

DONCASTER COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**LOCALITY REVIEW: EMPOWERED, ENGAGED
COMMUNITIES, WITH DEVOLVED LOCALITY
BUDGETS.**

JANUARY 2020

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EMPOWERED, ENGAGED COMMUNITIES, WITH DEVOLVED LOCALITY BUDGETS

Introduction and Summary

This report details the outcome of the review undertaken by OSMC between August and December 2019.

The Council has an ambition to move to a more locality based working model, empowering citizens and communities to work closely with the Council and its partners to deliver solutions to local issues. Within this context, the Mayor requested the Committee to consider how Elected Members and officers can work together to plan and invest in grass roots action that meets the needs of specific local communities and that makes a real difference to the quality of life for residents.

As local leaders, Councillors are well placed to work with their communities to determine local priorities and mobilise community-led and volunteer-led solutions. To support this initiative a small budget would be available within the ward and controlled by local Councillors, to support and help deliver community action.

During the review, the Committee identified a number of local authorities who operate a system of devolved decision making to enable local Councillors to allocate small sums of money to individuals or community groups to help deliver positive change. Members considered elements of these schemes and saw how effectively seed funding could encourage and help communities bring about their own creative solutions to local issues.

In undertaking the review, the Committee invited all Councillors to discuss and comment on the Terms of Reference (Appendix1) and to participate in a number of workshops to consider how this process could work. The Committee also visited Barnsley Council, held a telephone conference call with Nottingham City Council and received information on how a number of other local authorities operate devolved locality budgets in order to gain a wide range of perspectives.

It is not the role of Overview and Scrutiny to propose a comprehensive process for this element of the Locality model such as drafting application forms or guidance notes however, the recommendations identify a number of key features or principles that OSMC consider important elements within the new process.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank the Members, officers and the local authorities, particularly Barnsley and Nottingham City Council who contributed to this review.

Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Evidence and Activities

In order to gather evidence to develop its recommendations the Committee undertook the following activities:

- i. **6th September** – All Member workshop to discuss the Terms of Reference, initial thoughts and key lines of enquiry.
- ii. **12th September** – Terms of Reference agreed by OSMC
- iii. **16th September** – Member Site visit to Barnsley Council to consider how its “Ward Alliance” model operated, share best practice and identify lessons learnt.
- iv. **21st October** – All day workshop (all Members) to consider best practice and key features of the scheme:
 - Allocation of Budgets and modelling
 - Developing Priorities
 - Small grant funding - lessons learnt and past schemes
 - Barnsley case study
- v. **28th October** - All day workshop (all Members) to consider best practice and key features of the scheme:
 - Allocation of Local Transport Plan funding
 - Allocation of budgets and modelling
 - Role of Voluntary and Community sector
 - Making the scheme Work – training and Development & Measuring Impact
- vi. **31st October** – Conference Call with Nottingham City Council to consider its approach to allocating Local Transport Plan Funding at an area level.
- vii. **7th November** – Meeting with OSMC to discuss and identify draft recommendations following the review.
- viii. **17th January** – Presentation to Parish Council Joint Consultative Committee outlining the Committee’s work and seeking feedback.

During the workshops, elements of best practice from other local authorities were considered, including:

- Process for allocating ward budget and examples of expenditure – Nottingham County Council, Barnsley MBC, Hillingdon and Croydon Council.
- Examples of guidance notes and application processes: York Council. Hillingdon, Barnsley.
- Examples of developing local priorities: Rotherham MBC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Financial Arrangements:

That the Financial arrangements for ward budgets include the following features:

- a. A flat rate allocated to each Councillor, this may be pooled with other Councillors or wards providing this contributes to agreed priorities.
- b. The ward fund be allocated within the current year, carry forward of funding should only occur if earmarked for specific schemes.
- c. Applications for ward funding should, as far as possible, seek a contribution from applicants e.g. match funding, volunteering, additional community benefit.

Recommendation 2: Grant Funding Application and Decision Making Process

That the process identified below provide the framework for developing the grant application process:

- a) Ward Councillors agree a small number of local priorities through consultation events, data sets and other relevant information.
- b) Ward Budget agreed with a set amount allocated to each Councillor.
- c) Councillors identify groups who would benefit from the ward fund and actively encourage applications.
- d) Application forms are completed. Neighbourhood teams can advise and assist (but not drive the process).
- e) Grant applications could be considered at the monthly Neighbourhood Management meetings (ward meetings).
- f) Elected Members agree the allocation of grants and may take soundings from others present at the meeting including Community representatives invited by the individual Councillor. Successful applications are forwarded to Corporate Resources to ensure the application is recorded, meets governance criteria and a central record is maintained.
- g) Allocation of the individual member budget be reported on the Council's web page, quarterly finance and performance improvement report and within an annual report to OSMC.
- h) The ward meeting be used to check back on activities and impact, ensure priorities remain relevant and up to date and will be used to plan future consultation and feedback on the effectiveness of ward funding.

Recommendation 3: Grant Funding Application Process and Criteria

That consideration be given to incorporating the following elements into the application process:

- a. The grant application form, guidance and protocol be based around existing Doncaster Council forms e.g. Small Grants Form and other best practice models.

- b. That non-constituted groups, who can meet the requirements for the funding application be eligible to apply. A maximum level of funding be allowed for non-constituted groups e.g. up to £250.
- c. That consideration be given to how grass roots groups will be supported to become constituted to support their future sustainability.
- d. That each Councillor identify community representatives to assist and liaise with in respect of grant applications at the ward meeting.
- e. Consideration be given to applications from larger organisations such as Town and Parish Councils and Academies who can match fund and demonstrate this would contribute to meeting ward priorities.
- f. Further consideration be given to the most efficient process of allocating grant funding to applicants e.g. payment into bank account.

Recommendation 4: Supporting Transparency and Openness

That the following arrangements be incorporated into the scheme to support transparency and accountability:

- a. That an officer decision process be determined to authorise grant allocations supported by elected Members.
- b. An initial 6 monthly report to OSMC and the Executive highlighting the progress of the scheme with a subsequent move to an annual report.
- c. A summary of funding allocated and outstanding be included within the quarterly performance report presented to Cabinet and OSMC.
- d. That Councillor web pages be updated to identify how each Councillor has allocated their funding.
- e. An annual event to show case and share good practice and identify lessons learnt.
- f. Development of Key Performance Indicators that assist in measuring the impact of the scheme e.g. impact on local spend, additional volunteer hours, social return on investment.
- g. Give further consideration to developing ward meetings as a forum for identifying how localities can benefit from other grant funding streams. This may include a move to an Area Committee based approach as the ward based model matures.
- h. Development of a Communications Strategy to highlight the new arrangement in the context of locality working.

Recommendation 5: Local Transport Plan Funding

That in respect of the proposal for Area Committees to allocate Local Transport Plan Funding it be noted that OSMC:

- a. Support the current scheme of officers using an expertise based funding allocation and a “worst-first” highway scheme and maintenance programme across the Borough rather than an area based approach.
- b. Support further opportunities to engage locally and put forward suggested local transport/maintenance schemes.
- c. Recommend increased liaison with Highways to help influence schemes and achieve a joint understanding of local issues for officers, Councillors and communities.

Recommendation 6: Risks Identified During The Review

That the Executive consider measures to mitigate against the following risks identified during the review:

- a. Member engagement, buy in and support for the new arrangements.
- b. Ensuring Councillors engage with training and development associated with the new arrangements so they understand the purpose.
- c. Councillors unable to agree timely and relevant local priorities across wards
- d. Grant funding not allocated in year and left unspent.
- e. Capacity within the Council and partners to assist with the application process particularly supporting non-constituted and grass roots groups.
- f. Balancing effective transparent governance with efficiency and reduced bureaucracy.
- g. Managing complaints or criticism over allocation of grants.
- h. Effectively measuring and demonstrating good governance, including impact and value to the local area.

Recommendation 7: Next Steps

That a project plan be developed to identify key tasks and milestones to ensure the arrangements are introduced from 1st April 2020, including:

- training and development,
- priority setting,
- development of application form
- approval processes, protocols and guidance,
- financial arrangements for grant allocation,
- officer and resource implications etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS, FINDINGS AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The following section provides a summary of the evidence, findings and views expressed during the review to inform the Committee's recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Financial Arrangements:

That the Financial arrangements for ward budgets include the following features:

- a. A flat rate allocated to each Councillor, this may be pooled with other Councillors or Wards providing this contributes to agreed priorities.**

A total budget of £280k (including administration of the scheme) has been allocated to support Locality Budgets for 2020/21.

Members considered how the allocation would work as a total ward budget or as a budget allocated to each Councillor individually and the extent to which the allocation could include an element per Councillor and reflect the characteristics of the ward by allocating an amount for deprivation and for population.

This issue was considered in detail at the Member workshops and there was no consensus on how weightings for population and deprivation could be allocated. Members believed other considerations were also relevant such as type and number of communities and geographical area. Members considered that finding a formula that was equitable and took account of all relevant issues was challenging and would over complicate the process.

During its review, the Committee found that a number of other authorities (e.g. Barnsley and Rotherham) allocated a budget that was the same across all wards regardless of size or deprivation levels. In this model, Ward Members would agree by consensus how the funding would be allocated. Members recognised that as there were a number of 2 and 3 Member wards in Doncaster, a flat rate per ward would not be equitable. Members believed the most equitable way of allocating funding was to allocate the same amount to each Councillor. Councillors would have the flexibility to pool their allocation with other Members if they wished. Members believed this would also make the scheme more equitable, easier to administer and understand and would make individual Councillors more accountable.

Although Members recommended an individual allocation to Councillors, it was considered that ward priorities should be agreed by all Councillors.

- b. The ward fund be allocated within the current year, carry forward of funding should only occur if earmarked for specific schemes.**

Members were of the view that spending money in year encouraged Councillors to be "active" and identify groups who could come forward with ideas and suggestions for new initiatives. There was a risk that allowing unspent budgets to roll over would mean local resources were not being

maximised. It was recognised that initially Councillors may need a couple of years to understand the process and develop their systems to encourage applications.

- c. **Applications for ward funding should, as far as possible, seek a contribution from applicants e.g. match funding, volunteering, additional community benefit.**

Members supported the approach that the locality budget be used to empower and engage the local community and maximise impact. Examples of how this type of budget is used in other local authorities includes:

- Funding for equipment to help establish local sports clubs or social groups to promote healthy activities.
- Improvements, repairs or refurbishment of local community buildings and assets to enhance their use by the community.
- Funding that supports sustainable improvements to the natural environment e.g. equipment for litter picks or gardening equipment for local groups.
- Supporting the organisation of local events that bring the community together e.g. summer fetes, firework displays and Christmas markets

It was considered that where possible recipients should give something back to ensure buy in, such as match funding or additional volunteers or volunteer hours, which further increases resources in the area. The case study at Barnsley see (Appendix 2) demonstrated how seeking social action in return for funding had helped create a real impact by engaging communities and encouraging them to take ownership of local initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Grant Funding Application and Decision Making Process

That the process identified below provide the framework for developing the grant application process:

- a. Ward Councillors agree a small number of local priorities through consultation events, data sets and other relevant information.**
- b. Ward Budget agreed with a set amount allocated to each Councillor.**
 - a. Members supported the development of local ward priorities, agreed by all Members and informed by the community. These would identify the challenges and uniqueness of the area and the allocation of grant funding would have to contribute to these. It was suggested that priorities could be developed using data such as Multiple Indices of Deprivation, Doncaster Talks and through local consultation exercises. The ward priorities detailed in the leaflets attached at Appendix 3i and ii. (Hellaby and Hooper) provide examples of ward priorities in

Rotherham, these are short succinct and tell a story of the area. These are also useful in providing contact details for the local Councillors and may be useful as an initial template.

c. Councillors identify groups who would benefit from the ward fund and actively encourage applications.

Members were of the view they had a role in identifying and encouraging applications rather than expecting grant applications to be seen by them for the first time at the ward meeting. The discussion and work undertaken by Councillors to engage with the community before receiving an application was considered to be an important aspect of the process and of their leadership role. Members also considered that Councillors could proactive and put out a call for action requesting groups to apply if they had an initiative that could support the delivery of a particular priority.

d. Application forms are completed. Neighbourhood teams can advise and assist (but not drive the process).

Whilst this was seen as a Councillor led initiative, it was recognised that neighbourhood officers could assist Councillors in understanding wider local priorities and advising on applications or potential applicants. The system should not however be an officer led process but it was noted that the delivery of ward budget funding in areas such as Barnsley and Hillingdon relies on officers throughout the organisation supporting and assisting Councillors.

e. Grant applications could be considered at the monthly Neighbourhood Management meetings (ward meetings).

Members were of the view that considering grant applications should be incorporated within current processes wherever possible. Members acknowledged that a monthly ward meeting with Councillors and the Neighbourhood Manager currently takes place and this could provide the forum to consider grant applications.

f. Elected Members agree the allocation of grants and may take soundings from others present at the meeting including Community Representatives invited by the individual Councillor. Successful applications are forwarded to Corporate Resources to ensure the application is recorded, meets governance criteria and a central record is maintained.

Members supported the view that representatives from their local community should attend the meeting at the time grant applications are considered. Community representatives can also assist by ensuring

these meetings develop as a forum for reviewing and refreshing priorities and providing feedback on other local issues. The experience of Barnsley Council is that including community representatives supports greater community engagement and ownership.

g. Allocation of the individual Member budget be reported on the Council's web page and an annual report and incorporated within the quarterly finance and performance improvement report and within an annual report to OSMC.

Ensuring transparency within the grant allocation process and ensuring expenditure is clearly detailed was considered a key governance criteria. Members supported the view that the Council's web page should provide information on how elected members had allocated their budget. An example considered was York Council, which publicises expenditure on a ward basis.

<https://data.yorkopendata.org/dataset/register-of-ward-committee-decisions-on-funding>

h. The monthly ward meeting be used to check back on activities and impact, ensure priorities remain relevant and up to date and will be used to plan future consultation and feedback on the effectiveness of ward funding.

Members considered that as the process evolved, the ward meeting should be used to check back on whether the activities arising from the funding have taken place and had an impact. The involvement of community representatives would also allow Members to take account of wider community feedback and reflection. To promote locality working and the Councillors leadership role, Members anticipated these meetings developing into forums that go beyond grant funding approval. These meetings provided an opportunity to identify future ward initiatives, refresh priorities and identify future consultation and collaborative working to identify how local resources can be maximised for the benefit of the community.

Recommendation 3: Grant Funding Application Process and Criteria

That consideration be given to incorporating the following elements into the application process:

a. The grant application form, guidance and protocol be based around existing Doncaster Council forms e.g. Small Grants Forms and other best practice models.

Members considered examples of current grant forms. A number of these included the safeguards that would support good governance when

administering the scheme e.g. requiring a bank account, return of unused funds, requirement for health and safety training and risk assessments for organised events, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for groups working with vulnerable adults or children. It was recommended that the development of an application form setting out requirements and guidance would be useful. The application guidance attached at Appendix 4i. (Hillingdon Council) and 4ii. (Barnsley Council) provide further examples that incorporate the necessary safeguards that could be considered within the development of a local form.

That non-constituted groups, who can meet the requirements for the funding application be eligible to apply. A maximum level of funding be allowed for non-constituted groups e.g. up to £250.

Members recognised that encouraging grass roots engagement from local groups would mean that small non-constituted groups were likely to apply. Barnsley Council had encouraged non-constituted groups to apply and had written conditions in to the application process to ensure necessary safeguards. The Committee was also keen that with support small groups could grow and develop into more formal groups and associations. Members suggested that initially the allocation of funding to non-constituted groups could be restricted to a maximum amount e.g. up to £250.

b. That consideration be given to how grass roots groups will be supported to become constituted to support their future sustainability.

Members identified that small groups may need help and support both in completing applications and in ensuring their sustainability. It was recognised that there were a number of areas where this support could be provided e.g. Neighbourhood Teams, Strategic and Performance Unit and the local Voluntary and Faith Sector.

c. That each Councillor identify community representatives to assist and liaise with in respect of grant applications at the ward meeting.

Members supported the view that local representatives from the community could assist Councillors in identifying local groups to apply for grant funding as detailed at Recommendation 2 f. Members were supportive of the view that choosing representatives from the local community to attend debate and discussion around grant applications was helpful in gaining wider community buy in and engagement.

d. Consideration be given to applications from larger organisations such as Town and Parish Councils and Academies who can match fund and demonstrate this would contribute to meeting ward priorities.

Members were clear that the purpose of the ward budget was to support nurture, grow local groups within the local area, and support their sustainability to meet local priorities. When reviewing the allocation of ward budgets at other Councils, there was evidence that where larger organisations were seeking match funding for a local initiative e.g. repair or improvement to

a local community building that enables its usage to wider local groups or actively engage additional volunteers these applications could be considered acceptable.

e. Further consideration be given to the most efficient process of allocating grant funding to applicants e.g. payment into bank account.

There were a number of discussions about how resources could be allocated to applicants. The Committee was of the view that whichever process was used, it should be efficient, non-bureaucratic and meet good governance and audit requirements. Members recognised for example there would need to be monitoring of expenditure and proof of purchase or activity and this would need to be written in to the application process.

Recommendation 4: Supporting Transparency and Openness

That the following arrangements be incorporated into the scheme to support transparency and accountability:

a. That an officer decision process be determined to authorise grant allocations agreed by elected Members.

It was recognised that Members would ultimately be agreeing relatively small funding applications, the bureaucracy of approving and administering the scheme should not outweigh the value. However, Members recognised that the process required the necessary checks and balances including a formal sign off by the budget holder and a central record of all grant allocations. It is expected that individually some of the applications will be relatively small, consideration will need to be given to ensuring the level at which sign off takes place is appropriate and proportionate.

b. That Councillor web pages be updated to identify how each Councillor has allocated their funding.

One of the key governance elements of this scheme is accountability and transparency. Members noted a number of Councils had individual web pages for each Councillor detailing ward priorities, the amount of ward funding available the amount committed, the amount spent and the balance remaining. A number of Councils operating this type of scheme provide this information in an easy to read manner Croydon Council's website which provides current year allocation for each Councillor and a summary of grant funding issued during 2018/19.

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/community/advice/community-ward-budgets-for-each-ward/adiscombe-east>

c. An annual event to showcase and share good practice and identify lessons learnt.

Members recognised that the scheme should provide opportunities to share their experiences to support organisational and Member learning. It was also

acknowledged this would provide an opportunity to show case best practice and encourage applications.

d. Development of Key Performance Indicators that assist in measuring the impact of the scheme e.g. impact on local spend, additional volunteer hours, social return on investment.

Members supported a mechanism for measuring value added and impact. The Barnsley model was particularly effective in monitoring the amount of additional money going into the local economy from the match funding, additional volunteers, volunteer hours in the local economy and social return on investment. In addition Members recognised the need for the system to use case studies to demonstrate examples of impact on a local community as these were often more descriptive than raw data.

e. Give further consideration to developing ward meetings as a forum for identifying how localities can benefit from other grant funding streams. This may include a move to an Area Committee based approach as the ward based model matures.

During its review, Members referred to a number of funding streams that the Council was (or had been) responsible for allocating to small groups for the benefit of the community e.g. Doncaster Voluntary & Community Support Fund – Small Grants Programme Grants Programme, SEED funding, Helping Hand funding. Whilst it was recognised each would have its own specific criteria Members considered that once the ward budget arrangements were in place, consideration could be given to using these as the forum for considering other grant applications and developing a more streamlined process for supporting communities.

Views were also expressed that as the ward model matures there may be an opportunity to move to an Area Committee based approach with local Councillors having responsibility for greater budgets to be allocated to local initiatives. Running the ward budgets as a pre cursor to this will enable the Council to develop capacity, identify potential issues and learn from experiences.

f. Development of a Communications Strategy to highlight the new arrangement in the context of locality working.

Members recognised the importance of ensuring there was an awareness and understanding of the purpose of new arrangements. It was recommended that arrangements be put in place to ensure the new scheme was widely publicised and local groups could come forward with applications.

Recommendation 5: Local Transport Plan (LTP) Funding

That in respect of the proposal for Area Committees to allocate Local Transport Plan Funding it be noted that OSMC:

- a. Support the current scheme of officers using an expertise based funding allocation and a “worst-first” highway scheme and maintenance programme across the Borough rather than an area based approach.**

The Committee discussed the current arrangements for using LTP funding and supported the current model of a “worst first” approach across the Borough. Concern was raised that delivering local schemes that did not meet this criteria would cause uncertainty and potential legal challenge. The committee heard how Nottingham City Council used an area approach to the allocation of funding for highway improvements. The Nottingham model demonstrated useful ongoing engagement with local ward Members and communities, which helped, inform the delivery of schemes. However, it was recognised that there were some distinct differences in the local areas e.g. size of the road network.

- b. Support further opportunities to engage locally and put forward suggested local transport/maintenance schemes.**
- c. Recommend increased liaison with Highways to help influence schemes and achieve a joint understanding of local issues for officers, Councillors and communities.**

The review identified that greater engagement with elected Members in developing the annual maintenance programme would be helpful in ensuring communities were better informed about maintenance schemes and projects. Other local authorities such as Herefordshire County Council also advocate an area based approach to Highway issues with local schemes being considered in the development of the wider Maintenance programme. Whilst local communities a process of evaluation to ensure schemes meet initiate many local schemes put forward, the Council’s maintenance evaluation standards are still considered. Elected Members and communities receive feedback on proposed schemes to ensure they are better informed of any future programmes and Members and the communities value this.

Recommendation 6: Risks Identified During The Review

That the Executive consider measures to mitigate against the following risks identified during the review:

- a. Member engagement, buy in and support for the new arrangements.**
- b. Ensuring Councillors engage with training and development associated with the new arrangements so they understand the purpose.**

Members recommended that Councillors should undertake training prior to launch of the new scheme. For this scheme to be effective and make a difference in the communities ward Members would need to drive the process. It was recognised that as well as understanding how the scheme operates

Members may require training and development to ensure they have the skills to maximise impact e.g. understanding asset based communities development, consultation and engagement techniques.

c. Councillors unable to agree timely and relevant local priorities across wards.

Developing priorities was viewed as an essential part of the process as any grant allocation would need to contribute to these. It was important that these were agreed before the start of the financial year so the priorities were clearly defined. Members would need to work together to agree priorities for their area and this would require inputs from a range of areas particularly in wards with diverse communities over large geographical areas.

d. Grant funding not allocated in year and left unspent.

Funding should be seen as an asset for the local area. Councillors should be supported to ensure they could spend their allocation in year. There is a reputational risk to the Council and Councillors where budgets earmarked for local spend are not utilised. Unspent monies will be returned to the General Fund.

e. Capacity within the Council and partners to assist with the application process, particularly supporting non-constituted and grass roots groups.

Members were aware that there would need to be capacity within the Council to support local groups that may apply for grant funding. This could include assistance on how to complete the form and how to establish themselves as constituted groups.

f. Balancing effective transparent governance with efficiency and reduced bureaucracy.

Members recognised that there would potentially be a high number of low value transactions arising from the administration of locality budgets and there should be an equitable balance between safeguards for the use of public money without creating an overly bureaucratic system, where benefits are outweighed by the administration costs.

g. Managing complaints or criticism over allocation of grants.

The scheme would need to provide clear guidance on the grant qualification process and feedback to those whose applications were refused.

h. Effectively measuring and demonstrating good governance, including impact and value to the local area.

This would require development of meaningful key performance indicators and demonstrating benefits and added value. The table below identifies how the recommendations proposed can meet the principles of Good Governance in the Public Sector as developed by The International Federation of

Accountants (IFAC) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES	FEATURE OF THE RECOMMENDED SCHEME
A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	An agreed Protocol will provide confirmation of the process and expected behaviours. The Protocols used by Hillingdon Council and Barnsley provide good examples.
B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder Engagement.	Public consultation events such as Doncaster Talks and local events be used to develop priorities. It is recommended that Councillors invite Community representatives to assist in the grant allocation process to broaden stakeholder engagement.
C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	The scheme will outline a small number of ward priorities, which link to the wider area but recognise the challenges and character of the local area. Clear measures and Key Performance Indicators should be in place to monitor and measure the effectiveness of the process and the impact. (e.g. Barnsley measure social return on investment, additional volunteers and volunteer hours, local spend)
D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	The ward meeting provides the opportunity to assess, review and monitor the effectiveness of applications and past schemes as well as current applications. Annual reports and quarterly monitoring provide additional opportunity to identify any interventions to improve the scheme.
E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.	Provision of training and development for Members and officers prior to the commencement of the schemes will help develop capacity. Ongoing monitoring and sharing of good practice to develop effective processes will assist in developing this further.
F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	Arrangements may include: Development of a risk register prior to launching the scheme. Developing ward priorities and Key Performance indicators to track impact. Publishing regular reporting of spend and impact on communities will provide public accountability.
G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	Allocation of spend published on website and funding allocations broken down to ward or individual Councillor to publicise and provide accountability. Officers will provide advice and sign off agreed schemes. An annual report and inclusion within quarterly performance and improvement report will provide further transparency and accountability.

Recommendation 7: Next Steps

That a project plan be developed to identify key tasks and milestones to ensure the arrangements are introduced from 1st April 2020, including:

- training and development,
- priority setting,
- development of application form
- approval processes, protocols and guidance,
- financial arrangements for grant allocation,
- officer and resource implications etc.

Conclusion

The Committee set out to consider how a system of devolved decision-making could operate at Doncaster Council. Elected Members were invited to workshops to give their views on this new arrangement but also to seek their views and opinions on various aspects of the new process. The recommendations and suggested features of the scheme are presented to offer some guidance and suggestions as to how this may be undertaken in future.

Acknowledgements

The Committee expressed its gratitude to all Members and officers who participated in the review and to Barnsley Council for welcoming Members and officers to their council to discuss devolved decision-making arrangements and to Nottingham City Council for participating in a conference Call to consider their approach to devolved addressing local transport and highways needs.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference for the Review

Appendix 2- Summary of case study following site visit to Barnsley Council

Appendix 3i and ii – Examples of local ward priorities – Rotherham Council (Hellaby and Hooper Wards)

Appendix 4i and ii – Example application forms and guidance Hillingdon council and Barnsley Council

OSMC Review - Empowered, Engaged Communities, With Devolved Locality Budgets – Terms Of Reference

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

i. 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?

ii. 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?

iii. 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?

iv. 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?

v. 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?

vi. 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 with 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

SITE VISIT TO BARNESLEY

Barnsley Council's Area Governance arrangements have been cited by the LGIU and LGA as a best practice model.

Locality Budgets

The Council operates a three tiered approach across the Borough comprising six Area Committees (including up to four wards, each ward allocated £100k), 21 ward Alliances (each ward allocated £10k) and a system of Neighbourhood Networks.

Barnsley Council's reasons for introducing devolved decision-making included:

- Finding significant budget cuts but wanted to use austerity as a chance to do things differently
- Wanted to work WITH citizens rather than do things for them
- To help citizens & communities to put their many talents to best use locally
- Build on strong existing levels of 'people helping people' to make communities stronger
- To use the enormous knowledge and talents of communities and councillors to get better value for remaining budgets.

The guiding principles behind this way of working was to share leadership with communities by adopting a partnership approach of working together alongside residents and communities and strengthen and develop the sector.

Members considered the following information in respect of the Ward Alliance model.

Key features of the Ward Alliance model include:

- Shared influence and decision making between Ward Members and community representatives – elected member chairs the meeting
- Membership includes three Ward Members plus a minimum of six residents/local workers/businesses. Meetings are informal and held in private.
- The Ward Alliance determines local priorities and mobilises community-led and volunteer-led solutions
- Operates with a small budget (Ward Alliance Fund) £10k per ward (plus any carry-forward or any devolved funding from Area Councils) to support community action.
- Applications decided by the Ward Alliance by consensus wherever possible & by majority vote if needed (elected members do not have the power of veto)
- Ward Alliance Fund addresses local priorities by enabling others to undertake social action and encourage volunteering.
- 50% of available funding requires a volunteer match-funded element

What were the Committee's findings?

The Committee found the success of this arrangement had been due to a number of factors:

- i. The system had matured and developed over time since 2012.
- ii. There was a clear demonstration of impacts and value added through Performance Indicators e.g.
 - the number of volunteers and volunteer hours attributable to the Ward Alliance,
 - the amount of additional money brought in to the local area ,
 - the number of community representatives involved in the ward alliances
- iii. Ward Alliances were introduced as part of the Council’s ambition to engage and develop communities as part of the wider Council priorities of delivering “Strong and Resilient Communities”.
- iv. The arrangements were introduced shortly before a high profile volunteering campaign “Love where you live” in 2014.
- v. Ward level and Borough wide communications such as newsletters are in place focusing on impacts and providing case studies identifying value added and raising the profile of the area.
- vi. Barnsley has a strong, Voluntary and Community Sector
- vii. Strong Neighbourhood structure including including Community Development Officers who support the Neighbourhood process.
- viii. A focus on lessons learnt (some examples included)
 - Keep local priorities short and simple. Manage expectations.
 - Commission on quality and social value not price. (Procurement Rules amended to accommodate this)
 - Use Members and community knowledge to fill the gaps e.g. social isolation identified as an issue by communities but not identified in local data.
 - Share and show case good practice.
 - Volunteering and events has really helped community cohesion and bringing people together.