



# Doncaster Council

## **To the Chair and members of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Empowered, engaged communities, with devolved locality budgets.**

### **Introduction**

1. Members of OSMC will be aware that we have built strong foundations across the Council and Team Doncaster in recent years to deliver remarkable recovery from intervention and we are now ready to take the next step, to release the capability and energy of communities and staff at local level.
2. We are at a crucial moment - There is a very strong Mayoral and political priority to engage, empower and 'get closer' to communities. Reflecting and respecting the specific character, identity, strengths and stories of Doncaster's towns and villages will be crucial to building capacity and releasing the inherent strengths and resources within communities in an Asset Based Community Development approach.
3. A key moving part of this work is about creating empowered and engaged communities, specifically a framework to support the development of bottom - up engagement and empowerment. It also includes developing the role of local elected members, devolved budgets to stimulate grass roots activity and community capacity building.

### **Summary**

4. Exploratory work has taken place to develop how the Member engagement model with devolved budgets can be shaped and mobilised through a review led by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.
5. The attached Terms of Reference (Appendix A) sets out the scoping of the review, including the background and context, the anticipated areas of focus, suggested considerations, and proposed timeline, which will be developed into a more detailed approach. These terms of reference, were presented and explored at workshop on 6 September to which all Elected Members were invited.
6. The reflections and feedback collected during the initial OSMC and member workshop will be forwarded to Members in due course.

### **Recommendations**

7. The Chair and members of OSMC are asked to:
8. Approve the Terms of Reference for the Review and
9. Receive further feedback and updates in respect of the forthcoming site visit to Barnsley.

### **REPORT AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTIORS**

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**OSMC Review - Empowered, engaged communities, with devolved locality budgets.**

**Overview describing the background to this piece of work**

Why this matters:

***I) We are ready: This is the next stage in our improvement journey***

The whole Council has worked over the last five years with partners to deliver a remarkable recovery from intervention to a more confident and capable organisation, leading change and inspiring partnership delivery across a range of fronts – people, place and economy.

The first Doncaster Growing Together programme re-set our ambitions and has driven further reforms – including a major focus on joined up public services, locality working and supporting local communities. We are ready now to take the next step, to release the capability and energy of communities and staff at local level, and to accelerate and scale our work on service integration with a big focus on prevention – getting to root causes of social and economic challenges that can blight the lives of families and communities and generate demand for costly acute interventions.

***II) We are in a crucial moment which needs engagement and support of local communities***

There is a very strong Mayoral and political priority to engage, empower and ‘get closer’ to communities at a crucial point in Doncaster’s, the UK’s and the Planet’s history.

The ongoing impacts of austerity and welfare reform, the uncertainty of post - Brexit economic and social conditions and a global climate emergency all require the Council and its partners to understand risks and opportunities at a local and community level. Stimulating bottom - up grass - roots action will be a vital part of a wider partnership response to these issues.

Reflecting and respecting the specific character, identity, strengths and stories of Doncaster’s towns and villages will be crucial to this, building capacity and releasing the inherent strengths and resources within communities in an Asset Based Community Development approach.

***III) We need to maximise and focus Council resources***

In the context of continuing resource constraints, it is necessary to explore and define opportunities to ensure that the Council can maximise use of available resources to deliver outcomes for individuals, families and communities at locality level. Crucially the focus will be on localised prevention activity to stem the flow of demand for acute interventions will contribute over the medium and long term to cost pressures.

#### ***IV) We need a clear, strong framework for Team Doncaster local partnership delivery***

We have made much progress in driving reform and improvements through a partnership approach – driven by Team Doncaster and the Doncaster Growing Together programme. However as this work starts to focus on localities we need to ensure that there is a guiding framework in place at locality level to ensure that work across partners and policy themes is coherent and connected so it achieves maximum impact. This includes efforts to engage local communities where we must avoid fragmentation and potential confusion.

The Council and elected members have a crucial community leadership role to play here, in creating the conditions and framework within which local communities and a range of partners can work together and where empowerment and release of skills and energy at the front line can flourish.

Collectively, these present a **social, political, organisational and partnership mandate** to assess current ways of working and to identify options for future resource organisation at locality level and how this is supported centrally.

#### Our Opportunity:

Within this context, there are many ingredients in place which supports this direction and we already have strong foundations. There is a clear future focus on place, and specifically engaging people in their own defined communities and neighbourhoods. We need to explore the possible development of the role of local councillors and how they could operate in this new locality model to support local delivery and integration. This is a natural progression from the connectivity and collaboration in communities and with partners that already exists.

#### How?

OSMC will lead a cross-party group to look at empowered, engaged communities, with devolved locality budgets – and provide recommendations by December 2019 on:

- A framework to support the development of **bottom - up approach that includes developing the role of local elected members, devolved budgets to stimulate grass roots activity and community capacity building**
- A locality based operating model with strong governance arrangements supporting the delivery of the Boroughs priorities

The group will be the driving force to explore how this locality based model could work in Doncaster, and will:

- Represent cross party elected members
- Be accountable for completion of the review and agreement of future recommendations
- Identify issues and risks

## Principles of the review

- To be a 'critical friend' and constructively challenge options
- To reflect the voice and concerns of local people and communities
- Deliver value – maximise the social and financial value of our work
- Keep it simple – together we focus on what we can do, not what we can't
- Be ambitious – we expect Doncaster and its people to thrive. We are creative and courageous in pursuit of this ambition
- Do it together – we share responsibility with the community and our partners. No-one has all the answers
- Expect contribution – we empower people to help themselves and each other. We all do our bit.

These terms of reference outlines a number of areas of focus for OSMC members to discuss and consider as key activity to be undertaken as part of the review. The first stage of this process is for OSMC members to consider and approve the areas of focus, including any identified assumptions, constraints, and the exploratory questions to define the activity.

### **Areas of Focus**

#### **1. Site visit**

*Local Government Association signposts to a number of authorities with notable experience of effective locality working, with different governance structures and approaches. Research of similar best practice models and learning from previous local approaches highlights possible locations to visit, Barnsley (Ward Alliances, with devolved budgets) and Nottingham (Local Transport Plan, devolution to Area committees).*

- What do councillors need to know in advance of their visit?
- What would councillors like to explore during their visit?

#### **2. Governance arrangements**

*Doncaster's approach should follow existing Financial Rules, in a process that is proportionate and sustainable within the available budget. One which is driven by ward needs – that are described in ward plans and where evidence of spend and impact can be captured and reported.*

- How will ward plans and priorities be defined?
- What could the governance process look like?
- How will evidence and impact of the new approach be captured and reported?

### **3. Financial arrangements**

*£280K has been identified as the total budget for resources to be spent locally, and includes support resources. Allocation across wards will be based on a formula taking into account population and deprivation at a local level, with a fixed element per councillor. Budgets could be pooled across wards/councillors and while budget is expected to be spent in year, for specific priorities, it can be committed over a 4-year term. The aim is to attract matched funding, however recognise that this may not always be possible.*

- Consider the budget allocation across wards
- What will the budget be spent on?
- How will spend be monitored to ensure outcomes are achieved?

*We aim to explore devolved allocation of (part) of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) based on a formula such as number and conditions of roads and where spend is aligned to evidence-based intelligence within area plans to address local parking and traffic management issues.*

- Consider the budget allocation proposal; are there any additional factors to be included?
- What will councillors be responsible for?
- What would the process of approval and reporting of expenditure and outcomes look like?

*Budget spend will deliver on local priorities, which makes a real difference to the quality of life for residents and demonstrates value for money and investment in local spend, and the Doncaster £. This could include; stimulating the voluntary sector or seed community action rather than on recurrent spend.*

- How will we measure impact?
- How will we know spend provides value for money, social impact and community empowerment?

### **4. Membership of governance structure and officer support**

*All councillors will be represented in the new approach, which operates with minimal officer administrative support and should consider and work with Town/Parish councils where they exist. Explore and define role for councillors, communities and partners in this approach.*

- What should the involvement of communities and partners look like?
- How would you define the roles of each member of the governance structure?

## **5. Training and development**

*The approach has the focus on the role of councillors, devolved budgets to stimulate grass roots activity and community capacity building. It is important that individuals clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and have the knowledge and skills to carry out their role.*

- How should we ensure that all those involved have a clear and consistent understanding of how this will work?
- How do we also communicate this to assist staff, partners and members of the public?

## **6. New Model (Pilot)**

*The new model including devolved budgets aims to commence at the start of the new municipal year. For the Local Transport Plan element, the aim is to deliver a pilot in one area locality.*

- What should be considered in determining the LTP pilot area?
- How long should the pilot run for and how will impact be measured?

### **Additional Considerations**

- How would you like to work through the areas of focus? For example via facilitated workshops?
- How can we ensure that we engage will all essential stakeholders? Who else may need to be included?
- What else do you need to inform this work? i.e. data and intelligence
- How will this developing approach influence wider integrated area based working in the future?

### **Outline of Proposed Next Steps:**

- September – November 2019. OSMC to conduct the review over a 3-month period to explore and consider what the approach could look like in Doncaster.
- December 2019 Present findings and proposal of the model for agreement
- Winter/Spring 2019/20 Select and pilot in an area for the LTP
- January – April 2020 Develop proposals into detailed plans for 2020/21 to set governance structure and align to budgets
- Municipal year 2020 Launch of new devolved locality budgets