

WEST AREA COMMITTEE - 11 MARCH 2009

Title of paper:	Ward walks in the West Area	
Director:	Lianne Taylor, Acting Director of Local Communities	Wards affected: Aspley, Bilborough and Leen Valley
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Other officers who have provided input:	Debbie Fenton– Neighbourhood Action Officer, Bilborough Sioban Campbell– Neighbourhood Action Officer, Aspley Susan Ward-Rice– Neighbourhood Action Officer, Leen Valley	
Relevant Council Plan theme(s):		
Choose Nottingham		
Respect for Nottingham		
Transforming Nottingham's Neighbourhoods		
Supporting Nottingham People		
Serving Nottingham Better		
Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):		
This report informs members of the style of ward walks being organised across the West Area.		
Recommendations:		
1	That members note the ward walks currently being organised in Aspley, Bilborough and Leen Valley.	
2	That members suggest alternatives to achieving the same outcomes as ward walks.	
3	That members put forward any suggestions to make ward walks more efficient in promoting members as 'champions of place'.	

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of area management structures members agreed to the organisation of regular consultation and engagement with neighbourhoods. The style or method of this engagement in the West Area has included councillor surgeries, open events, theme based meetings and, more recently, ward walks. At present these walks have been organised in all three wards across the West Area.
- 1.2 Ward walks consist of identifying a geographical 'hot spot' brought to the attention of members and officers. Letters informing residents in the targeted area of the dates and times for the ward walks are posted at least a week before the event takes place. People are given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire identifying particular issues affecting their area and posting this in a stamped addressed envelope to the Area Management Team. Some members of the community are happy to place a request card in their window asking to meet with councillors during the ward walk. Officers on the walks note specific problems or issues requiring action.

- 1.3 Issues picked up during the ward walks are dealt with and residents informed of action taken. It is believed this process enables local people to participate in decision making.
- 1.4 In Aspley the ward walks are scheduled to take place every six weeks. The Neighbourhood Action Officer is responsible for administrating these and invites key officers to participate. Members have been fully involved and see these as a valuable method of engagement with local communities.
- 1.5 In Leen Valley a ward walk was organised to target a neighbourhood which members felt was not being engaged with through existing methods. Whilst another walk is scheduled to take place in the near future, members feel that they would like to consider alternative ways of consulting with their communities.
- 1.6 In Bilborough one ward walk has been organised from which a number of community issues were identified. Unfortunately there was a lack of involvement from some officers. A further ward walk was scheduled for 3 February 2009, but had to be cancelled at the request of members due to bad weather.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

- 2.1 Information about ward walks across the West Area was requested by members of this committee.
- 2.2 The report provides an opportunity for the Area Committee to evaluate the success of ward walks so far and make recommendations for improvement.
- 2.3 This enables members to consider alternative ways of achieving the same outcomes as ward walks using other methods of engagement.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

None

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)

- 4.1 Whilst ward walks are facilitated by Neighbourhood Action Officers and therefore have no cost attached directly to them, on occasions there are actions which arise from them that need financial support to complete.
- 4.2 The mailing, publicity and request cards are paid for using the West Area incidental budget.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS)

- 5.1 Bad weather means that at times ward walks may have to be cancelled at very short notice, therefore it may be difficult to inform all the community members within the targeted area of this cancellation.
- 5.2 The safety of officers and members during the ward walks has to be considered. At present the Neighbourhood Action Officers inform their colleagues where, when and what time their walk finishes. The Neighbourhood Action Officers carry mobile phones with them to report any emergency.

5.3 The ward walks have been valuable in identifying community safety issues as well as allowing engagement with sections of the community who do not participate in traditional methods. These include Black and Minority Ethnic communities and people with disabilities.

6 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

None

7 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

None