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| To: POLICY AND RESOURCES (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT) SUB COMMITTEE | Subject: DECENTRALISATION REVIEW: WAY FORWARD |
| From: CHIEF EXECUTIVE | |
| Date: 15 January 1999 | Ref: CE012/023 |

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the main findings and key issues arising from the first annual review of decentralisation scheme and to identify issues for consideration development of decentralisation.

2 Background

2.1 The Council approved its decentralisation scheme along with proposals for the first stage of implementation in February 1997. In adopting the scheme the Council recognised decentralisation as a process of change to the political and management systems of the Council with the objectives of:

- bringing services and decision-making closer to the public where this will result in an improvement to the services;
- enabling the public to influence and shape the design and delivery of services and the way the Council serves its community; and
- providing more effective and responsive local government.

2.2 Key elements of the Council's approach to implementing the scheme include:

- formal area decision-making via Area Committees
- area planning and co-ordination via Area Teams and Liaison Directors
- community involvement principally via community forums

Strategic co-ordination of decentralisation including supporting areas, ensuring resources and reviewing progress is a responsibility of the 'centre' including the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee.

2.3 This first annual review was initiated by the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee at its meeting in August 1998. Area Committees, Area Teams and Liaison Directors were invited to respond to questions and to submit responses by December 1998. The Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee held a special meeting on 7 January 1999 to review key issues raised in submissions from a central perspective and give initial consideration to the way forward.

3 Context

3.1 It is clear that the Council has made a positive start to decentralising. The establishment of Area Committees, Area Teams and Community Forums has generated opportunities and expectations and a potential to achieve the objectives identified in the decentralisation scheme. The completion of area profiles will further enhance the opportunities to respond to local issues and improve the impact of Council service through better co-ordination.

3.2 At the same time the Council is beginning to respond to the new national policy context for local government (including community planning, best value, social inclusion and democratic renewal) which stresses community involvement, increased responsiveness to local needs, corporate working, community based partnership and effective mechanisms for the local delivery of policy priorities - all aspects of the Council's approach to decentralisation.

4 Review - Key Issues

4.1 Review submissions have been made by most Area Committees, Liaison Directors and Area Teams. A report on the submissions is Appendix 1. Generally the submissions recognise that decentralisation is at an early stage but that a point has been reached in most areas where expectations and opportunities now require some changes to current arrangements. Key issues identified in the submissions are:-

- **Area Committees** - status, role, powers and support arrangements.
- **Area Teams/Liaison Directors** - teams require more dedicated support, clearer remits, and an accountability framework which recognises the conflicting demands of area and departmental work.
- **Resources** - a substantial investment in both human and financial resources is needed.
- **Community Involvement** - forums are up and running in most areas. Investment in community development services is required.
- **Centre** - reaffirm commitment to decentralisation at a political and managerial level. The centre should be more pro-active.

4.2 A number of other issues were identified at the special meeting of the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee including the capacity and role of the 'centre', the policy framework within which area structures operate, the role of Liaison Directors, the incompatibility of area structures within departments, the potential linkages between corporate, area and community planning and the relationship between decentralisation and other major strategic issues.

5 Way Forward

5.1 In reviewing the objectives of the Decentralisation scheme and the approach the Council has taken to decentralising its political and managerial system the Community Development Sub-Committee have previously proposed that these remain unchanged and that the Council renew its commitment to decentralisation.

5.2 On this basis and with reference to the review submissions the national policy context and guidance from the Community Development Sub-Committee a number of considerations are set out concerning:-

- The Centre
- Resources
- Area Committees
- Area Teams/Liaison Director
- Community Involvement

5.3 Considerations - The Centre:

- 1 *Leadership* - The Community Development Sub-Committee and the Corporate Management Team should consider how to demonstrate a more pro-active commitment to decentralisation at a political and managerial level respectively.

- 2 *Role* - A guidance note defining the role of the centre in decentralisation, clarifying who should be doing what and identifying and prioritising issues should be developed by the Chief Executive's Department for approval by the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee.
- 3 *Capacity of Centre* - Proposals to enhance the capacity of the centre to provide more effective developmental support to areas (training, advice, guidance consultancy, etc.) should be developed by the Assistant Chief Executive (Operations) for consideration at the next meeting of the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee.
- 4 *Area/Centre Decision Areas* - With reference to the remit and terms of reference of Area Committee the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee should consider defining the respective decision areas of central and area committees.
- 5 *Monitoring Area Management* - The Chief Executive's Department should develop and implement a system to monitor area management and report periodically to the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub Committee on this issue.

5.4 Considerations - Resources

- 6 An assessment of the resources required to support the process of decentralisation in areas and centrally should be undertaken by the Assistant Chief Executive (Operations).

5.5 Considerations - Area Committees

- 7 *Support* - Proposals to improve and standardise the current arrangements for supporting Area Committees should be developed and reported to a future Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee covering committee co-ordination and the role of the Liaison Director and Area Team in supporting Area Committees/Area Committee members.

5.6 Considerations - Area Teams/Liaison Directors

- 8 *Roles/Responsibilities* - A guidance note clarifying the roles and responsibilities of Liaison Directors and Area Teams including supporting committees, area planning/co-ordination, service development, community participation and public access to services/information should be prepared by the Chief Executive's Department for approval by the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee.
- 9 *Accountability* - An accountability framework which recognises the potentially conflicting accountabilities for staff working in both a departmental and area context should be developed as soon as possible and consideration should be given to recognising area roles within job descriptions.

5.7 Considerations -Community Involvement

- 10 *Responsibility* - The responsibility for developing and supporting representative Community Forums as one mechanism for consultation and community involvement in decision making should remain with Area Committees.
- 11 *Support/Resourcing* - The Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee should be responsible for ensuring that area structures are adequately resourced to support Community Forums effectively.

6 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee:

(a) request that the Chief Executive take forward all the considerations identified in Section 5 of this report and report to the Policy and Resource (Community Development) Sub Committee in due course, and

(b) otherwise note the contents of this report.



Chief Executive

DECENTRALISATION REVIEW - REPORT ON SUBMISSIONS

(1) **Introduction**

Not surprisingly, given the potential significance of the decentralisation review almost all submissions requested have been made. The submissions received, collated and summarised for this report are all from area perspectives.

A list of the submissions received is attached.

(2) **Key Issues - Summary**

Generally the submissions recognise that decentralisation is at an early stage but that a point has been reached in most areas where expectations and opportunities now demand some changes to current arrangements. Key issues identified in the submissions are:-

- **Area Committees** - their status, role, powers and support arrangements.
- **Area Teams/Liaison Directors** - teams require more dedicated support, clearer remits and an accountability framework which recognises the conflicting demands of area and departmental work.
- **Resources** - a substantial investment in both human and financial resources is needed.
- **Community Involvement** - forums are up and running in most areas. Investment in community development services is required.
- **Centre** - more obvious commitment to decentralisation at a political and managerial level is necessary. The Centre should be more pro-active in supporting the process.

(3) **Liaison Directors**

Liaison Directors described their role as leading and co-ordinating the work of the Area Team, Committee co-ordination including generating reports for Area Committees and following through on decisions and work around community forums and area profiles. Time devoted to the role varies from 10 to 20 hours per month.

Difficulties identified were lack of time, the relatively low political status of Area Committees, the ad hoc nature of staff support, the fact that no other staff have a decentralised area role as part of their core duties, lack of resources, the consequent degree of attention to detail and involvement in minutiae and the absence of any formal mechanism for Liaison Directors to review and discuss progress together.

(4) **Area Committees**

Most submissions identified the level of support and resources available to Area Committees as insufficient. Some indicated that this could become a serious problem as both the area profiles and community forums raise expectations and opportunities which the Committees will want to respond to.

Area Teams were seen as important vehicles for generating business for the Area Committees. Arrangements for co-ordinating meetings of the Area Committees varies. A system of formal programmed Convenors' meetings is proposed.

Regarding the role and remit of Area Committees a clear consensus from the submissions is for more decentralised decision-making with area budgets and the Committees able to determine their own priorities and influence service delivery locally. Specific suggestions include allocating both capital and revenue funding to Area Committees in the form of an Area Development Budget, routine consideration of local/area budgets and programmes, departmental service/budget reports on every agenda on a cyclical basis and that the Area Committees determine planning applications and other matters affecting their local area.

It was suggested that Area Committees should develop a far greater role in scrutinising individual departmental services in their area and promoting corporate activity. This was seen to be less about changing the 'remit' of Area Committees and more about supporting Members to use Area Committees productively to address their responsibilities.

Suggested changes to the current arrangements for supporting Area Committees include the appointment of Area Officers who would report to Liaison Directors. Another suggestion is for Area Committees to be co-ordinated and controlled by full-time staff from the Centre with all Departments organised on an area basis with staff responsible for one Area/Area Committee.

The relatively low political status of Area Committees was seen to be a significant barrier to the progress of decentralisation.

Focusing on the coming year some Area Committees indicated an attention to address service delivery arrangements for all Council services in the area, the feasibility of first-stop shops and other issues identified in area profiles.

(5) Area Teams

In most areas, Area Teams meet on a six weekly cycle with ad hoc sub-groups meeting as necessary to deal with tasks concerning the area profile, community forum or a specific area project.

The composition of the Teams is fairly consistent regarding the number of departments represented. Attendance levels at meetings and the seniority of staff involved varies. Some Teams have already contributed to better co-ordination of services at an area level (e.g. re. youth services and services to older people) and a number of submissions identify the benefits and potential of closer corporate working.

Generally, Liaison Directors view the composition of the Teams as appropriate but a consistency of involvement by staff who have sufficient seniority and delegated responsibility is seen as important. Some submissions indicated that some departments are key players in the Area Team and others are not and the notion of a core area team exists in one area. A number of submissions highlight the opportunities for better co-ordination of services that are likely to be identified when area profiles are finalised.

Difficulties experienced by Teams include:-

- variable sense of commitment from senior Members and officials.
- lack of clarity in relation to remits.
- lack of time.
- lack of supporting resources.
- lack of responsibility delegated to some team members, and
- the relatively low status of Area Committees as against Service Committees in the operation of the Council and Departments.

Proposals for enhancing the operation of Area Teams and improving co-ordination of Council services include:-

- an accountability framework including clear guidelines within job descriptions.
- a designated, full-time member of administrative staff to support the Liaison Director and the Area Team.
- internal and external promotion of decentralisation and its supporting structures.
- appropriate linkages at an area level with Police, Fire, Health Board etc.
- training in community working and seminars on specific topics.
- a detailed induction covering the work of all Departments in the area.
- arranging 'time out' to consider the development of the Team and future area activity.
- a more flexible approach with the ability to bring in staff with specific knowledge or skills as required,
- the development of one-stop shops
- the further development of decentralised departmental structures, and
- investment in team building

(6) Community Involvement

Community forums have been established in most areas following a process of community consultation and facilitation of public meetings. Typically, this process has been managed through the Area Team. Some forums are supported by a sub-group of the Area Team involving staff from three or four Departments. In some areas, Social Work, Community Education and Chief Executive's staff are seen as having a key role in developing the forums and their future relationship with the Council. A typical comment on the process is 'the development of the Community Forum has generated a significant level of interest and enthusiasm for the Council's decentralisation scheme and it is imperative that this is harnessed over the next year and beyond by the Area Committee and the Council'.

There is a diversity of arrangements regarding the operation of the forums. In one area administrative support for the forum is mainly provided through the Area Housing Office. Initial working arrangements between the forum and the area structures also vary. In one area, emphasis is given to the relationship between the Area Team and the forum. In another, forum representatives attend Area Committee meetings.

A number of submissions identified the need for additional community development services to support community participation and the overall process of decentralisation.

(7) Resources

Views as to the extent to which decentralisation has so far been inhibited by a lack of resources vary but all submissions stress the need for substantial resources (human and financial) for the next stage if the process is to work properly. In particular, community forums and area profiles are identified as creating opportunities and demands which the area structures must be adequately resourced and supported to respond to.

None of the submissions fully quantify the resources required in terms of staff and finance. One submission estimates £2,500 will be needed to support each community forum each year. It is clear that the provision of area budgets is only part of what is seen to be needed.

However some submissions recognise the limited scope to simply add to existing costs. One Area Committee for example proposes that the Council's approach should be 'to support decentralisation by redeploying existing resources and reviewing the current operational and management arrangements to enhance decision making and service delivery in the area'.

(8) Role of the Centre

Views from an area perspective of the current level of support from the Centre (i.e. Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee, Corporate Management Team, Chief Executive's Department and Administration Department) range from adequate to inadequate.

Many submissions mentioned the need for more commitment to decentralisation at a political and managerial level. It was felt that the Policy and Resources (Community Development) Sub-Committee must ensure that the development of decentralisation is matched with resources. Two submissions identified the need for the Centre (including Service Committees and Directors) to recognise the importance and potential of the decentralisation policy in enhancing the profile of the Council and helping communities feel part of North Lanarkshire. Other proposals include:-

- integrated support from the Department of Administration in each area to the Area Committee, Area Team and Community Forum to help improve communication between these structures
- consideration by the Corporate Management Team of how to match corporate and departmental needs and develop implementation plans.
- a corporate training programme to support Area Committees and Area Teams
- closer monitoring of Area Committees/Teams
- central direction re quality of Area Committee agendas and local departmental activity reports
- the need for investment in good community development services, and
- each Department should be structured to allow staff to be deployed on an area basis.

DECENTRALISATION REVIEW - SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED (BY 12 JANUARY 1999)

| <i>Area</i> | <i>Liaison Director</i> | <i>Area Team</i> | <i>Area Committee</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Airdrie * | | | ✓ |
| Bellshill and District ** | | | ✓ |
| Coatbridge | | | ✓ |
| Cumbernauld | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Kilsyth and Villages | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Motherwell | ✓ Joint | ✓ | ✓ |
| Northern Corridor | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Shotts and Harthill | ✓ | ✓ (draft) | ✓ |
| Wishaw and Newmains | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

* comments from four local organisations submitted.

** submission also from community forum.