

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment	Presented at Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel	16 July 2007

NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING SCRUTINY INQUIRY POSITION STATEMENT

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny panel has been undertaking an inquiry into Neighbourhood Working and has a final hearing to undertake.

So far we have:

Commissioned a report from a special advisor [***The scope and prospects for neighbourhood working in Chorley - Partners in Change***].

This report posed a number of questions which the Scrutiny panel accepted as the basis for continuing the inquiry-obtaining the answers to these questions was the key output of the inquiry.

Held a number of inquiry hearings

Interviewed and questioned witnesses from Partners, Community Organisations, Parish Councils, Active Citizens, other Local Authorities and third sector organisations.

Held a listening day at the St. Lawrence's centre

Undertaken one site visit to the Great Lever Neighbourhood Management Area in Bolton

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2. The view has been taken, and this answers one of the key questions posed by the inquiry, that we would want to closely align the aims and objectives of Neighbourhood Working with the Borough's Community Strategy. We do need to resolve the issue of – **“What is the relationship between Neighbourhood Management, its governance structures and Boards, and the Local Strategic Partnership”**.

RISK ISSUES

3. The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy		Information	
Reputation	✓	Regulatory/Legal	
Financial		Operational	✓
People	✓	Other	

4. We have heard that neighbourhood management is a potential delivery mechanism for both improving service delivery and satisfaction improvement in a number of priority areas:

Improving equality of opportunity and life chances.

Involving people in their communities.

Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live.

EVIDENCE HEARD BY THE INQUIRY

5. The Scrutiny Inquiry has heard evidence that:

- Chorley has existing strengths in neighbourhood representation, especially through the 3 Target Area Partnerships [PAICE, SWITCH and Clayton Brook Together] and the 23 Parish Councils. The scrutiny panel may want to build on these existing strengths and assets.
- Key front line services in particular police; streetscene, leisure and housing report a high degree of existing commitment to neighbourhood working. They co-operate well together. Three of these services already have designated neighbourhood workers. The fourth (leisure) is ready and able to move in this direction. These services report experience and ability in attracting other partners – for example, social services, education – as needed to look at particular pieces of work (e.g. supporting vulnerable families). A proposal based on existing strengths and familiarity with joint working is likely to be less costly and more sustainable than alternatives trying to bring together services and personnel without this background. The scrutiny Inquiry has often heard about the need to work from what exists and not impose additional demands and structures.
- These services have front line responsibility for issues that most concern residents – crime, anti social behaviour, youth provision, environment and parking.
- The 3 Target Area Partnerships and the Parish Councils will be reluctant to accept new commitments that require additional meetings or other demands on time. In most cases it would not be practical or desirable to try to provide a dedicated neighbourhood management service for each one. We have also heard that many witnesses feel the need for a service that is able to respond to more local groups. This suggests a need for a solution that is flexible and responsive to opportunities to meet with neighbourhood representatives on their own terms without demanding that people form new bodies structured to the convenience of professional management rather than to that of volunteers.
- We have heard of the need also to link with Community Forums, or any community engagement structure that may replace them, without sacrificing the ability to empower groups at a more localised level. Again this points to a need for flexibility.
- The 3 Target Area Partnerships report significant frustration with the existing level of support in respect of community development, communications and administration.
- We have heard that the Parish Councils do not feel they have a ‘champion’ in the district council in the way that the Target Area Partnerships do. They felt that there may be a risk of alienating these existing structures if a solution is produced that appears to make additional demands on the limited time and resources of volunteers and/or to marginalise and diminish the contribution these bodies make. There is little will or capacity to generate new structures. These considerations point to a solution that reassures these bodies and puts those that wish to participate at the heart of neighbourhood working.
- The 3 Target Area Partnerships and some (but not most) parish councils are interested in engaging positively with an extension of neighbourhood working. Some residents groups are also interested but these link with the Target Area Partnerships or Parish Council structures. We heard that solutions need to avoid making consistent demands on all to engage in a similar way. The intention is to be flexible, responsive and accommodating.

- We heard that there are many uncertainties around the short term future of the environment affecting neighbourhood working – thinking here in particular of the outcome of the Lancashire pilot in Clayton Brook and the wider consultation on Lancashire’s neighbourhood empowerment policy; and the new experience of Community Forums. Again this supports a solution that is flexible and responsive. Neighbourhood working, most felt, should be considered a journey, not a destination.
- The scrutiny panel has heard of the importance of channels of communication able to ‘cascade’ both up and down so that strategic priorities and information support neighbourhood empowerment, which can operate at the smallest practical scale.
- We heard also views about resourcing and sustainability should contain additional costs at sustainable levels. Any neighbourhood working proposal must however recognise and provide for costs for community development and communications.
- At Bolton we heard about the successes of one of the Pathfinder areas, how this had delivered measurable improvements in satisfaction and achieved some of its original aims of reducing relative deprivation.
- We also heard at Bolton about the critical importance of the make up of the responsible board and the recruitment and appointment of active community members- we were impressed by their appointment and selection process for community members and the way this had developed the effectiveness of neighbourhood management.
- We also heard about, and saw practical examples of what is widely reported in the literature, which is the community confidence building aspects of neighbourhood management.

MODELS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING

6. Drawing on this evidence it might be useful to consider three models of Neighbourhood Management which might be appropriate for Chorley. They are not mutually exclusive and the Scrutiny panel itself will need to make a decision about whether, and what recommendations to make to Executive Cabinet. Members may want to make recommendations which adopt elements of each.

Option 1

Area based approach

This is closest to the established Pathfinder model such as that looked at by the Scrutiny panel in Bolton.

In its purest form it implies a comprehensive devolved management covering a wide range of policy areas and service delivery programmes. However if, for reasons of practicality and affordability, we confine its constituency of concern to those issues that are known to deliver safe strong neighbourhoods then we have:

- **Quality of life:** those things which make somewhere a good place to live
- **Support for the neighbourhood:** being involved and proud to live in a neighbourhood
- **Confidence in local service providers:** knowing problems will be addressed
- **Feelings of safety outside the home at night:** having the confidence to be outside the home day or night

This model would see a large-scale reorganisation of the Council’s, and other partners’ services to area-based teams. These teams would be accountable to a management board with representation including all the ward Councillors in the neighbourhood but essential is a majority of community board members. The Chair would usually be a ward councillor but this is not essential, but useful in a power brokering capacity.

These may be jointly funded teams including staff from the Borough Council, Police, Primary Care Trust, housing providers, education and skills and voluntary and community

organisations. In Chorley the nearest example we have of this is the Multi Agency Problem Solving [MAPS] team in SNED, which currently operates on a Borough wide basis.

They would probably need a focus or base in the locality and there would need to be either ring fenced budgets or a wholesale devolution of mainstream budgets with appropriate governance structures.

Clearly this option would require very considerable commitment from the partners and a mind shift towards community action and priorities. I think it is fair to observe that this model, at least in terms of funding strategy, used in Great Lever, has been partly set aside and budgets effectively mainstreamed back to the position that existed before the Pathfinder initiation.

Taking an arbitrary size of Neighbourhood Management area as 10,000 population then the Pathfinder experience demonstrates an additional cost per area of c£200k. With 10 Neighbourhood Management areas in Chorley this equates to an overall cost of £2M per year.

These costs could be reduced by a targeted approach however at 3 or 4 target areas based on deprivation indices and the evidence which exists does show that this approach is quite successful at dealing with issues of multiple deprivation, lifting areas out of deprivation, engaging with serious partners, developing a defined identity for the neighbourhood and “bending the spend” in relation to mainstream funding.

Adopting a targeted approach such as this would require area selection criteria to be developed based on current relative deprivation indices or other targeted outcomes.

Characteristically each neighbourhood would have a neighbourhood management team with dedicated resources of:

Neighbourhood manager
Administrative support
Community development worker
Community care-taking team
Elements from: housing and health workers
Local base in the area
Small “credit” projects budget
Dedicated Policing
Fire and Rescue resource

Option 2

Thematic approach

In this approach the effort would be concentrated on a particular theme, or related group of themes of community concern.

Implicit in this approach is a Borough-wide coverage with similar opportunities, though not necessarily equality of effort, in each neighbourhood.

A repeated feature of the Scrutiny hearings in Chorley was an enthusiasm for this type of approach based on a basket of community concerns such as:

Local environmental quality
Crime and the fear of crime
Open space management

And the related issues of:

Improving the quality and coordination of local services Provision of youth opportunities

For Chorley this approach has certain attractions:

- It builds on existing structures such as MATAAC, Neighbourhood Policing and the close and effective working of the Community Safety Partnership [Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership]
- It complements the work already done in restructuring the management of environment, streetscene and crime and disorder operations.
- It reduces a great deal of risk [assuming risk reduction is a good thing!] because these objectives are easier to deliver and buy-in more easily obtained when people understand and relate to the objectives and outcomes. It has features akin to another model of neighbourhood working which relies on a "project" based approach.
- It is based on existing neighbourhood boundaries, which are at least partly established mostly on "natural" neighbourhoods

It does have drawbacks in its limited ambition and scope although it is not unreasonable to think that such an approach would establish a sound foundation for gradual expansions of scope as community confidence grew and communities developed.

For this approach to work I would propose that the following structures and arrangements be put in place:

The neighbourhood management areas be based on Policing districts which are:

[Note-all Lancashire Policing area names]

1. Clayton and Whittle
2. Wheelton rural 1,2 and 3
3. Adlington
4. Coppull
5. Coppull rural
6. Chorley north east and east
7. Euxton, Astley Village, Chorley north west and town centre
8. Chorley south east, south west and Liptrott

The core of the proposal is for "**Neighbourhood Teams**" [NTs] to be formed for delivering key front-line services on a neighbourhood basis. These will be based on those services that now have a commitment to working together and managing services on a neighbourhood basis.

This core membership will comprise:

- Police (Community beat managers)
- Streetscene (neighbourhood officers)
- Leisure (generic youth, sport and arts workers)
- Social housing (where applicable – neighbourhood officers from CCH and PfP)

Each team requires a nominated Leader and we need to establish a mechanism for deciding this.

The teams will be encouraged to involve other services either on an ad hoc project basis or by recruitment over the longer term. Team members must be empowered to make decisions on local service provision. One of the team members will be designated as a team leader

NTs may in time identify a local base or 'hub' where they can establish a local office presence. This could be a school, community/leisure centre or similar facility. However this is not essential to the concept. In some cases in Chorley this already exists or could be easily developed.

Community engagement

Each NT will have a commitment to report to its local community with a "Management Board" of ward councillors and a community representative providing community administrative oversight to ensure that another tier of local governance does not impose additional burdens. In this option it is a requirement that NTs report periodically to each Parish or Town Council in its area and keep Target Area Partnerships and organisations representing local opinion and concern informed of what is going on. In the case of two of the TAPs, these could, themselves, undertake the role of community oversight.

In the longer term the Management Board may develop a more robust form of accountability as Parishes and other groups become more confident in its ability to make decisions and are prepared to delegate attendance.

Evidence from Bolton indicates the need to get both the make up and the membership of this board right.

Effective communication chains are essential to this proposal. The Scrutiny inquiry heard repeatedly that, whilst all witnesses considered communication and feedback essential, traditional, or additional, communication methods would exert a very strong negative influence

This might mean that having effective feedback mechanisms to board members, groups and active citizens using effective mobile working technology is a requirement of this option. SNED has a project underway which could be adapted to this objective, if required.

Additionally NTs will respond to local street groups, action groups etc. These will normally be short-life groups stimulated by local concern and/or by the NT itself. Where groups emerge with a longer-term representative function then the NT will co-opt a representative onto the management board for the life of the project

NTs will be expected to have the ability to attend meetings, give basic support to groups in terms of understanding and influencing NTs services and other services where NTs can make links, and identify needs and opportunities to develop new initiatives to empower neighbourhoods.

An expanded remit for the Police and Community Together [PACT] meetings is proposed as the face-to-face means of community engagement with citizens. Essentially these will become Multi Agency Neighbourhood Task Related Action Planning Sessions [MANTRAPS]

It can be seen that there is not an equality of resource between these 8 neighbourhoods and either Neighbourhood Officers or Leisure Officers and this needs to be resolved.

This option would also require an additional resource to collate and analyse neighbourhood intelligence and data sets, which help with community feedback, which I consider essential to maintain validity.

Characteristically whilst each neighbourhood would have a responsible team this resource would be accountable locally but coordinated from the centre which requires the following total resource for Chorley:

Neighbourhood Coordinator/Analyst at the centre
8 Neighbourhood Officers [2 more than we have]

Nominated generic leisure officer for each neighbourhood
Neighbourhood Policing team
Registered Social Landlord Neighbourhood Officer
Element of “credit” spending allocated at the neighbourhood level*

* There are several mechanisms such as:

- A small sum [£500-£1000] of revenue or capital allocated to each ward councillor which must be spent on approved outcomes agreed by the Neighbourhood Management Board-this would encourage pooling and cross neighbourhood working.
- A small project fund established in each neighbourhood of say £3000, which was to be spent on, approved projects.

In both cases the Council would be the accountable body.

Option 3

Flexible approach

This approach is a development of Option 2 and includes all its features continuing to be delivered across the Borough with added features that address some of the current issues in Chorley. It seeks to build on the work of the Community Development Officer in Leisure Services, which the Scrutiny Panel heard, was highly valued.

This approach would deliver:

- Some intensive support for the existing Target Area Partnerships that are concentrated in relatively deprived areas. The purpose of this is to encourage and develop the TAPs community development role and would provide each TAP typically with a continuing level of “light touch” support consisting of:
 1. Guaranteed 50 days a year of facilitation by a Community Development worker, essentially someone who is “on their side” and to whom they can turn for ideas, support and when things go wrong. This worker would help the TAPs with action/locality planning, supporting them to review local needs and opportunities, map out their futures and reflect on past achievements and difficulties.
 2. A 3-year credit fund of a small amount of unrestricted [£5,000-£10,000] money to be spent over the three years.
 3. Networking experience by the organisation by the Council of an annual neighbourhood conference.
 4. A broker who can mediate with other organisations and agencies if required and unblock relationships with power holders such as the local authorities.
In this model I suggest that a Senior Council Officer act as the Champion for each TAP.
- An opportunity, subject to the agreement of the TAP and Anchor. for a “Community Anchor” organisation to agree to support each of the current TAPs.
There would need to be a coincidence of interest between the Anchor and the TAP but examples might be:

Target Area Partnership	Community Anchor
PAICE	Groundwork
SWITCH	Chorley Community Housing
Clayton Brook Together	Places for People

Development of the existing TAP model in Chorley

This option also includes a development role to extend this TAP model to other, less represented, areas of the Borough this is because:

- Reliance in all these models is placed on the utilisation of existing groups. This works well for most of the area and is what our witnesses said they preferred. However it runs the risk of leaving the non-parished areas outside the existing TAPs areas without community representation.

It is proposed that a community development function is supported which would:

- Take responsibility for identifying or developing cohesive community groups that would be prepared to undertake a neighbourhood management role in non-parished or TAP areas.
- Potentially these might include:

Existing resident or special interest groups
Voluntary or faith groups
Schools
Ad-hoc groups of active citizens
Short term project or "friends" groups.

One other developmental task remains which this model also supports:

- The identification of rural areas suffering from pockets of deprivation and isolation
- The identification of poverty and deprivation concentrated in micro-pockets with little prospect of the emergence of champions or without the right critical mass for large-scale interventions.

This flexibility option would require the following additional resources in addition to Option 2:

Extra qualified and experienced community development worker
A 3 year £15,000-£30,000 budget for the existing TAPs
A small 3-year development budget for the rural/micro areas of £3000 per year.

RECOMMENDATION

7. That this report be considered by members of the panel and form the basis for consideration of options at the final hearing of the panel.

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Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
The scope and prospects for neighbourhood working in Chorley-Partners in Change	November 2006	Neighbourhood Working	SNED-Bengal St. Depot
Neighbourhood Policing area map	June 2006		

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
John Lechmere/Paul Lusk	5720	11 July 2007	