

O & S Task Group - Review of Neighbourhood Working

1. Introduction

Neighbourhood working was launched in Chorley following a report to Executive Cabinet on the 14 February 2008 following an Overview and Scrutiny review into neighbourhood working undertaken during 2007.

The recommendations made by that review were accepted at the time and implemented as follows:

- The establishment of neighbourhood teams.
- Support for working with existing neighbourhood based groups.
- A funding mechanism to support local initiatives.
- The reinforcement of the role of the ward Councillor in neighbourhoods
- Support for relatively deprived and poorly organised neighbourhoods.

In practical terms and for several years this resulted in the development of neighbourhood profiles which were designed to assist in understanding the issues within neighbourhoods as diverse as health, housing, deprivation indices and the like as well as attempting to map service provision within those areas.

Each year Members would undertake an organised tour of their neighbourhood area with Council officers accompanied by other agency officers such as LCC and housing providers.

The purpose of the tour was to identify issues that Members felt should be addressed, however little reference to the neighbourhood profiles was made and the issues determined for resolution predominantly related to street scene and infrastructure matters.

2. Neighbourhood Working Review

In 2012 a review of the neighbourhood working model was instigated by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and culminated in a report to Executive Cabinet on 22 November 2012 which resulted in the following changes to neighbourhood working:

- a. The definition of neighbourhood working was approved as ***“Working with our partners to improve the quality of life, health and wellbeing of all our citizens and to improve the environment of the neighbourhoods in which they live”***.
- b. Approval was granted to redraw the boundaries of the neighbourhood areas, increasing the number of areas from seven to eight.
- c. It was agreed to improve the level of representation at the twice yearly round of neighbourhood area meetings to include County Council Member representation and Parish Council Member representation. In addition officers from other agencies could be included at the desire of the particular neighbourhood area meeting.
- d. A process was established which encouraged each neighbourhood area to identify three priorities for delivery in a financial year which would be costed and subject to Executive Cabinet agreement as part of the annual budget setting process.

APPENDIX 1

A set of 'rules' for the conduct of neighbourhood meetings were agreed which essentially provide for the group to select a chair person and for decisions to be made by consensus rather than introducing a voting system.

Neighbourhood group chair responsibilities were proposed by the Council Leader and sent to the then chairs for consideration.

- Chair the twice yearly neighbourhood area meetings (currently January and June each year).
- Liaise with lead officers on behalf of the neighbourhood group to scope predetermined neighbourhood priorities.
- Convene ad hoc meetings of the group to reach consensus on the actions necessary to deliver priorities.
- Determine with lead officers the proposed cost of delivering each neighbourhood priority including any on-going recurrent costs.
- Act as the single point of contact for the neighbourhood area group for officers and group members alike.

In addition the review provided guidance on the areas of work that neighbourhood priorities could cover.

<u>INCLUDED</u>	<u>EXCLUDED</u>
Additional works and schemes to improve areas of open public space over and above business as usual work	Issues that are the sole responsibility of another agency and the Councils only input would be as a lobby.
Work and projects that support the formation of new community groups or sustain existing ones	Borough wide issues that are subject to existing partnership arrangements e.g. health, community safety
Leading or supporting community events that meet the principles and definition of neighbourhood working	Activities which are universally delivered across the borough
Activities and work that promote community cohesion such as initiatives that integrate demographic groups into the life of the community. E.g. a junior citizen's scheme.	

3. Integrating Neighbourhood Working

Up until 2012 it is fair to say that neighbourhood working had been seen as a stand-alone service or an extension of community development work at best. It was therefore essential that, in line with the definition agreed above, neighbourhood working starts to transcend all Council service delivery and integrate with Council and partner services.

The restructure of the Health Environment and Neighbourhoods Team, undertaken earlier this year has established a core service to start the process of embedding a neighbourhood working culture across all service areas.

It is therefore vital that neighbourhood working is not seen only in the context of delivery a set of specific project type priorities or as a community development programme but as a means of establishing local need and, where practicable, putting solutions in place at a local level that meet those needs.

To that end the following work streams are being progressed with a view to providing a fully neighbourhood focussed service

Time Credits – seeking to embed time credits within all Council service areas to ensure volunteering opportunities are maximised. We are continuing to encourage new and existing community groups to use time credits as a means of supporting their work. We are extending the ‘time out’ opportunities to ensure a diverse range of activities and events are available as a time-credit spend opportunity.

HEN Restructure – the HEN restructure is now established and teams are working to ensure services are delivered with a neighbourhood focus. The neighbourhood area map is recognised and used to establish teams who work in a given neighbourhood locality offering a range of public protection and neighbourhood services. We are now more closely engaged with street scene colleagues to ensure this neighbourhood focus is integrated across those service areas.

Developing Neighbourhood Action Plans – we have started a pilot process of developing meaningful neighbourhood action plans that include and engage with a number of key service provider partners such as social landlords, County colleagues and health service providers. This will ensure that work in neighbourhood areas is coordinated with the efficient use of scarce resources. It is anticipated that future neighbourhood priorities will form part of these action plans.

4. Further Considerations

As part of this Overview and Scrutiny review into neighbourhood working Members may wish to consider the following:

- Is the definition of neighbourhood working still appropriate?
- Is the current representation at meetings sufficient?
- Are the priorities being identified through the neighbourhood working process meeting the overall needs of neighbourhoods?
- Is there scope for Members to take a greater role in neighbourhood working?
- Review the frequency of meetings?
- Does the role of the Chair need amending?
- Can the way we monitor and report on delivery be improved and if so the most efficient way we can do it?