

# **Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Neighbourhood Working Sub-Group**

**Wednesday, 14 February 2007**

**Present:** Councillor Adrian Lowe (Chair), Councillors, Doreen Dickinson, Anthony Gee, Miss Margaret Iddon, Marion Lowe and Kenneth Ball

**Officers Present:** John Lechmere (Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment) and Gordon Bankes

**Also in attendance:** Paul Lusk (Partners in Charge)

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Keith Iddon and Daniel Gee.

In the absence of the Chair of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and with the consent of those Members present, Councillor A Lowe assumed the Chair of the meeting.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest by any of the Councillors on any of the agenda items.

## **3. NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING: SCRUTINY INQUIRY**

The Chair reminded the Members that the third session of the Sub-Group had been convened to interview further witnesses selected to assist the on-going inquiry into neighbourhood working.

The Chair introduced and welcomed the following persons invited to the meeting:

- Ian Mcarthur – Groundwork
- Steve Murfitt – Clayton Brook Together
- Darren Cranshaw – Chairman of Brindle Parish Council (Parish Council Representative)
- John Lechmere – Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment

The Chair advised the invited guests and the Sub-Group Members of the meeting to obtain their responses to a number of prepared questions aimed at seeking their views on what approaches to neighbourhood working should we consider? The views of each of the guests in reply to the following questions are summarised below:

### **Question 1**

**How do you think we should define a 'neighbourhood' for the purposes of our inquiry?  
(How small/how large? Are these different sides for different purposes?)**

John Lechmere

Should have their own identification.

Groups of residents, environmental problems, health problems, small group of houses.

We already have SWITCH and Clayton Brook Together.

Ian McArthur

These are self-defining areas. The area for Groundwork tends to be self-defining. Groundwork address wider geographic areas, with youth problems, crime and disorder. Small is best and looking at what we do. Build upon a better community understanding. Build 'social capital'.

Interaction around school catchment areas. Schools act as a hub for the community eg Chicago in USA based around schools.

Steve Murfitt

Start with a small neighbourhood, bringing in schools. Identify local issues with information obtained from the children. Nurture a local community/neighbourhood and empower people to take responsibilities.

Darren Cranshaw

A parished area would be the most logical area to start. No size fits all, but use of Parish Council area which have some unique issues.

## **Question 2**

**Would you say you are now involved in neighbourhood working?  
(In what why? Which agencies/partners are involved?)**

Steve Murfitt

Involved in neighbourhood working by accident. Use of primary school and brought out into the community. Issues such as drugs, drink and anti-social behaviour.

Working with the Police and Health Authorities on these issues. Worked with PACT. Identified issues and attempted to resolve the issue on the same day. Branched out into Clayton Brook Together for all activities.

PACT was working well in Clayton Brook and now into its third year. First year a lot of issues. Makes it as representative as possible. A junior PACT formulated with a fair success. Raising awareness on a number of issues.

Darren Cranshaw

Work done through the Parish Plan with engaging with the local people. Have struggled with partnership working at different levels. Organisations are not geared up to this. This can be improved.

John Lechmere

Currently services are not designed around Neighbourhood Working. Do not provide bespoke services in the area.

Ian McArthur

Circulated a report prepared by Wigan and Chorley Groundwork on the update for January 2007 on the Chorley projects.

Members raised the issue of the impact of Neighbourhood Wardens. Steve Murfitt pointed out that any loss would impact on the Clayton area.

### **Question 3**

**What are the benefits we should especially aim to achieve by neighbourhood working?  
(What are the priorities for local residents?)**

Darren Cranshaw

People should be able to see a visible difference of improvement. Concentrate on a common purpose. In Brindle there would be more joined up working with all agencies/partners.

Ian McArthur

There will be more understanding in the community and working within the community. At Groundwork there are community link officers that facilitate working. Mention made of active citizenship outside the formal Council structure.

Steve Murfitt

Improved quality of life in the community. Street surgery can be intimidating so must have a less formal way of engaging with the community.

John Lechmere

Want to improve and respond to services. Improvement to feedback to people/community. People want to feel they are being noticed. Employment of staff and the need to feel they have made a difference to the community. Improvement to staff satisfaction.

The Chair raised the issue of raising false hopes, with the key being customer service. If we cannot do a particular task the community must be given the reason why it cannot be done.

The Sub-Group debated the diversity of some of the areas within Chorley, particularly the comparison between the Parishes of Brindle and Clayton. In areas like Clayton Brook attitudes have changed with improvements made to community engagement. Clayton Brook has vastly improved compared with around 15 years ago when there was a problem with a small minority of drug dealing and several empty properties in the area.

### **Question 4**

**How should residents and local groups be involved?  
(At what level do they wish to be involved? Do they want to be involved in making decisions or providing services. How?)**

Darren Cranshaw

Make it as easy as possible and do something to capture peoples imagination eg PACT meetings, community meetings.

Use of the Parish Plan in local schools and asking what they want the community to be like in 20 years.

Suggestion of promoting use of existing networks, and existing meetings in the areas. Make use of local knowledge.

Steve Murfitt

Get people involved in any function/event in the area. Go to them rather than the opposite.

Chair pointed out the need to make more effective use and involvement of residents. Not just adding a meeting but expansion of street surgery concept. Going out with an opportunity of solving problems.

A problem exists in Clayton with the invisible boundary of the A6.

Ian Mcarthur

Community Link Officers could do this, as done by Groundwork. Work around Community Wardens and active citizenship.

Gave an example of 3 projects showing evidence of improvement. A physical difference had been achieved. Potential community leaders come to the surface.

**Question 5 What part should elected members of the District Council play? (For example: making decisions, providing leadership, supporting the local community)**

Ian Mcarthur

Councillors role is to facilitate the delivery of services. They should engage and participate in the community and make it easier to make progress. The key role is to facilitate.

Steve Murfitt

Councillors should be taking an active role in the community and to those they represent. Some say that they never see their Councillor. They need to be present at community meetings.

John Lechmere

Referred to the issue of funding and providing a link between the Borough Council and Parish Council level. Helping to provide opportunities and deliver services.

Some Councils could have a budget like some local authorities, with the empowerment of Councillors to carry out projects.

They should assist in the devolvement of services to a local level.

**Question 6**

**How would you like to see neighbourhoods working in Chorley?**

Darren Cranshaw

Find out what they want in the community. Look at best practice. They use parish lengthsman. Engagement within the community with consultation within the community.

Steve Murfitt

Establish what the people want and an issue that will impact on quality of life in the community.

Ian Macarthur

Work more closely with Groundwork. Groundwork makes an impact like no other organisation. Good projects in the area.

John Lechmere

Build on what we have.

Paul Lusk to Darren Cranshaw and Steve Murfitt

Would the Parish Councils in Chorley like to have more power in their neighbourhood.

In response it was pointed out that each Parish Council is different. Would welcome more authority to deliver on promises. People will be able to see the results quicker.

#### **4. REVIEW OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

At the conclusion of the 'question and answer' session, the Chair thanked each of the invited guests for their attendance and contribution to the debate. The responses and viewpoints would be taken into consideration when the final report and recommendations of the Sub-Group were being compiled.

Chair