Chorley Council

Report of	Meeting	Date
Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel Cllr Greg Morgan-Chair	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	12 November 2007

INTRODUCTION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING IN CHORLEY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.   The Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel has completed its inquiry into Neighbourhood Working and makes the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.   That Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider this report for recommendation to Executive Cabinet.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3.   The Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel has undertaken an inquiry into Neighbourhood Working.

This report makes recommendations for the adoption and implementation of a system of neighbourhood working for Chorley.

If adopted the system would provide for:

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.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)
(If the recommendations are accepted)

4.   People will feel and be involved in their communities.
Services will be improved by local influence and delivery.
Community confidence and cohesion will be built.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5.   The panel considered a wide range of neighbourhood working models as part of the inquiry process.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

6.   This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the central Lancashire sub region		Improved access to public services	✓
Improving equality of opportunity and life chance	✓	Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	✓
Involving People in their Communities	✓	Ensure Chorley is a performing Organisation	✓

BACKGROUND

7.   The Environment and Community Overview and scrutiny panel has: -

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 such as the Police service, Registered social landlords, Community Organisations, Parish Councils, Active Citizens, other Local Authorities, third sector organisations and private individuals.

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

Undertaken a site visit to the Great Lever Neighbourhood Management Area in Bolton where board members, councillors and officers were interviewed.

8.   The Scrutiny Inquiry has heard evidence that:

8.1   Chorley has existing strengths in neighbourhood representation, especially through the 23 Parish Councils and the 3 Target Area Partnerships [PAICE, SWITCH and Clayton Brook Together]. The scrutiny panel has determined that the Council should build on these existing strengths and assets.

8.2   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.

8.3   These services have front line responsibility for issues that most concern residents – crime, anti social behaviour, youth provision, environment and parking.

8.4   The 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.

8.5 We 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.

8.6 The 3 Target Area Partnerships despite being essentially a creation of the Community Safety Partnership have reported difficulties with support in respect of community development, communications and administration.

8.7 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 wishing to participate at the heart of neighbourhood working.

8.8 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 also heard that solutions need to avoid making consistent demands on all to engage in a similar way. The intention is to be flexible, response and accommodating.

8.9 There are uncertainties around the short term future of the environment affecting neighbourhood working – thinking here in particular of the outcome of the Lancashire Partnership - LAA Neighbourhood Dimension pilot in Clayton Brook* and any resultant commitment of the County Council to operate at small area level, 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, we felt, should be considered a journey, not a destination.

*[The Draft Final report of the Chorley Pilot available at 30 October broadly supports the proposals here and in particular highlights the contributions from:

The successful partnership working established through the safer and Stronger Communities block.
The Stronger and More Involved Communities theme group of the LSP
The production of local profiles and action plans monitored as part of the Local Strategic Partnership Performance Management framework
The strengthening and development of Community Development support for communities.]

8.10 Channels of communication which are able to 'cascade' both up and down so that strategic priorities and information support neighbourhood empowerment, which can operate at the smallest practical scale are important.

8.11 Resourcing and organisation should contain additional costs at sustainable levels. Any neighbourhood working proposal must however recognise and provide for costs for community development and communications.

8.12 At one of the Pathfinder areas [Bolton], how Neighbourhood Working had delivered measurable improvements in satisfaction and achieved some of its original aims of reducing relative deprivation.

8.13 At Bolton the make up of the responsible board and the recruitment and appointment of active community members was considered vital to success. Their appointment and selection process impressed us and we were shown how this had improved the effectiveness of neighbourhood management and created a more sustainable future.

8.14 As widely reported in the literature it is the community confidence building aspect of neighbourhood management that helps to ensure its success in the longer term.

MODEL FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING

9. Drawing on this evidence the panel considered three models of neighbourhood working for Chorley. We rejected one model as being too expensive and demanding of other resources.

We are proposing one model is adopted in Chorley and that we adopt the Area Teams approach but also include for an element of capacity building using community development techniques, which are well established in Chorley in the Target Area Partnerships. These would be cascaded into other areas on the same model.

9.1 **Neighbourhood Team 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 these community concerns:

9.1.1 **Quality of life:** those things that make somewhere a good place to live, such as working on and improving local environmental quality

9.1.2 **Support for the neighbourhood:** being involved and proud to live in a neighbourhood and being consulted about local issues and feeling that you can affect the use of resources.

9.1.3 **Confidence in local service providers:** knowing problems will be addressed, including prompt and effective community and individual feedback and accountability. Partners working together to built both community capacity and confidence in service providers.

9.1.4 **Feelings of safety outside the home at night:** having the confidence to be outside the home day or night so that greater use can be made of Greenspace and other community facilities.

9.2 An important related theme to much of the evidence was both perceived and real inter-generational tension manifest by:

- Mutual misunderstanding and intolerance

- Perceived problems from shared use of space

- A desire to develop diversionary activities for young people

- A desire from young people to make a contribution to their local environment and society.

9.3 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.

9.4 Each NT would prepare an annual action plan for its neighbourhood. The action plan would be evidence based and would accept reasonably felt community concerns as a valid evidence base so that the information advising the action plan would commonly be:

1) **Crime, disorder and environmental data analysed through MATAC**
2) **Super output area profiling data supplied by Chorley Council.**
3) **Existing Parish Plans.**
4) **Health inequalities data supplied by the Primary Care Trust.**
5) **Results of a facilitated action planning process managed through the Community forums or faith and community groups.**
6) **Local environmental, crime reduction and asset management proposals from local groups, active citizens and ward Councillors.**

9.5 It would be implemented by:

9.5.1 Building on existing structures such as MATAC, Neighbourhood Policing and the close and effective working of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

9.5.2 Progressing the work already done in restructuring the management of environment, streetscene and crime and disorder operations by both strengthening and deepening this integration by:

- Developing neighbourhood Streetscene strategies
- Undertaking a comprehensive asset register of public space and developing local care partnerships, and community management of suitable spaces.
- Further restructuring street care operations to concentrate on neighbourhood management satisfaction as well as asset management and maintenance.

9.5.3 Managing the risk of operational failure by concentrating initially on this basket of issues which are easier to deliver and buy-in more easily obtained because the evidence is that people understand and relate to the objectives and outcomes

9.5.4 Basing the organisation on existing neighbourhood boundaries, which are understood and at least partly based on "natural" neighbourhoods.

9.5.5 In this latter case Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be asked to finalise a recommendation from two potential footprints based on either;

- 8 neighbourhoods based on the Neighbourhood Policing areas **[Option 1 attached]** or
- 7 neighbourhoods based on the Lancashire County Council electoral divisions **[Option 2 attached]**

The panel were mindful of the view that quality of life issues were inextricably linked with not just relative inequality of opportunity but in some neighbourhoods pockets of real health inequality, which could respond to neighbourhood managed health interventions.
The panel felt that neighbourhood managed health interventions such as smoking cessation, alcohol harm reduction and the promotion of active lifestyles was the logical next progression for the neighbourhood teams, when augmented by health care resources.

9.6 **The panel recommend that the following structures and arrangements be put in place**:

The neighbourhood team core management be:

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

9.7 Each team will have a nominated leader who will be answerable to the management board of each neighbourhood.

9.8 The teams will 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 within agreed parameters.

9.9 Each NT will establish a communication hub or base in the neighbourhood. They will have freedom to do this and this hub may be for example a school, simply a notice board, a temporary mobile office, a community centre or village hall etc. These will not need to be staffed but there will be a commitment to have a presence in the same way that the PACT arrangements work. The panel heard that, whilst the community appreciated the effort devoted to the current PACT process a more involving process with more real time feedback would be appreciated.

9.10 The Panel has heard that reputable governance arrangements need to be established for the Neighbourhood Teams. A potential, but as yet undeveloped, role for the Local Strategic Partnership was an option but in the mobilisation phase it was envisaged that the teams would be accountable to the Neighbourhood Coordinator who would develop a more structured governance model in the first year of operation.

Community engagement

9.11 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.

9.12 This reporting will not be a formal written report but is designed to support and enhance the role of the local Ward Councillor. The panel felt that this type of informal oversight was more fruitful and engaging and more meaningful to the type of problems the NTs were likely to resolve.

9.13 NTs will also 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.

9.14 The community representative would be appointed following advertisement against a job description with the Council acting as the appointing body.

9.15 The panel agreed that effective communication chains are essential to this proposal. The panel also agreed that, traditional, or additional, communication methods would exert a very strong negative influence on success and recommend that feedback to board members, groups and active citizens using effective mobile working technology is a requirement.

9.16 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. An example of such interests might be the local Tree Warden, where one has been appointed.

9.17 NTs will be represented at 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.

9.18 PACT meetings will be expanded formally to include environmental and other issues and will continue to be the primary face-to-face means of community engagement with citizens.
PACT will become **Partners And Community Together.**

9.19 An additional resource to collate and analyse neighbourhood intelligence and data sets, which help with community feedback, will be provided based in the MATAC process.

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

Neighbourhood Coordinator/Analyst at the centre
8 Neighbourhood Officers
Generic leisure officer for each neighbourhood
Neighbourhood Policing team
Registered Social Landlord Neighbourhood Officer in areas where there are significant areas of social rented housing.
Element of "credit" spending allocated at the neighbourhood level*

9.19.1 The panel recommend that the "credit"-spending spending element be £500 of revenue or capital allocated to each ward councillor which must be spent on approved outcomes agreed by a Neighbourhood Management Board-this would encourage pooling and cross neighbourhood working.

9.20 The panel also recommend that when the performance of the Community Safety Strategy is reviewed at the end of the strategy period of March 2008 that a continuing role for the Target Area Partnerships as community development leaders is examined.

9.21 The panel also recommend that to assist this process the following be provided.

- Some intensive support for struggling, embryonic or badly represented areas that are concentrated in relatively deprived areas determined at April 2008 by the review process mentioned above. The purpose of this is to encourage and develop a voluntary and faith sector community development role and would provide each group 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 groups with action/locality planning, supporting them to review local needs and opportunities, map out their futures and reflect on past achievements and difficulties. This worker can mediate with other organisations and agencies if required and unblock relationships with power holders such as the local authorities.

  2. A 3-year credit fund of £5000, per deprived neighbourhood, of unrestricted money to be spent over the three years to support their basic infrastructure and communications.
  [For this purpose a deprived neighbourhood is defined as a neighbourhood containing at least one, or a substantial part of at least one, super output area in the 20% most deprived by reference to the index of multiple deprivation]
  Using this definition three neighbourhoods would qualify irrespective of which model is selected based on the most recent available data - Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004.

  3. Networking experience, by the organisation, by Chorley Council of an annual neighbourhood conference.

  The Panel also recommend that a separate senior council officer act as the Champion for each relatively deprived neighbourhood.

9.22 An opportunity, subject to agreement, for a "community anchor" organisation to agree to support each reformed TAP from April 2008.

There would need to be a coincidence of interest between the community anchor and the TAP but the Panel suggests examples.

Target Area Partnership	Community Anchor
Chorley East	Groundwork
Chorley South West	Chorley Community Housing
Clayton Brook	Places for People

9.23 **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 without community representation.

9.24 It is recommended that a community development function be 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.

9.25 The Panel also recommend that the Community Development worker 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.
- The Ward councillors in decision making about the preferred projects to be supported by credit spending by being the accountable officer for the expenditure.

10. Resource requirements of these recommendations.

Nature of resource	Annual budget	Notes.
Additional 2 Neighbourhood Officers	£40000	
Neighbourhood Coordinator/Analyst	£30000	
Members credit budget	£23500	47 x £500
Target area partnership support	£5000	Guaranteed for 3 years
Community development worker	£25000	
Rural isolation budget	£5000	
Total	**£128500**	

It is intended that this budget would replace the discretionary support budget of £50000 currently available resulting in a net budget requirement for £78500. If the credit budget were determined to be all capital funding then this would further reduce the revenue requirement to £55000.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

11. This report has implications in the following areas.

Finance	✓	Customer Services	
Human Resources	✓	Equality and Diversity	✓
Legal	✓		

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There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
John Lechmere/Paul Lusk	5720	1 October 2007	