report

meeting	Communities Department Briefing		
date	13th November 2006	agenda item number	**4**

Report of the Strategic Director for Communities

Departmental Priorities

Purpose of the Report

1. To update members on the development of the new Communities Department, this paper outlines the major issues facing the department over the next few months and the delivery of core strategic priorities.

Building the New Department

2. The new Communities Department came into being, as part of the council-wide restructuring, on 1st October 2006. Broadly, the new department will be responsible for most of the "people and places" functions of the former Culture and Community and Environment Departments with the following exceptions:

    a) The Young People's Division (including the youth service, play development, and the teenage pregnancy team) has moved to the Children and Young People's Department.

    b) Support Services (including Finance, HR, IT, and Property Services) have moved to the Resources Department as part of the integration of support services.

    c) The Welfare Rights Service and the Health Inequalities Team have moved to Adult Social Care and Health.

    d) Part of the Community Engagement Team has moved to the Chief Executive's Department to lead work on strategic partnerships

    The new Communities Department will have responsibility for some 200 services delivered by 5,000 staff from some 300 locations. Our frontline services include arts, catering, cleaning, country parks, landscaping, libraries, road repairs, road safety, sports, and trading standards.

3. Members will appreciate that the organisational restructuring that the council is currently undertaking requires a high level of managerial attention. In keeping with the corporate timetable the strategic director and service directors are in place, and the third-tier posts are currently going through the

enabling process with most expected to be in place by the end of November. The proposals for the rest of the structure should be published for consultation at the beginning of December.

4. Our priorities for building the new department include:

   a) Moving quickly to create an integrated department. The senior management team is in place and we have involved a wider leadership group in developing and promoting the new department's ambitions and values.

   b) Maintaining our focus on excellent service delivery. Many organisations find during reorganisations that they become inwardly-focused. We are determined not to allow this to happen.

   c) Strengthening the political interface. The department's services sit within six portfolios. The three core portfolios are Community Safety and Partnerships, Culture and Regeneration, and Environment. However other services are under the purview of the Leader, Deputy Leader, and People and Performance portfolios. In addition to ensuring that robust arrangements are in place to support these cabinet members, we are also conscious of the need to improve communication with other members and ensure that they are kept abreast of plans and developments.

5. The Communities Department is responsible for delivering a broad range of the council's strategic priorities across access, culture, regeneration, safety, and sustainability. The key service challenges facing the department include:

   a) Reducing the number of deaths and accidents on the roads, particularly those involving children

   b) Improving the safety of our communities by strengthening neighbourhood policing and tackling anti-social behaviour

   c) Encouraging community activity and promote community cohesion

   d) Protecting consumers from poor quality goods and services

   e) Enriching people's lives and opportunities through libraries and other cultural activities. Protecting and enhancing our built and natural heritage. Improving community facilities and resources.

   f) Increasing participation in sport, leisure, culture, and physical activity

   g) Promoting economic growth, better quality jobs, and increased prosperity. Increasing the proportion of the population in work

   h) Reducing household waste and increase recycling. Reducing CO^2 emissions from council buildings

   i) Widening transport choice and work to tackle congestion and associated pollution.

j) Improving the physical environment in local communities and improving the condition of roads and footways.

6.   Progress on individual priorities will feature on future briefings.

NET Phase 2

7.   The Department for Transport has given programme entry approval to Nottingham Express Transit phase 2, which would provide new tram routes to Chilwell (via Beeston) and Clifton. Programme entry is the initial approval stage. The next steps are as follows.

   a) The City and County Councils must now decide whether to apply to the DfT for planning powers to build and operate NET Phase Two, and to confirm the scheme proposals. Applying for a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) will trigger a Public Inquiry which would take place towards the end of 2007.

   b) Based on the conclusion of the Public Inquiry, the Secretary of State for Transport will make a decision whether or not to grant the TWAO planning powers. If TWAO powers are granted, the scheme will be considered for Conditional Approval, which would then allow the scheme to start procurement.

   c) Alongside the Public Inquiry the team behind NET Phase Two will also have to submit detailed construction design information to the Department for Transport and provide details of the procurement costs to build the scheme.

   d) Full approval will only be granted after procurement costs are known.

8.   If all these stages are achieved successfully the TWAO is granted, and the design and procurement costs are approved by government, construction could start in early 2010 with trams running by 2013.

9.   A separate report giving more detail on NET Phase Two is presented as a separate paper to this Departmental Briefing meeting.

Sherwood Forest Living Legend

10.   Our ambitious Sherwood Forest: Living Legend partnership project is designed to bring together culture, heritage and regeneration and achieve a significant improvement in one of the counties best-loved assets. The application to the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks Programme for £38 million towards a total cost of £49 million. Following a detailed assessment the scheme was successful in being is one of six short-listed projects. The programme is competitive and only one of the six bids can be successful.

11.   The bid was submitted by the County Council on behalf of a wider partnership of organisations including the Alliance SSP, Forestry Commission, English Nature, Sherwood Forest Trust and East Midlands Tourism (part of the East

Midlands Development Agency). Having been shortlisted, and awarded a development grant, a Stage 2 application, is due to be submitted in May 2007.

12.   A conference on the Sherwood Living Legend is to be held at Thoresby Park, on 22 November 2006. Invitations have been sent to all Members of the County Council, the District Councils, Parish Councils, local community groups and a range of national, regional and local organisations with an interest in the area. It is anticipated that these delegates will constitute a wider reference group for the project and will meet bi-annually during its life.

Regional Cultural Commentary

13.   We have accepted an invitation from the Government Office for the East Midlands to participate in discussions with the DCMS representative in the Government Office and the regional cultural agencies (Arts Council, Sport England, Museum and Libraries Association, and Culture East Midlands). These commentaries are seen as part of the drive to improve local cultural services and are intended to: help align national, regional, and local objectives; develop improved working relationships between local authorities and the DCMS' sponsored bodies; and provide a focus for local authorities and the sponsored bodies to work together to deliver improvements.

14.   We have produced a self assessment against the regional commentary template. The draft commentary is expected in early December and a discussion has been arranged for 8th December. This will be the subject of a future departmental briefing.

Regional Spatial Strategy

15.   The East Midlands Regional Assembly has published the draft regional plan for consultation. The council is a consultee and it is proposed to take a report to Cabinet in December which will form the council's response.

16.   The Regional Plan provides a strategy within which local authorities' planning documents and Local Transport Plans can be prepared. As part of the statutory 'Development Plan' it will also be material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals. It provides a broad development strategy for the East Midlands up to 2026 by identifying the scale and distribution of provision for new housing and priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, energy, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. The strategy also provides the longer term planning framework for the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), prepared by the East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*), and should be used to inform the development of relevant non land-use strategies and programmes in the region.

17.   Because of the scale and complexity of the regional spatial strategy there is a later paper on the agenda which will explore it in greater detail.

Anti-Social Behaviour

18.   Community Safety is consistently one of the most important issues identified in community consultation. An Audit Commission report on neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour published in May 2006 highlighted the following issues:

   a) How safe or unsafe people feel in their neighbourhoods is not always related to the actual incidence of crime. The general trend of falling crime rates nationally since 1995 is not recognised.

   b) For most people the actual incidence of crime, including serious crime, is not the principal factor determining how safe they feel. Rather it is their daily experience of anti-social behaviour in their immediate neighbourhood, or their perception of what is happening locally, that shapes their view. Crime statistics do not include the range of anti-social behaviour which affects perceptions on the local quality of life..

   c) Much crime data is available at too high a geographic level which disguises the reality of particular neighbourhoods and makes it hard to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

19.   The implication of this work is that an effective response to concerns about neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour has to start from local perceptions. Further, it requires a range of agencies to be involved.

20.   The paper later on this agenda sets out the policy framework within which the Council is currently operating and a draft anti-social behaviour policy.

Mick Burrows
Strategic Director for Communities

Background Papers Available for Inspection

Regional Cultural Commentary: Self Assessment 30th October 2006