



# **Scrutiny Review of Neighbourhood Management Services**

**A REVIEW BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
JULY 2008**

**Panel Members:- Councillors Davies (Chair), Bevan and Weber**

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## **Reasons for the Review**

- 1.1 Since its inception Neighbourhood Management has played an important part in the delivery of local services which meet Government's intentions and achieves Council objectives.
- 1.2 Initially established in 2001, to implement the Government's national strategy for neighbourhood renewal, Neighbourhood Management was restructured in 2005 and 2007. This was necessary to meet an evolving local and national agenda which placed community involvement and engagement as central to the revitalisation of local communities. There have been numerous policy initiatives from Government since 2001 trying to strengthen community engagement and involvement within public services such as:
  - Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act placing new duties to develop a story of place with 35 improvement targets, development of systematic opportunities for involvement, consultation and engagement and new statutory duties for partners to participate within the Local Strategic Partnership.
  - Place shaping roles identified through the Lyons Review
  - Extended schools and children's networks from the Department of Children and Families.
  - Neighbourhood Policing from the Home Office
  - Our Health, Our Choice, Our Say from the Department of Health.
- 1.3 The Government has just published it's White Paper on community empowerment.
- 1.4 Perceptions of the Neighbourhood Management Service were thought to vary between Members, internal stakeholders and external organisations. With the numerous new polices and the new legislation it was opportune to review activity and direction to ensure fitness for purpose. This is the reason why it was selected for in-depth review by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **The Way in Which the Review was Undertaken**

- 2.1 The initial terms of reference are attached as Appendix A. As the review progressed it was realised that it needed to concentrate and make general recommendations on the way Neighbourhood Management could best contribute to the work of the Council and its partners in improving local area working.
- 2.2 The Panel met four times. They heard from:-

- The Young Foundation on how Haringey's Neighbourhood Management was perceived nationally
- Safer Communities in relation to the Safer Neighbourhoods Police Teams
- The Primary Care Trust.
- The Directors of Urban Environment and Children and Young Peoples' Service and the Assistant Chief Executive Policy, Performance, Partnerships and Communications.
- Homes for Haringey
- Those councillors who responded to a general invitation to submit comments
- The Cabinet Members for Community Cohesion and for Environment and Conservation
- Area Assembly chairs
- The Head of Neighbourhood Management
- Neighbourhood area managers.

2.3 The Council's Consultation Manager was also engaged to run a focus group specifically with residents who did not attend area assembly meetings and to conduct telephone interviews with residents who were involved in the work of Neighbourhood Management.

## **Role of Neighbourhood Management**

3.1 Neighbourhood Management identifies "one person or a small team of people to co-ordinate at a neighbourhood level to act as champion and trouble shooter for the area". With the development locally of area based working and the Council's re-shaping exercise the Neighbourhood Management's role has evolved into that of an "enabler" and "facilitator". Neighbourhood Management's main roles within Haringey are:

- Developing and promoting the seven Area Assemblies and their 'making the difference' budgets.
- Building community capacity and creating engagement and participation
- Helping new and harder to reach communities to access services.
- Initiating and developing community programmes within the Area Based Grant (such as the reaping the benefit employment initiative and community empowerment seed corn funding).
- Managing the Neighbourhood Resource Centre and the Broadwater Farm Community Centre.
- Supporting local service improvements with other Council services and partners,
- Acting as a broker and enabler and supporting members, colleagues and partners
- Advising assembly chairs and ward councillors on local issues and helping to improve consultation with local residents

- 3.2 Neighbourhood Managers told the Panel that they saw themselves as a crucial link working for Members, council services and external partners to enable the Council to better meet community needs. They quoted, as a good example of this, the Green Lanes Strategy Group which had brought together businesses, residents, external partners and officers to identify key objectives.
- 3.3 Attached at Appendix B is a paper from the Head of Neighbourhood Management which sets out more information about the service and what he considers the successes and benefits of the service.

### Views on the performance of Haringey's Neighbourhood Management Services

- 4.1 Neighbourhood Management is seen as a central part in the way in which local services were delivered and the Young Foundation testified that Haringey's service was seen as a "trail-blazer" and was carrying out some excellent work.
- 4.2 The Directors of Urban Environment and Children and Young People's Services considered that Neighbourhood Management provided local intelligence, identified local priorities, and facilitated community engagement and participation. Additionally Neighbourhood Management was good at co-ordinating multi-agency working. As the Director of Children and Young People's Services said they were seen by other services "as the eyes and ears on the ground".
- 4.3 The Panel agreed with the two directors that it was not the role of Neighbourhood Management to be responsible for service delivery or to be seen as an operational delivery/reporting service getting involved in activities such as personally patrolling to identify dumping spots. The Assistant Chief Executive Policy, Performance Partnerships and Communications emphasised the Neighbourhood Management role of supporting Council Services and Partners to deliver good services within neighbourhoods through working with communities.
- 4.4 There was concern joint working between Neighbourhood Management and other departments did not always keep to a coordinating role for Neighbourhood Management and also needed to be responsive to other departments' work programmes. The Panel considered that there was a need for greater clarity as to the roles and tasks of the Neighbourhood Management Service along with clear guidelines which should be shared across the Council. This view was supported by the research undertaken with local residents who attended Area Assembly meetings, the results of which are set out in Appendix C.

### The Panel's views

## **Organisational Issues**

- 5.1 The Panel appreciated that Neighbourhood Management would continue to be an area of rapid change and that staff structures and duties needed to be flexible if the service was to continue as it is. However staffing stability would help to maintain continuity in service knowledge and delivery. The efficiency savings and forthcoming restructure were noted and the need for this to be delivered professionally, sensitively, transparently and within Council Policy. It was also accepted that effective neighbourhood working required staff to build up a wide knowledge of local issues and priorities and to secure the confidence of local residents.
- 5.2 It was felt that the structure for managing and monitoring Neighbourhood Management could be improved. There were particular concerns regarding area based working (see also later section) with regard to the clarity of which service was leading – Neighbourhood Management or Urban Environment. It was felt that greater clarity was required and improvements in accountability both between the services involved and the Members.
- 5.3 Neighbourhood Management have a work programme which is developed in conjunction with assembly chairs and endorsed by the Cabinet Member. However, care needed to be taken to ensure that workloads for all Neighbourhood Management areas are consistent and that some areas do not end up with excessive workloads, which could led to expectations not being achieved. Greater links, evidence and transparency between the Neighbourhood Management priorities within the work programmes, local priorities and the Council and Partnerships Plans was highlighted as an area for improvement.

## **Partnership Working**

- 6.1 The Panel heard about the various initiatives that Neighbourhood Management was involved in, such as “the health in mind” project with the Primary Care Trust and “living under one sun” initiative which involved the Council, Mental Health Trust, Primary Care Teaching Trust, Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team, Lee Valley Authority and many others. However the links with Homes for Haringey and with housing associations did not seem to be as well formed or positive. Some neighbourhood managers found working with Homes for Haringey staff particularly difficult. The Primary Care Trust also wished to develop further their working with Neighbourhood Management, particularly on community based care.

## **Area Based Working**

- 7.1 In January 2006 the Urban Environment Directorate set up an area based working pilot in Northumberland Park working in close collaboration with Neighbourhood Management. The purpose of the project, which is now being extended to all neighbourhoods, was to explore how environmental services could work more effectively with the neighbourhoods, other directorates and key partners to improve the overall effectiveness of services and to 'join up' services on the ground. The remit of the project was the 'cleaner, safer, greener agenda'. The over-arching objectives of the pilot were to:
- Improve service delivery and promote 'one Council'
  - Improve efficiency (by removing duplications etc)
  - Improve resident satisfaction
- 7.2 The pilot has begun to develop and to report some area based performance data on environmental issues and consideration is being given as to how they can be used to more clearly inform service improvement priorities, both within the Council's Business Plans and the Local Area Agreement. Commissioning and procurement of front line services is also likely to be in force by the end of 2009.
- 7.3 The Panel heard from the Director of Children and Young People, that three children's networks have been established. Each children's network was divided into two network learning community of schools whose aim was to deliver integrated services to children and young people as close to the family as possible, creating 'the team around the family'.
- 7.4 Neighbourhood Management was already helping to operate area based working. Another advantage was that the safer neighbourhoods policing was rolled out, the police used the same framework as Neighbourhood Management, hence maximising joint working opportunities.
- 7.5 The Panel considered that there was a need to develop better information at the neighbourhood/area assembly level which would inform the production of priorities and work programmes. These would need to be considered and included within business planning processes and plans across Council Services. The need to clarify the role of Neighbourhood Management in relation to area based working is detailed above particularly the lead service as Urban Environment and Adults, Culture and Community Services all participate. It was noted that Neighbourhood Management was already involved in facilitating and chairing monthly meetings across several partners but its role could be developed further to be the central co-ordination point. It was proposed that more effective systems were required to ensure good working relations between Neighbourhood Management and other services. One suggestion was that Neighbourhood Management should have a pivotal co-ordinating role for area based working taking into account the local area agreement targets.

## **Involvement and Engagement of Local Residents**

- 8.1 It is envisaged that the White Paper due in Summer 2008 will build on the “strong and prosperous communities” agenda and make further recommendations around empowerment, engagement and participation.
- 8.2 Neighbourhood Management has already carried out extensive work to engage with local communities, had achieved Beacon status in 2005 and been short listed this year for a transforming services: citizen engagement and empowerment award.
- 8.3 Involving local people in planning and shaping local services is fundamental to the work of Neighbourhood Management, and is carried out in a number of ways e.g. area assemblies, making the difference projects, liaison with councillors, businesses and residents, and supporting community groups. The Head of Neighbourhood Management informed the Panel that he hoped that local people felt that Neighbourhood Management staff facilitated access to service delivery staff; the service supported Members in their Ward Councillor role and provided opportunities for resident involvement and engagement.
- 8.4 There were numerous examples of successful schemes involving community engagement which is set out in detail in Appendix B.
- 8.5 Additionally Neighbourhood Management supports various community groups, local businesses and other initiatives including residents associations, young people, faith groups and safer neighbourhood police teams. The Panel recognised that community engagement and community development projects were crucial if the Council was to continue to be in the forefront of providing local services. It was also suggested that further development work could be undertaken such as engaging with voluntary work, encouraging self help groups, or setting up community groups but that, depending on the cost of this work, it might need to be funded from compensatory savings. The Panel wished to see funding for these projects maintained or improved.

## **Area Assemblies**

- 9.1 Area assemblies are seen as one way of developing accountable local services. Each area assembly is chaired by a ward councillor and give residents an opportunity to contribute ideas on how their areas can be improved. Meetings are held quarterly and topics of local interest are discussed both there and in smaller discussion groups. Cabinet Members attend each of the area assemblies to answer questions and provide information across a range of subjects. The role profile for chairs of area assemblies is attached as Appendix D.

- 9.2 Evidence from local residents indicated that assemblies were not always as effective in obtaining residents views as they could be. The logo “You talk we listen” was cited as a method of operation for assembly meetings, but at times meetings were too business like and used too extensively as a consultation mechanism for both the Council and its partners. This gave the impression that meetings were too controlled by the Council and residents had insufficient opportunity to express their views. This view was supported by the residents consultation exercise as comments received included:
- “I’ve stopped going to them because I prefer to raise issues rather than listen to a lot of speakers”
  - “Generally residents are outnumbered by councillors, officers and the police”
- 9.3 This problem might be resolved if the Council gives further consideration as to how and when area assemblies should be used for consultation purposes and seek each assemblies views on this issue. However the Panel was informed that both the Primary Care Trust and the new Community Based Justice Programme had expressed an interest in using Area Assemblies as part of their wider consultations.
- 9.4 Also there was a need for the resources allocated to each area to be monitored. Following completion of projects Neighborhood Management should monitor service delivery to completion, and keep residents and ward councillors informed. Additionally it was suggested that a central register of all external agencies should be kept so that each Area Assembly does not have waste time finding contacts etc.
- 9.5 Each area assembly had a designated Chief Officer known as the Area Liaison Officer (formerly Neighbourhood Champion) to assist area assembly chairs and ward councillors. Their specific role is attached at Appendix E, but the duties include:
- assisting and advising area assemblies,
  - being the budget holder for “making the difference” funding,
  - being a signpost for strategic partners
  - being an escalation point in turning feedback into action.
- 9.6 However the Panel felt that these duties needed to be clarified and awareness of the position better promoted and advertised to residents.
- 9.7 The Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Involvement suggested that area assemblies should have better links with corporate priorities and other Council services. Once again the Panel felt that this and improved communication between services could be better achieved if there was greater clarity of the Neighbourhood Management Services role and the relationships between departments. Additionally the Panel felt that a central register of external agencies



and contact details between the Area Assemblies would be helpful, although it was recognised that this could have financial implications.

## **Making the Difference Funding**

- 10.1 Each Area Assembly is allocated £50K per year for one off small improvements to make a difference in their local area and around 500 possible projects are considered annually. This is a form of participatory budgeting and the process confirms a commitment to local involvement. The sort of projects that have been approved include improving open spaces, better youth activities, better street lighting, planting of trees and community events. Projects have to be completed within the specific financial year.
- 10.2 Some Neighbourhood Managers stated that there were difficulties with residents' expectations being raised when proposed projects had involved considerable time in terms of detailed research and costings were not selected for implementation. It was considered that there was a need for greater transparency and clarity in terms of projects eligible for "making the difference" funding or for which mainstream Council funding might be possible. Furthermore there should be clearer guidance as to the purpose of the funding i.e seed funding, one off projects etc and there was a need to ensure that residents were kept informed of progress on their applications, including those that were not pursued. Also information should be provided to residents on what happens to bids that are rejected such as whether there are alternative routes and who takes responsibility for follow through.
- 10.3 The Panel noted that a review of the "making the difference" programme was being carried out by the Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Involvement (now completed); so this area was not the subject of detailed consideration in this report. However, the Panel also noted that the Area Assemblies have different sizes – from two to four wards each – meaning that in some parts of the borough the Making the Difference funding equalled £12.5k per ward and in others £25k per ward.

## **Support to Members**

- 11.1 The Head of Neighbourhood Management told the Panel how the service supported ward councillors to carry out their role as community champions. This support included providing briefings on ward issues, supporting area assembly chairs, responding to members' enquiries and attending meetings with councillors. This was to support ward councillors in their roles of engaging with local residents and partners.
- 11.2 Whilst it is clear that new Ward Councillors needed help and support as they grew into their roles, the need for such support should diminish over time. It was evident to the Panel that there needed to be clarity in the respective roles of Councillors and Neighbourhood Management

staff so as to avoid any confusion. The Panel also considered that the briefings provided to Ward Councillors needed to be improved and that there should be regular liaison and updates with local councillors and the sharing of priorities for the annual work programme to ensure that priorities are transparent for each ward.

## **Funding**

- 12.1 The overall cost of Neighbourhood Management was being reduced from £3.255.million in 2007/8 to £2.975 million in 2008/9, i.e. a £280,000 reduction. This was due to efficiency savings and reduction in external funding. In 2008/9, 2.055.million was from Haringey's mainstream funding and the rest from Area Based Grant. Details of the Neighbourhood Management expenditure and grant income for 2007/08 and 2008/09 is set out in Appendix F
- 12.2 The Panel was advised that Neighbourhood Management was getting better at using data for identifying issues around income and employment deprivation, which helped in bidding for extra funding. Opportunities were always being sought to lever in extra funds and to ensure external income was maximised. As the cost of service improvements have to be met from existing budgets it is essential that administration and other costs are kept to a minimum. This can only be achieved with lean and efficient structures which work harmoniously together to provide "joined up" services. The Panel considered that it was the use of essential resources by Neighbourhood Management are clearly monitored with regular reports to management.
- 12.3 The Panel understood that £50k previously used/delegated to each Area Manager for each neighbourhood management team to facilitate local solutions and for small local projects had been substantially reduced in this year's budget but they felt that this should be re-instated in next year's budget to at or near its previous allocation.

## **Performance**

- 13.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provide a new performance framework for Council's with 198 indicators replacing the previous best value performance indicators. Five of these targets relate directly to the work of Neighbourhood Management and they are:
- % of people who felt that they can influence decisions in their locality
  - Fair treatment by local services
  - Environment of a thriving third sector
  - %of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
  - Participation in regular volunteering

- 13.2 This year's audit and inspection letter states that "Neighbourhood Management services is responsive to local needs and allows residents to influence how services are delivered". This echoes the finding from the Annual Residents survey where the percentage of residents that feel involved in decision making has increased from 36% in 2004 to 48% in 2007 and the number of residents who consider that the Council keeps them informed has risen from 61% in 2004 to 74% in 2007.
- 13.3 One possibility worth pursuing is to try out a "secret shopper" test of how neighbourhood management works.
- 13.4 It would also help if the targets relating to neighbourhood management were reflected in their area work programmes and part of the appraisal process for all neighbourhood staff.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the roles, purpose and tasks of Neighbourhood Management (including ensuring that these are linked into appraisal objectives) be defined and that guidelines be produced which clearly specify the role and responsibility of Neighbourhood Management in relation to other Council services and to Ward Councillors, especially in the light of the Council's plans to extend area based working and that the local area agreement targets be taken into account re appraisal objectives.
2. That whilst the functions and structure of Neighbourhood Management needed to be reviewed in the light of recent developments, this should be done sensitively with relevant staff being consulted and where possible given assurances about their future employment.
3. That area work programmes involving all relevant Council services and partners be shared with Ward Councillors and further developed with links to local area agreement's targets and outcomes and that departments' business plans take into account any concerns raised by Neighbourhood Management when developing their work programmes.
4. That a review be carried out of the way in which area assemblies and Neighbourhood Management contribute to council's consultation processes.
5. That regular review of each areas' staffing levels and workloads, bearing in mind the advantages to be gained through staff stability and their local knowledge be undertaken.
6. That a reassessment of the size of Area Assemblies be carried out to ensure proper engagement with each area and that Making the Difference funding be split evenly across the Borough on a 'per ward' basis.

7. That the role and operation of area assemblies be reviewed to ensure that they are achieving the desired objectives and link into the Council's corporate priorities.
8. That the names of Area Liaison Officer and their precise duties be further developed and advertised.
9. That Homes for Haringey be asked to appoint a designated officer to link with Neighbourhood Management on joint initiatives and that Neighbourhood Management compile a list of issues causing concern with Housing Associations which may be taken up by the Council at its regular meetings with Housing Associations.
10. That Neighbourhood Management and each service directorate it deals with nominate one of their existing officers to have specific responsibility for joint liaison.
11. That consideration be given in next year's budget process to reinstating at or near the previous level the devolved budget (formerly £50k) for each Neighbourhood Management team used to facilitate local solutions or for small local projects.
12. That serious consideration be given to maintaining or increasing the funding for community engagement and community development projects .
13. That residents whose Making the Difference bids are rejected be advised of alternatives and given support where possible.