to be used.
- 2.2 The suggested new model emphasises the role councillors have to play in leading the changes that will be necessary for their communities to manage, and hopefully prosper, in the challenging times ahead. Councillors will have a key role to play in helping their communities, and the individuals within those communities, to do more for themselves and each other. This will mean that councillor's knowledge and understanding of their particular areas, backed up with targeted intelligence and evidence, will be fundamental in assisting communities to decide, firstly, what is truly important to them and consequently how these services can be delivered, particularly if they can no longer be provided by the Council.

2.3 To achieve this, councillors will be instrumental in bringing together local organisations and local people, fostering a sense of pride and belonging in their communities to develop local solutions to local issues. The goal for ward councillors will be to make their communities buzz with the desire to do things differently and to ensure local residents develop the skills to achieve this.

3. **Current position**

3.1 As a starting point, Annual Council agreed to establish four district committees (Batley & Spen, Dewsbury and Mirfield, Huddersfield and Kirklees Rural). In the interim, the new District Committees have the same delegations and devolved budgets (revenue only) as the previous Area Committees.

3.2 In addition there was a commitment to explore future development of area working with a proposal returning to Council in December. The two broad areas to be explored and agreed were:

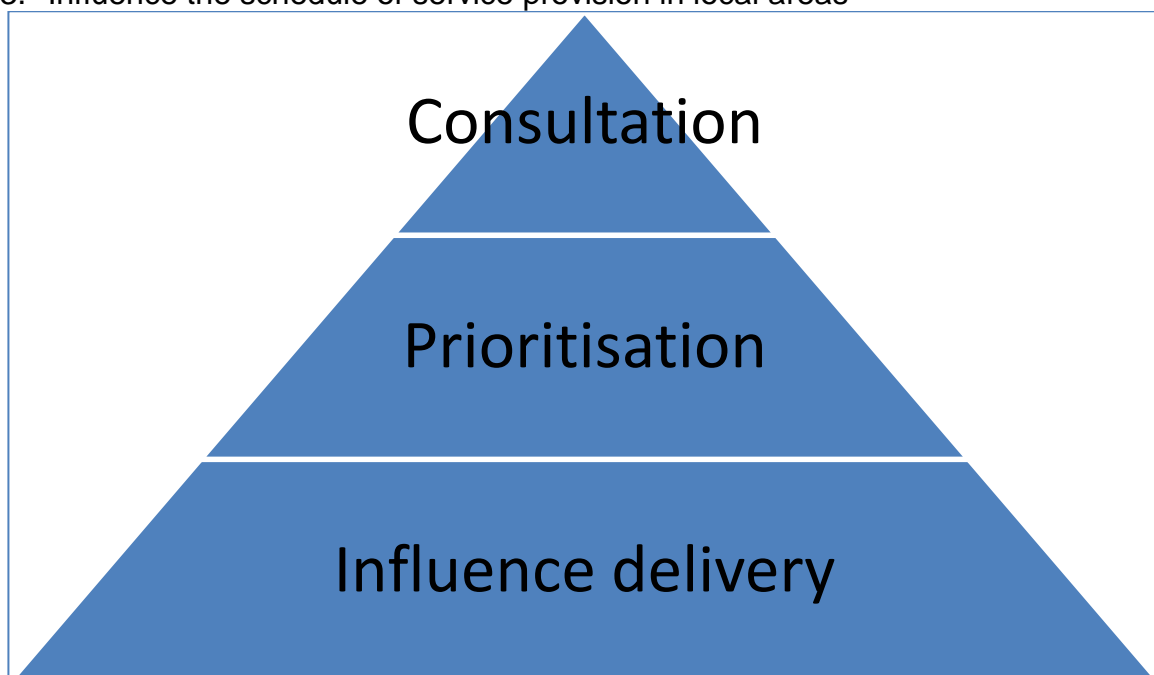
- a) More devolved responsibility to district committees;
- b) A mechanism to promote innovation at the neighbourhood/ward level

3.3 The Leader of the Council established a Cabinet Working Group (CWG) to design a proposed future operating model. The work of the CWG has now concluded and this paper outlines a suggested proposal on which consultation will now take place.

4. **What next?**

4.1 There are a number of different tiers of devolution and in Kirklees it could operate at three levels:-

- 1. Consultation on strategic district wide planning
- 2. Setting a local vision and making recommendations to the Cabinet on local priorities
- 3. Influence the schedule of service provision in local areas



Kirklees Tiers of Devolution

4.2 **Consultation**

4.3 There are areas of the council, due to the nature of their activity, which require a co-ordinated district wide approach; for these activities the District Committees will play an important role in feeding in local views and intelligence and will provide the platform for strong consultation. This could include areas such as refuse collection and disposal and the cultural and leisure offer.

4.4 In addition to 4.3 above, District Committees could provide strategic overview and performance challenge over a number of key strategic priorities, for example schools performance, crime and disorder, and housing.

4.5 **Local Prioritisation**

4.6 The council is entering a period of unprecedented change and following the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and budget decisions due to be taken in February, the services delivered at an area level will be significantly reduced. In order for our districts to continue to thrive a new level of local leadership will be required in order to support our communities and unlock local resources.

4.7 Under the proposed model District Committees will be expected to make informed and evidence based recommendations to Cabinet on priorities for the configuration of services and assets within their area. The scope of these areas of activity will be identified by Cabinet as part of the devolution process and will contribute to both the Health and Wellbeing and Economic strategies. This will shape the future delivery of council priorities.

4.8 To help enable this, each district will be provided with a schedule of all the services and assets in their area post CSR. This raw information along with local councillor knowledge of their wards, statistical profiles of the district and priorities in existing strategies will provide the basis for District Committee planning.

4.9 This way of working means that the traditional leadership role of councillors in their communities is greatly enhanced, with greater expectations on what councillors are to achieve but balanced by greater opportunities for councillors to deliver on behalf of and with their communities. Councillors will be supported to create the opportunities and environment to bring together people to achieve the outcomes that are important for their communities.

4.10 The new way of working will be hallmarked by better engagement with communities and improved understanding of what is truly important to them, both now and in the future. Communities and individuals will be supported to do more for themselves by their local councillors, who will work to strengthen community networks and bring together local organisations, people and resources for maximum impact. Communities, led by their councillors, will access external funding, co-operate with the voluntary and community sector and negotiate for limited council resources to be matched by those from our partners and other organisations.

In each district these features will be used to develop a local “Plan for Place.” “Plans for Place,” will have a three year timescale and provide the vision and drive for each of the four districts. Under the proposed model each District Committee will start work on the “Plan of Place” in April 2015 and will present completed plans to Cabinet in the Summer of 2015.

4.11 Influence delivery within the agreed council budget

4.12 Over the past few years, there has been considerable effort to distinguish between those services that for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness are delivered as a universal offer and those that can be focussed on an area basis. This has proved fairly successful in terms of councillors being able to influence priorities for action on their patch and staff ownership and responsiveness of services but in an ever more challenging financial landscape requires further deliberation.

4.13 The new model for devolution would build on this and provide an opportunity to, following the impact of CSR, re-evaluate how delivery and resources can be better aligned to local needs.

4.14 Initially the following universal areas could be included in the offer for functions on which District Committees could influence how the service is delivered (in line with revised budget allocations). Examples of these services could be (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Street Cleansing;
- Smaller parks, large playing fields, allotments;
- Grass cutting;
- Road safety measures;
- Safer communities;
- Resident requests for place-based improvements such as drainage, grit bins, etc.
- Parking issues, e.g. pavement issues, etc.

4.15 In practice, once the council has agreed a budget in February, each District Committee will develop a relationship with a lead officer for their area to understand service pressure, priorities and delivery and link this to local intelligence to help influence the schedule of delivery.

4.16 New Homes Bonus

4.17 In addition to the existing revenue budget allocated to each District Committee (there are proposals to limit future rollover of this budget), 10% of the forecast New Homes Bonus grant will be reserved in order for local communities to make recommendations to Council on how this should be invested in their area. This will be operated under criteria which is to be agreed by cabinet at a future meeting. This could include:

- Proposals must alleviate pressures caused by new housing development within Districts or provide for the innovation of Services.
- All bids for funding within a District are required to be signed off by the District Committee, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

4.18 Consistency

4.19 The flexibility built into the new approach to district working has been designed to foster creativity and innovation at a local level. However, area working must also be consistent with the Council's key strategies and district wide priorities but also ensure services can be delivered in an efficient way. This gives councillors an opportunity to become more involved in supporting council strategy.

4.20 To further ensure consistency, arrangements developed under the new way of working will have to abide by the following council wide criteria:-

- Priorities to be informed by a wide ranging community engagement plan;
- Information needed to produce the "Plan of Place," will include a District Intelligence Assessment (this will include the assets and services that will remain in the district post CSR; local councillor knowledge of their wards (using ward plans where they are already in place); statistical profiles of the district; and priorities in existing strategies including the Health and Wellbeing and Economic strategies);
- Plans must show a long term sustainable vision;
- Each plan must show how it supports the Council's key strategic priorities, Health and Well-Being and Economic strategies;
- The "Plan for Place," must be signed off by the relevant District committee councillors, with a majority of District councillors in favour of the plan;
- If no "Plan of Place" is signed off by an agreed deadline, the process would revert to Cabinet.

4.21 Developing Local Innovation

4.22 Part of the strength of Kirklees is its rich diversity and districts have a history of working across a range of different boundaries. Under the proposed devolution model local areas, inspired and led by their local councillors, will have the increased flexibility to work across ward boundaries, create new partnerships and work within existing structures.

4.23 To support this as part of their "Plan of Place" each District Committee will be required to ensure a process by which ward priorities can feed into the overall "Plan of Place". District Committee Chairs will play a crucial role in ensuring the involvement of ward councillors and local stakeholders within the community in the development of District priorities and, moving forward, in the delivery of local interventions in line with the priorities in the district "Plan of Place".

4.24 An important aspect to driving local change has been the concept of "double devolution". Whilst important, this lower level of devolution is complex and needs to be considered further. In order to do this it is proposed, under a phased approach to implementation, Cabinet will invite expressions of interest for pilot areas to explore models of working at a more local level. Any pilot will need to be established in a way that meets the requirements of the criteria set out below:

- A. Any partnership or group formed with third parties must evidence it is inclusive of the whole community
- B. If a new body is formed at a lower level than the District, all ward councillors covering that geographical area must be represented in the structure.
- C. The body must produce a neighbourhood plan in line with the District Committee planning process.
- D. Any grant awarded must meet the requirements of the District Committee and provide clear performance information to the committee.
- E. Any body /organisation engaged must have open, transparent, auditable and recordable decisions in line with District Committees though these will be proportional to the function and scope of activity undertaken.
- F. Any body/organisation engaged must have a formal constitution signed off by the District Committee and Cabinet.
- G. The Council's constitution, financial procedure rules and schemes of delegation will apply to the District Committee's expenditure and decision making BUT NOT to resources devolved to a lower level where the rules above will be sufficient to achieve an appropriate level of probity and governance.

5. **Implications for the Council**
Not applicable

6. **Next steps**

6.1 The following timeline identifies the next steps for the devolution offer:-

October to December 2014

- Consultation on proposals

December 2014

- Council to consider the outcome of the consultation and agree a way forward

February 2015

- Council agree budget

March 2015 onwards

- District Committees presented with information to provide the basis for the Plan of Place.

May 2015

- District Committees begin process of influencing deployment.

Summer 2015

- District Committees to present Plan of Place to Cabinet.

7. **Officer recommendations and reasons**

- 7.1 That Members note the proposals put forward by the Cabinet Devolution Working Party and put forward comments.

8. **Cabinet portfolio holder recommendation**

- 8.1 This report is an accumulation of comments and views from my Cabinet Devolution Working Group and I would like to seek Members comments on the proposals.

9. **Contact officer and relevant papers**

Michael Greene
Head of Safe and Cohesive Communities
Tel no 73704

10. **Assistant director responsible**

Kimiyo Rickett, Assistant Director (Communities and Leisure)