

STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
25th July 2012	Public Report

Final Report of the Neighbourhood Committee Review Implementation Task and Finish Group

Contact Officer(s) – Adrian Chapman
Contact Details – 863887

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report provides details from the task and finish group established to monitor the implementation of recommendations made as part of the review of Neighbourhood Committees.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1
- (i) For the committee to note the contents of the report and comment on any of the progress updates provided in appendix 2
 - (ii) For the committee to consider the new recommendations made in section 5.1 of this report
 - (iii) For the committee to agree that the work of the task and finish group is now concluded
 - (iv) For the committee to receive an annual report on the performance of neighbourhood committees

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 Neighbourhood Committees are a key component of delivering a 'localism' approach to service design, delivery and decision making. They are an important component of the priority which sets out to create strong and supportive communities, providing an open and public dialogue between the council, our partners and our communities on local issues and opportunities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In 2010 the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task and Finish Group to review the implementation and introduction of Neighbourhood Committees. The Group agreed a broad scope, captured in their terms of reference which are attached at appendix 1.
- 4.2 The Group reported its findings back to the Scrutiny Committee in 2011, with final recommendations being agreed and passed to Cabinet and then Council for debate and agreement.
- 4.3 One of the recommendations agreed was that the Review Group should continue as a Task and Finish Group but to oversee the implementation of the wider recommendations that were agreed. Since that time, the Task and Finish Group has been working with officers to oversee the implementation and further development of agreed recommendations, and has identified further areas for continued improvement that will help embed Neighbourhood Committees even further into the democratic decision making processes of the council.
- 4.4 A full list of all recommendations agreed by Council are attached at appendix 2, along with details of progress made.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 In addition to monitoring the delivery of the recommendations set out in appendix 2, the task and finish group have also considered a range of ongoing operational matters and have agreed the following new recommendations:
- (i) To move away from general presentations at meetings that do not allow for interaction, debate and challenge
 - (ii) Ensure that agenda items are, in the main, to enable decision making rather than for information only
 - (iii) Adopt a Scrutiny-style approach to key agenda items, where council officers and staff from partner organisations are called to provide evidence, information and advice to Neighbourhood Committee members, and to present on key issues affecting the neighbourhood in a more appropriate manner
 - (iv) Produce a communications and PR strategy that includes a detailed calendar of communications and PR activity that:
 - Supports the overall objectives of Neighbourhood Committees
 - Promotes each Neighbourhood Committee in each area in advance of the meeting
 - Publicises the outcomes from each Neighbourhood Committee after each meeting
 - (v) Organise and run an annual Peterborough-wide Neighbourhoods conference at which:
 - The overall performance and progress made in the previous year is highlighted and discussed
 - Any barriers, issues and opportunities arising from the previous year are highlighted and discussed
 - Overall strategic and operational principles for the forthcoming year are identified, discussed and agreed
 - (vi) Alongside the Community Action Plans, agree a performance plan for the year for each Neighbourhood Committee that sets out required performance across multiple domains (e.g. litter picks, grass cuts, metres of footpath replaced, £25k spend deadlines etc), and then monitor its performance at the monthly Neighbourhood Management meetings and the quarterly Neighbourhood Committee meetings. Performance data should be shared visually at each Neighbourhood Committee meeting
 - (vii) Ensure that all Council Departmental Business Plans include commitments about how services will engage with and be shaped by Neighbourhood Committees and their community action plans
- 5.2 The scrutiny committee is asked to consider each of these recommendations for approval. As these are operational matters which support the delivery of neighbourhood committees, and only if agreed by the scrutiny committee, they will be delegated to each of the Neighbourhood Managers to deliver in their respective areas.
- 5.3 It is envisaged that the recommendations and progress made to date will continue to be driven forward as part of the core role of the council's neighbourhood management team. It is therefore proposed that the task and finish group ceases to operate, and that instead an annual report is provided to the scrutiny committee which sets out progress made by each neighbourhood committee and identifies any issues and opportunities.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Set out in this report.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The Task and Finish Group has engaged with key officers to ensure progress is made towards delivering the agreed recommendations.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 To implement any new recommendations agreed by the scrutiny committee, and continue to deliver previously agreed recommendations.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9.1 None.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1: Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference
Appendix 2: Summary of progress against Task and Finish Group recommendations

Appendix 1

STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCILS

Terms of Reference

To review the process and principles of Neighbourhood Councils, taking learning and experience from the first year of operations, in order to produce recommendations for their continued development. The review is to include:

1. The overarching terms of reference for Neighbourhood Councils as set out in the Constitution
2. The range of responsibilities and decision-making powers delegated to Neighbourhood Councils as set out in the Constitution
3. The relationship between Neighbourhood Councils and other Council forums, committees and meetings
4. The relationship between Neighbourhood Councils and other neighbourhood or community focussed forums (e.g. Neighbourhood Panels), to ensure minimum duplication and maximum delivery
5. The process of engaging with Councillors outside the formal Neighbourhood Council meeting to progress decisions made and actions agreed during the meeting
6. The revenue and capital funding delegated to Neighbourhood Councils
7. The process for making decisions on allocating delegated finance, including Section 106 funds
8. The logistical arrangements that support Neighbourhood Councils, including meeting venues, accessibility, times, dates, frequency, presentation including sound equipment, refreshments, seating arrangements and the associated costs.
9. The methods used to promote Neighbourhood Council meetings to the public and partners to ensure maximum and appropriate levels of attendance and public participation
10. The processes used to develop the agendas, including reviewing how best to ensure agendas are relevant, meaningful and interesting and how best to involve the public in the debates
11. The process of reviewing previous actions and how those results are presented to the public
12. The process for distributing the agenda packs before, and the minutes after, each Neighbourhood Council meeting

Appendix 2: Summary of progress against Task and Finish Group recommendations

	RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS TO DATE
1	<p>Agree the principle of delegating as much revenue and capital funding as possible as a driving principle behind Neighbourhood Committees, in line with the spirit of the new Localism Bill, and that this principle is agreed by Councillors and shared with officers.</p> <p>Agree that the mainstream revenue budgets are disaggregated, wherever possible, feasible and legal, and delegated to neighbourhood Committees. In agreeing to this a pilot programme to be implemented focussing on a specific part of council activity before a more expansive roll-out programme.</p>	<p>The Localism Bill is now an Act. Budgets are being delegated to Committees, as are certain budgetary decisions. This includes the £25k annual allocation per Committee.</p> <p>A suitable pilot programme has been agreed that will see an element of the highways maintenance budget being prioritised by Neighbourhood Committees. Neighbourhood Managers have been working with colleagues to develop the model, and local priorities are being identified. Officers will also be working with the contractor, and councillors, to determine how this should work in practice.</p> <p>We will also be consulting over the next few weeks on how future decisions on aspects of the new Community Infrastructure Levy can be delegated to Committees.</p>
2	<p>Commit to reviewing the Constitutional delegations to neighbourhood Committees in support of maximising funding delegated to them.</p>	<p>The Constitution has been amended to ensure this commitment is clear.</p>
3	<p>Agree that the current level of £25,000 funding is guaranteed from 2011/12 onwards as a minimum sum available to each Neighbourhood Committee to be offset by any Planning Obligations Implementation Strategy (POIS) monies that become available to each Neighbourhood Committee.</p>	<p>This has been agreed for the remaining period of the medium term financial plan (when it will then be reviewed as part of the normal planning process).</p>
4	<p>Agree that the process for determining and allocating POIS monies be carefully assessed and agreed to ensure that all parts of Peterborough benefit from growth and new development</p>	<p>POIS Neighbourhood Pool money generated from new developments must be spent in the neighbourhood in which the development is located.</p> <p>Neighbourhood projects will be identified through the Community Action Planning process and added to the Integrated Development Programme (IDP) to make them eligible for POIS funding.</p> <p>Also, see the note regarding consultation for the new Community Infrastructure Level at point 1 above.</p>

	RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS TO DATE
5	<p>Agree that community plans are produced for each of the neighbourhood committee areas in line with the thinking articulated in the Localism Act in order to help determine how all funding and other resources delegated to neighbourhood committees should be spent.</p>	<p>Community Action Plans are complete in draft form and are in the process of being shared and discussed with Members. They will need to continue to be developed and refined in order for them to become the recognised vehicle for helping to make evidence based decisions about service design and delivery.</p> <p>All projects or potential projects will be added to the relevant community action plan to allow for transparent prioritisation.</p>
6	<p>Agree that the Community Leadership Fund is maintained at £10,000 per ward, but that 25% of that budget is allocated by councillors to meet needs identified through neighbourhood committee planning processes.</p>	<p>The CLF budget has been maintained at £10,000 per ward.</p> <p>However, it is the decision of councillors as to what they consider to be the most effective use of this sum in their wards. Neighbourhood Managers are working closely with councillors to help maximise the added value CLF can make, and this is especially helpful now that the community action plans are emerging.</p>
7	<p>Agree that the frequency of Neighbourhood Committee meetings be maintained at four per year in each area and that any future change to this pattern should see an increase rather than a decrease in the frequency of meetings.</p>	<p>The meeting frequency has been maintained at four per year, and dates are agreed at the start of each year as part of the overall calendar of meetings.</p>
8	<p>Agree that the Neighbourhood Management Delivery meetings, led by the relevant Neighbourhood Manager, be created in all Neighbourhood Committee areas as a means of engaging and progressing actions between Neighbourhood Committee meetings.</p> <p>Ensure the broader neighbourhood management framework is in place and is able to respond to the opportunities provided in the Localism Bill and other relevant emerging legislation.</p>	<p>NDT meetings are now in place in all areas.</p> <p>The neighbourhood management team will continue to drive this meeting forward cognisant of other emerging locality-based meetings (for example, those developed by Children's Services or the Police), ensuring efficiency and avoiding duplication.</p>
9	<p>Agree that minimal staffing costs be maintained by ensuring only essential council officers are present at each Neighbourhood Committee meeting.</p>	<p>The principle of this recommendation is in place, although the number of officers required at each meeting will vary depending on the agenda.</p>
10	<p>Agree that ALL councillors are encouraged, through a flexible and modern programme of continuous training and development, to actively participate in all aspects of Neighbourhood Committee business, this training and development programme to incorporate the broader aspects of Neighbourhood Management, Localism and Big Society.</p>	<p>The Council's Governance Team is looking at suitable training and development programmes. The success of this will rely on the willingness and availability of councillors to engage as it is acknowledged that training adds additional demands to busy diaries.</p>

	RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS TO DATE
11	To change the name of Neighbourhood Councils to Area Committees	After discussion and debate at Cabinet, it was agreed that the name would be changed to Neighbourhood Committees.
12	Adopt the following as a vision statement for the Area Committees: “Area Committees will deliver improvements for the local area by identifying, overseeing, monitoring and driving actions to support all issues relevant to the area, including service delivery, service improvements, and area developments”.	This was agreed.
13	Amend the relevant procedure rules contained within the Constitution to reflect all of the agreed recommendations, and to ensure that Area Committees are supported by similar procedures that support other Council committees.	The Procedure rules have been amended.
14	Replace the existing terms of reference for Neighbourhood Committees with the following: (i) Area Committees are established in Peterborough in accordance with the provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2000 (ii) Area Committees will require the pro-active support of all elected Councillors, officers, and partner organisations to ensure their full and positive success Area Committees should: (iii) Make decisions within the remit of their terms of reference and their formally delegated responsibilities, or make recommendations to the Executive as appropriate on issues which affect the area (iv) Be the committee where members of the Area Committee and members of the community can discuss issues of concern or interest, including those that are not the direct responsibility of the Council as well as those that are (v) Set the standards for services to meet local needs which are outside the immediate responsibility or budget of the Area Committee, and seek agreement for any changes from the Executive (vi) Be the primary focus for public involvement and consultation within the area, working closely with other public, private and voluntary agencies, and advising and/or making recommendations that arise to the Executive as appropriate on issues which affect the area (vii) Develop community action plans, and monitor their implementation, to ensure the promotion of economic, environmental, cultural and social well-being of the area, that service delivery improvements are made and that better outcomes are achieved (viii) Carry out any non-Executive functions delegated by the Council, and any Executive functions delegated by the Leader, in accordance with the scheme of delegations set out in Part 3 sections 1 and 3 of the Constitution (ix) Be directly responsible for any delegated funding identified by the council and invest that money in ways that support the priorities identified through the community planning process	The Terms of Reference have been amended.

	RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS TO DATE
15	<p>That for the municipal year commencing May 2011, replace the existing delegations to neighbourhood Committees with those set out below. Keep this under review during that year, with a view to expanding the delegations from the start of the Municipal year commencing May 2012:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Leader retains responsibility for functions delegated and may exercise those functions in person, regardless of further delegation. Further, the Area Committees must act with due regard to all other council policies and procedures (ii) To promote the council's role as a community leader in its area, giving a meaningful voice to the community and fostering good and productive working relationships with the council's partner organisations, including Parish Councils, Police, Fire, Probation, criminal justice agencies, health & social care agencies, education agencies, young people's services, community associations, residents associations and voluntary sector agencies (iii) To take a leading role in promoting the economic, environmental, cultural and social wellbeing of the area, and develop community action plans to achieve this that improve service delivery and achieve better outcomes (iv) To set the standards for all former City Services operations now contracted to Enterprise to ensure effective delivery of all services, including making decisions on the maximum amount of any delegated budgets allowable within the terms of the contract to be deployed on local priorities (to be confirmed subject to details of the contract) (v) To agree the annual programme of works contained within the Highways Capital Programme for 2012/13 onwards (vi) To act as consultees on all major or significant Executive and Council proposals that affect the area, including those affecting both capital and revenue spend (vii) To act as consultees in respect of Major Planning applications relevant to the area, and report views to the relevant Committee (viii) To carry out any actions that the Executive authorises in addition to those set out above, until such time as that authorisation is revoked 	<p>These were agreed and the Constitution amended, with the caveat that they are subject to there being sufficient resources to implement the recommendations.</p>

	RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS TO DATE
16	<p>Deliver the recommendations set out in the report from the sub-group of the Neighbourhood Committee Task & Finish Group which has focussed on rural / parish issues specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) create a new committee to replace the Rural North Neighbourhood Committee, that comprises rural ward councillors, and one co-opted representative from each of the 23 rural Parish Councils (ii) appoint a rural ward councillor as chair of this committee (iii) hold all meetings at a rural location within any of the 23 rural parish council areas (iv) decisions relating to non-financial matters or those that are not formally delegated responsibilities will be debated by all members of the committee, with all members having a single vote each (v) matters relating to financial or delegated responsibilities will be decided solely by elected City Councillors 	<p>This has been fully agreed and implemented.</p> <p>Cllr David Over has been appointed as Chair.</p> <p>All Parish Councils were invited to nominate a co-optee to join the new Committee, and the majority have taken this opportunity up.</p>
17	<p>Create a single, seamless approach to neighbourhood engagement by creating a structure which enables the following to be delivered in each Area Committee area during the same session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward Forum: a ward-specific informal forum where ward councillors can engage with their constituents and discuss informal issues or issues which may require escalation to the Area Committee. During these forums, key officer representation should also be available, including from the Neighbourhood Management team, Trading Standards, Community Safety, Police, and Enterprise • Neighbourhood Panel: formally police-led but now partner-wide meetings during which three local priorities are identified for resolution • Area Committee: re-launched Neighbourhood Committee meetings, focussing on more strategic or impactful issues affecting the area 	<p>This approach has been extensively piloted and is now operating in the majority of areas.</p> <p>In some cases, Neighbourhood Panel boundaries have been altered to align with the Neighbourhood Committee boundaries to enable this new approach to happen.</p> <p>However it is clear that 'one size does not necessarily fit all' and the Police have faced pressure in some areas for these meetings to remain separate. This issue continues to develop and evolve.</p>
18	<p>Organise a minimum of two Area Committee locality "tours" per annum, during which ALL members of the Committee, the nominated CMT member, key PCC officers, key officers from partner organisations, key community leaders/representatives and the local media explore the area in more depth, focussing on particular problems, hotspots and successes.</p>	<p>Schedule of visits either already in place or being arranged for each committee.</p>
19	<p>Agree to the creation of a job description for the roles of Chair and Vice Chair of the Area Committee that reflects the changes of emphasis and focus set out in these recommendations, and the role these posts will play in support of the broader neighbourhood management structure.</p>	<p>Role descriptions have been agreed and are subject to presentation to Chairs and Vice Chairs by the Neighbourhood Managers.</p>

	RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS TO DATE
20	<p>Agree to the creation of a lead officer role within the Neighbourhoods division to co-ordinate and facilitate the entire Neighbourhood Management meeting and engagement structure, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing, co-ordinating and monitoring delivery of action plans at area Committee, Neighbourhood Panel, Ward Forums, and locality tour levels, holding Members, officers and partners to account as necessary • Liaising with key PCC departments, notably Democratic Services and Communications, to ensure all required actions are delivered • Arranging agenda setting and planning meetings for Area Committee in accordance with the Constitution • All logistical arrangements for Area Committees, Neighbourhood Panels, Ward Forums, Neighbourhood Management Delivery Team meetings and any other related forums, including venues, refreshments, access, transport, etc • Liaising with Council departments and partners regarding information to be made available at each meeting (e.g. literature or a staffed information stand) • Managing the agenda plan for each Area Committee containing items for future discussion • Developing, managing and co-ordinating a full contacts database of residents, community groups, officers and partners to ensure maximum awareness of all relevant meetings and opportunities for engagement 	<p>As a result of this recommendation and subsequent discussions, we have appointed assistants to each of the three Neighbourhood Managers, part of whose role is to co-ordinate the outcomes from Committee meetings and ensure good progress is made.</p> <p>Governance and practical support for the meetings continues to be provided through the Democratic Services team.</p>
21	<p>Agree that alongside formal minutes from the Area Committee, comprehensive action plans should be created from (i) every Ward Forum and (ii) every Neighbourhood Committee meeting, setting out clearly what actions have been agreed, and naming a lead officer (with the consent of the officer named) and a lead councillor jointly responsible for ensuring the action is achieved.</p>	<p>Ward Forum issue sheets have been introduced, and are populated during the Forum sessions. Working action plans for each Neighbourhood Committee area have also been established.</p>
22	<p>Agree to formalise the seating arrangements at Area Committee meetings so that all Members sit at the front of the audience in a horseshoe arrangement, making it clear who has voting rights, how those rights are used, and who is not in attendance.</p>	<p>This has been implemented for each Neighbourhood Committee.</p>
23	<p>Agree to identify a different member of the Corporate Management Team to act as champion and advocate for each of the seven Area Committees, and to ensure that the principles of Area Committees are given the appropriate status amongst officers</p>	<p>A CMT representative acts as champion and advocate for each Committee. In addition, and in order to empower the next level of management, each CMT member is also supported by a Head of Service.</p> <p>The Chief Executive maintains a strategic overview of all 7 committees.</p>

	RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRESS TO DATE
24	<p>Agree to develop a single media and communications strategy, supported by an action plan, which pro-actively promotes Area Committees and Ward Forums and their achievements in a timely manner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) to help achieve this assign an officer within the Communications team to have responsibility for co-ordinating publicity and marketing for Area Committees and Ward Forums (b) produce a publicity “pack” of template materials and formats that promote Area Committees including “soft” formats (via use of the web, social networking, etc) and “hard” formats (posters, leaflets, etc) 	<p>A communications strategy and action plan has been developed.</p> <p>However it is clear that more work needs to be done to communicate information about neighbourhood committees and this will be developed further by the neighbourhood managers through their bi-weekly meetings with the Safer/Stronger Peterborough Strategic Manager.</p>
25	<p>Agree to be creative and flexible with the logistical arrangements for neighbourhood engagement activities set out in recommendation 7, providing they follow the Access to Information rules. For example, vary the start and end times of the meetings to ensure engagement with different residents, and ensure venues have enough space and capacity to cope with the requirements of both formal and informal forums during the same session.</p> <p>Agree that officers should explore transport initiatives as and where appropriate for each of the Area Committee meetings to support attendance from residents.</p>	<p>These recommendations are agreed in principle, subject to there being sufficient resources available, although local arrangements will need to apply so will be discussed with Chairmen and Committee members during the monthly Neighbourhood Management Delivery meetings.</p>

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