

Report of	Meeting	Date
Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods (Introduced by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods)	Executive Cabinet	12 November 2009

## PROGRESS AND PROPOSAL REPORT NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION PLANS

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To provide an update on the progress, with associated proposals, for Neighbourhood Working and the Neighbourhood Action Plans.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. To note progress and achievements to date on the establishment of Neighbourhood Working, the implementation of the Neighbourhood Action Plans and with associated allocations of pump-prime budget.
3. To adopt the proposals for the continued development of Neighbourhood Working.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

4. A number of desired outcomes of neighbourhood working included the establishment of a neighbourhood team approach; enhancing the quality of life of residents; building capacity and support for the neighbourhood; and, creating confidence in local service providers.
5. An approach has been developed and delivered against these desired outcomes which has included capacity building involving officers, elected members and partners; established a process to consult and ensure issues for action are reflective of local priorities; developed, and commenced implementation of, seven Neighbourhood Action Plans to focus attention and 'pump-prime' funding; and, a restructure of the Neighbourhoods Directorate to ensure resources are targeted appropriately.
6. An element of added value is now evident as progress on neighbourhood working continues. Achievements include improved relationships and communications with partners and other agencies and the establishment of 'virtual' neighbourhood teams. There is similarly a more structured and co-ordinated response to local issues and external funding has been secured for projects contained within the action plans – which wouldn't necessarily have been possible without the neighbourhood working approach being in place.

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

### (If the recommendations are accepted)

7. As 2009 – 2010 is the first full year of the implementation of the new neighbourhood working process, all partner organisations have been part of a learning curve that is proving to be challenging but very beneficial. New relationships and partnerships have developed, issues and concerns have been highlighted, and joint solutions promoted. All partners, including residents, have been able to consider each other's systems and procedures and clarify how things actually work, at a very local level. It is important to recognise that we are looking at progress made within only the first seven months a 12 month project to deliver on the Neighbourhood Action Plans.
8. In accordance with the content of the December 2007 Executive Cabinet Report, "Neighbourhood Working ...should be considered a journey, not a destination".

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

9. Other models of neighbourhood working have been tried and tested, including Area and Community Forums, but it is understood, through positive participation, that the current model appears to be a 'closer fit' for Chorley's purpose and demographic profile.
10. Neighbourhood management normally brings external funding sources with it. Chorley has not been, is not able, to secure such funding and the approach has to be based around partnership and collaboration and not funded structure.
11. Neighbourhood working and the action plans illustrate how we have responded to lessons learnt and which will be fundamental to our Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), providing evidence of how we implement, in partnership, our duty to involve and engage our communities.
12. Discontinuing the neighbourhood working journey will jeopardise any further development of community engagement and partnership working with residents, impinging upon our community leadership role.

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 13 This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region		Develop local solutions to climate change.	√
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances	√	Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	√
Involving people in their communities	√	Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	√

## **BACKGROUND**

14. The Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel undertook an extensive inquiry into Neighbourhood Working. An initial report of the findings and recommendations were accepted by Executive Cabinet on 6 December 2007. A further report outlining these recommendations, details of resources allocated for delivery and an action plan with milestones for implementation was presented by the Chief Executive and approved by Executive Cabinet on 14 February 2008.
15. The challenge was to develop a process to produce an action plan for each of the 7 Neighbourhood Areas, covering the period 2009/10, and to provide a rationale for the allocation of £150,000 of 'pump-prime' budget for neighbourhood working.
16. A monitoring report on these recommendations was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 September 2009.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING – IMPROVING NEIGHBOURHOODS IN CHORLEY**

17. PREPARING FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING - February to December 2008:
  - Seven Neighbourhood Areas were designated, including all parts of the Borough, including five rural/semi-rural Areas and two town centre/urban Areas.
  - A Neighbourhood Co-ordinator and two additional Neighbourhood Officers were appointed, and the existing Community Development Officer post was transferred into the Neighbourhoods Directorate.
  - A central partnership forum was established to monitor the development of Neighbourhood Working.
  - Draft profiles of each Neighbourhood Area were developed through a process of local consultation and information sharing that included 14 informal drop-in sessions for local residents and 20 Ward Walks with Council Members.
  - The first versions of the Neighbourhood Profiles were in use by the 7 Neighbourhood Teams set up to deliver the agreed outcomes of Neighbourhood Working. The Teams held their inaugural meetings in December 2008, identifying a number of partnership projects.
  - Three "Meet the Neighbourhood Teams" sessions were organised for Chorley Council Members and Parish Clerks in December 2008.
  - A staffing restructure in support of Neighbourhood Working was completed within the Neighbourhoods Directorate.
18. DEVELOPING NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING - January to October 2009:
  - A second full-time Community Development Officer was appointed.
  - Four Parish Council drop in sessions were organised with a view to development of the Neighbourhood Action Plans in March 2009.
  - An Elected Members' Tour of Chorley Borough took place in March 2009, which co-in sided with the production of the first draft of Neighbourhood Action Plans.

- Continued to build on working relationships with Parish and Town Councils via the Borough Parish Liaison Committee and Information Exchange sessions, with Chorley Partnership and its thematic groups, and with the existing Target Area Partnerships.
- The 7 Neighbourhood Teams met again in March 2009, each creating a task list for action by a range of partner agency representatives.
- A series of Neighbourhood Action Plan launch events were organised at 11 different venues (including 5 Rural Days of Action) during April and May 2009.
- The launch activities were promoted through the Chorley Guardian and Citizen on 22 April, via the Council website, posters and fliers, and seven Neighbourhood Area web pages were developed on the Council's website [www.chorley.gov.uk/neighbourhoods](http://www.chorley.gov.uk/neighbourhoods)
- A further round of 6 informal drop-in sessions for residents took place between May and July and postal contact was made with residents in two smaller Parishes during September 2009, at the suggestion of residents attending earlier drop in sessions.

#### 19. DELIVERING ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION PLANS 2009 - 2010

- Each Neighbourhood Area has its own Neighbourhood Action Plan, containing a series of projects with details of partner involvement, timescales and desired outcomes. The projects were developed in response to Ward Walks, Parish Plans, to residents' drop-in sessions and community meetings.
- The Neighbourhood Action Plans aim to reflect and address the diverse needs and aspirations of what are relatively large neighbourhood areas by focusing on the smaller "neighbourhoods" within.
- It may be that it is not possible to resolve some of the projects within this year, or within the next few years. It may that an agreement is reached to put on hold or relinquish some projects. However, even in those instances, progress can be made by ensuring that an informed decision is made in partnership, and communicated effectively. Fully understanding the processes and constraints in play locally can be highly empowering for communities, and is less likely to lead to dissatisfaction.
- Neighbourhood Working is subject to the Council's Project Management systems and is currently set at "green".
- During August and September 2009, Ward Members were invited to sign up to the Neighbourhood Action Plan for their area, including progress reports on specific projects, and to agree proposals for allocation of the 'pump-prime' budget agreed for 2009/10.

#### NEIGHBOURHOOD PROJECTS - PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES

20. There are a total of 117 projects contained within the 7 Neighbourhood Action Plans. As of this date, work has already commenced on delivery of 81% of these projects.

#### RESOURCES

21. From the initial and total budget of £250,000 allocated to Neighbourhood Working, £100,000 has been used to establish new mainstream posts to support the delivery, development and implementation of neighbourhood working. The remaining

£150,000 has been designated as a 'pump-prime' fund to support delivery of the first year's projects.

22. Proposals agreed by Ward Members in each Neighbourhood Area reflect that:

- Not all projects are dependent on budget provision to progress.
- Some works identified by Members through Ward Walks and other neighbourhood initiatives have already been carried out.
- Some projects have already been funded externally.
- Some projects could potentially attract match funding, either from other statutory or private partners, or from external funding pots accessible to VCF sector partners. In these cases, a tariff of potential outcomes has been identified.
- Community skip days/clean up days are popular, and a Borough-wide budget allocation for these has been proposed. However, for effectiveness and best value, these initiatives ideally need to link with other neighbourhood and partnership activities, and we are encouraging this joint approach.
- Whilst Neighbourhood Working is entirely dependent upon partnership working, it is nevertheless important that the Council's own contribution is recognised. Part of the 'pump-prime' budget has therefore been allocated to ensuring that activities and projects are promoted, leaving an identifiable legacy within each Neighbourhood Area.

23. As we are still in the relatively early stages of delivering on the Neighbourhood Action Plan projects, estimated costs have been used, as the projects are shaped and led by local communities, precluding hard and fast decisions on our part. A priority for Neighbourhood Working is to deliver projects that are owned and valued by the communities within that neighbourhood.

#### REVIEW OF 2009 – 2010 NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION PLANS

24. As part of the invitation to sign up to their Neighbourhood Action Plan and budget allocation, Council Members received a half-year progress report on local projects.

25. Should we identify problems in delivery of any projects within the Neighbourhood Action Plans during the second half of the year, we will reconvene with the Council Members for that Neighbourhood Area, re-assess the project and any budget allocation, and agree a way forward.

26. The entire Neighbourhood Working 'pump-prime' budget must be utilised by the end of March 2010. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods will receive a monthly progress report from November 2009 to March 2010. It is helpful to note at this stage that additional funding has been secured through creating 'leverage' opportunities through the 'pump-prime' resource. In addition, other agencies have been able to target financial resources to deliver against actions contained within the Neighbourhood Action Plans. An example specifically relates to the highways improvement works, funded by Lancashire County Council and approved through Lancashire Locals.

27. Promotional work will be carried out as projects reach a stage where tangible results can be celebrated and communicated.

## THE WAY FORWARD 2010 – 2011

28. It has already been recognised that outcomes from this process has included an element of learning and how we may wish to do things differently going forward. During the course of delivering Neighbourhood Working, it has become apparent that several large projects could potentially develop still further into 2010/11 and there may be a requirement for further external funding to be achieved in partnership.
29. The experience of Neighbourhood Working during 2009-2010 has facilitated closer partnership working and highlighted the potential to achieve aspirations at a very local level. It may be prudent to exploit this partnership working further, to agree upon shared values and competencies with partners at the local operational delivery level.
30. The Neighbourhood Tours, Parish Plans, community development activities and residents' drop-in sessions have already highlighted a wide range of projects that could be included in draft Neighbourhood Action Plans for consideration during 2010/11.
31. A lesson learned from our first year of neighbourhood working is that delivery on more than 117 widely differing projects in a 12 month period is an extreme challenge, albeit a very useful one in identifying and developing potential partnerships. Accordingly, we propose that the 2010/11 Neighbourhood Action Plans might each contain fewer projects that have a clear partnership commitment from the outset.
32. During December 2009 and January 2010 Council Members and local statutory, voluntary, community and faith sector partners will be invited to comment on their experiences of neighbourhood working so far, and submit ideas for partnership projects for 2010/11.
33. Draft Neighbourhood Action Plans will be presented to Council Members for discussion in February 2010, with a report submitted to Executive Cabinet in March 2010.
34. An important point to note is that we will have considerably less budgetary resources allocated to neighbourhood working projects during 2010/11. With this in mind, much of the work carried out during the 2009/10 has focused on increasing local capacity to both pool existing resources more effectively, and to attract external funding where possible. It is imperative that we continue to support and encourage community groups to access such funding.
35. In summary, it is proposed that the following actions be a focus for developing Neighbourhood Working in the future
  - Continue to explore further opportunities for external funding to be achieved in partnership and via community groups
  - Develop shared values and competencies with partners
  - Establish realistic numbers of projects for inclusion in future Neighbourhood Action Plans
  - Consult with Members, partners, voluntary, community and faith sector partners on future partnership projects

## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

36. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Corporate Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	√

ISHBEL MURRAY  
CORPORATE DIRECTOR (NEIGHBOURHOODS)

There are no background papers to this report.

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