

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 4
7 FEBRUARY 2011	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Hiller (Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning)	
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NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL REVIEW – PART ONE

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Deadline date :
Cabinet is requested to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree that the principle of delegating as much revenue and capital funding as possible is a driving principle behind Neighbourhood Councils, in line with the spirit of the new Localism Bill, and that this principle is agreed by Councillors and shared with officers. 2. Commit to reviewing the Constitutional delegations to Neighbourhood Councils in support of maximising funding delegated to them. 3. Agree that the current level of £25,000 funding is guaranteed from 2011/12 onwards as a minimum sum available to each Neighbourhood Council to be offset by any POIS monies that become available to each Neighbourhood Council. 4. 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. 5. Agree that mainstream revenue budgets are disaggregated, wherever possible, feasible and legal, and delegated to Neighbourhood Councils. 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. 6. Agree that Neighbourhood Plans are produced for each of the Neighbourhood Council areas in line with the thinking articulated in the Localism Bill in order to help determine how all funding and other resources delegated to Neighbourhood Councils should be spent. 7. 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 the Neighbourhood Council Neighbourhood Planning process. 8. Agree that the frequency of Neighbourhood Council meetings be maintained at four per year in each area and that any future change to this pattern should see an <i>increase</i> rather than <i>decrease</i> in the frequency of meetings. 9. Agree that a thorough review be conducted of all other community-based meetings with a view to combining meetings wherever possible. 	

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S – Continued

10. Agree that the ongoing but separate review of the Rural North Neighbourhood Council be included in the overall review of Neighbourhood Councils to ensure shared learning and avoidance of confusion and misinformation.
11. Agree that Neighbourhood Management Delivery meetings, led by the relevant Neighbourhood Manager, be created in **all** Neighbourhood Council areas as a means of engaging and progressing actions between Neighbourhood Council meetings.
12. Agree that minimal staffing costs be maintained by ensuring only essential Council officers are present at each Neighbourhood Council meeting.
13. 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 Council business, this training and development programme to incorporate the broader aspects of Neighbourhood Management, Localism and Big Society.
14. Agree that the Special Responsibility Allowance for Neighbourhood Council Chairs is no longer awarded; reflecting the greater role to be played by ALL Councillors in relation to Neighbourhood Councils and that each of the seven Neighbourhood Councils should elect its own Chair who should be a Councillor from one of the wards represented at that Neighbourhood Council.
15. Agree that the Recommendations form part of an overall implementation plan for Neighbourhood Councils alongside the recommendations that emerge from part two of the Review to be overseen by the cross-party working group formed from the task and finish group; and that the Constitution be updated accordingly to reflect any recommended changes.

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following a meeting of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 19 January 2011.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of a review of Neighbourhood Councils which has been undertaken by the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. The review is being undertaken in two parts, the outcome of the first part is attached at Annex 1. The outcome of the second part will be presented to Cabinet on 21 March. Cabinet are asked to consider the conclusions and agree the recommendations of Part One of the review.
- 2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.5 To review and recommend to Council changes to the Council's Constitution, protocols and procedure rules.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO
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4. REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCILS – PART ONE

4.1 Neighbourhood Councils have now been in operation for over a year and the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee requested that a report on their progress be presented to them at their meeting on 10 November 2010. After receiving this report and noting that going forward the proposal was to remove the £25,000 dedicated funding and reduce the meetings to twice a year it was agreed that there should be a review of the process and principles of Neighbourhood Councils. The Committee agreed that there was a need to take learning and experience from the first year of operations, in order to produce recommendations for their continued development. The review would look at:

- The processes and principles of Neighbourhood Councils and to come forward with recommendations for their continued development
- Examine all aspects of Neighbourhood Councils, including their funding, delegated responsibilities and logistical arrangements
- How the meetings can be developed to meet the expectations of local residents

4.2 To ensure all aspects of Neighbourhood Councils were taken into account Terms of Reference were put in place and can be found in the attached report at Annex 1.

4.3 Part One of the review has considered the financial aspects of Neighbourhood Councils in order to feed into the budget setting process of the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2011/12. The conclusions and recommendations can be found in the attached report at Annex 1.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 Consultation undertaken is detailed in the report at Annex 1.

5. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

That Cabinet supports and agrees to the recommendations put forward from Part One of the review of Neighbourhood Councils.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 This report has come to Cabinet following a request from the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee to conduct a review of Neighbourhood Councils. The review has taken into account the learning and experience from the first year of operations, in order to produce the recommendations for their continued development.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 Option 1. Not to agree to the recommendations. The Committee do not recommend this as they consider it to be detrimental to the ongoing improvement and development of Neighbourhood Councils.

7.2 Option 2. Develop alternative recommendations. The Committee do not recommend this as they consider that the Task and Finish Group have conducted an in depth and objective review and therefore the recommendations put forward are considered to be the most effective way of improving the provision of Neighbourhood Councils.

8. IMPLICATIONS

Finance

Some of the recommendations in the report at annex 1 present an alternative scenario to that which is being proposed in the budget consultation document. For example, the report at annex 1 recommends that the frequency of Neighbourhood Council meetings is not reduced which means the proposed savings linked to reducing the frequency of meetings will not be achieved. However, many other recommendations suggest that further savings and efficiencies *will* be achieved, largely through better decision making and more targeted investment in communities.

Legal

Some of the recommendations in the report at annex 1, if agreed, will require changes to the Council's constitution.

Environment

The report at annex 1 recommends that the frequency of Neighbourhood Council meetings be maintained at the current level of 4 per year per area. The proposals set out in the budget consultation report include a saving linked to reducing the frequency to 2 meetings per year per area, also leading to reduced levels of travel to and from meetings.

However, neighbourhood planning processes and more frequent communication with communities will support the enhanced work required in those communities to respond more effectively to the environmental challenges we face.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

Minutes of Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny meetings held on 10 November 2010 and 19 January 2011.