



Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 12th February 2015

Report of: Policy and Improvement Officer

Subject: Written responses to public questions

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Summary:

This report provides the Committee with copies of written responses to public questions asked at the Committee's meeting on 27th November 2014.

The written responses are included as part of the Committee's meeting papers as the way of placing the responses on the public record.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	X

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Note the report

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: OPEN

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**Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development
Committee 27th November 2014**

Written response to public questions from Mr Alan Kewley

Question 1 a

Public Questions were submitted to this Committee on 25th September, and brief verbal responses were provided as minuted in 5.1 A full written response was promised by the Chair – When can we expect to receive this?

A response was provided on 27th November 2014. At the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee meeting on 27th November 2014 Cllr Chris Weldon, the Chair of Committee stated that the timescale for the response was unacceptable.

Question 1 b

Council guidelines include response time to public questions. Please confirm what these are?

The Council Procedure rules state in relation to meetings of the Council that where a submitted question cannot be answered because time does not allow, or where a Cabinet Member undertakes to provide a written answer, the written answer will be provided within ten working days of the Council meeting.

The Constitution does not state a response time for a written answer to questions asked at Scrutiny Committees.

At the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee meeting on 27th November 2014 the Chair of the Committee stated that he would expect written responses to questions raised at that Committee to be provided within 10 days, in line with the timescale for Council meetings.

Question 1 c

Why were these written Questions not minuted for the public record?

The minutes of Committee meetings reflect the proceedings of the meeting and therefore record the response provided at the meeting to public questions.

The Chair of the Committee has asked Matthew Borland, the Policy and Improvement Officer to look at the most appropriate way of making sure that future public questions and the written responses to questions are put on the public record.

Question 2 a)

Item 11 on today's agenda contains a management report on Community Engagement since a new Locality Management model was introduced over a year ago, and refers to a Review over the next few months. Please confirm how and when local communities will be consulted to provide a more balanced assessment of its effectiveness?

As part of a 18 month review we will be seeking the views of Councillors, selected council services, partners, VCF organisations and local residents.

However, given the limited resources at our disposal this will have to be proportionate in terms of budget and officer time.

Question 2 b)

A key part of this new model was a detailed Ward Plan, to be updated annually following local public consultation. This report doesn't mention these, but rumours suggest they've been abandoned in favour of a brief summary of Ward Priorities. Original Ward Plans haven't been updated since Sept 2013 - Please confirm their present status ?

At the initial launch of this new model in September 2013, we did suggest that each ward would have an action plan with a series of priorities and actions needed to address these. Over the last 12 months councillors, officers and partners have felt that the ward priorities identified were best tackled at an Area wide level as it allowed service deliverers from the VCF, public and private sector to respond more effectively and efficiently, and avoided duplication. Therefore, the focus has been on the development of deliverable Action Plans tackling area wide priorities with tangible outputs and outcomes through the Local Area Partnerships. Each area is currently working on 2 or 3 key priorities. Details of these priorities are on the website and blogs, or can be provided on request. However, Councillors still felt it was important to illustrate and promote the local ward priorities as it indicates what ward councillors are focusing on over the next 12 months, through a variety of channels. These have recently been refreshed and promoted via the website, blogs and public meetings. etc.

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Written response to public question from Mr Nigel Slack

Q1 Sheffield for Democracy was invited, by Cllr Iqbal, to attend the Local Area Partnership Chairs Meeting on 4th November. We had hoped to discuss with them the shortcomings of the new arrangements and be able to consider ways forward. This didn't happen but it seems that the best that can be said of the working of these new engagement arrangements is that it's a very mixed picture. From what we've heard, via some councillors, there is no consensus about its validity across the political spectrum and that leaves many wards and communities with reduced opportunities for effective public engagement and the report to tomorrow's Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny panel confirms this.

We have undertaken to commit to writing our concerns and suggestions for Cllr Iqbal and the Chairs Meeting and will do so shortly.

We are, however, having attended a previous meeting and in light of one Councillor's comments at that meeting, concerned about the potential for the excess of work for the aforementioned Safer & Stronger Communities panel.

There is a significant amount of work expected of the Lead Ward Councillors and LAPs and, to be fair, very low levels of support. Considering this, we would like to ask whether this matter could be considered by this scrutiny management panel, with thought being given to a separate line of scrutiny for these arrangements?

The report to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee's 27th November meeting informed the Committee that a review of the locality based working model is planned. The report states:
"A review of the model will be taking place over the next few months and presented to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health at the end of the financial year."

The full report is available on the Council's website.¹

At its meeting on 27th November the Committee agreed to ask the Cabinet Member and the Lead Officers to report to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee following the completion of the review.

¹ The link to the report is:

<http://sheffielddemocracy.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s16169/Community%20Engagement%20LAPs.pdf>

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