

## Agenda Item No 6b

### Special Meeting of the Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2007

#### QUESTIONS RECEIVED

##### A. Questions Received from Councillor Craigie

- 1) Dudley **clearly** identifies 24 deprived neighbourhoods/wards. Neighbourhood Management presently covers 9 areas. Under City Strategy, it will be reduced to 5 areas with 2 peripatetic officers. How can this be a step forward in reaching the source of deprivation within our areas?
- 2) Why has the DCP, who, from reports, clearly support the Neighbourhood Management, not contributed financially?
- 3) I cannot find any evidence to support funding requests to the DCP. Therefore can I have written evidence of the request to the DCP partners for financial contributions to Neighbourhood Management and reasons for their refusal.
- 4) Why have Neighbourhood Managers been put on the deployment register before any decision has been made?
- 5) Has there already been a position created for a Brierley Hill Economic Regeneration Manager? If so, please explain the necessity of this early-created position.
- 6) If so, will this Brierley Hill Officer affect funding for the other managers positions?
- 7) City Strategy is stated as a three-year programme. What is planned for when this comes to an end? There is a real danger that this programme will cease altogether and disappear without trace.
- 8) According to Unison. The officer's job description, under City Strategy has less than 50% changes and yet the title has changed. Please explain the reasons why and the legal implications regarding this specific change.
- 9) Should Neighbourhood Management change, what would happen to all the work targeted at **social** deprivation within the wards that is not unemployment related?
  - a) Those wards that may change to City Strategy.
  - b) Those wards that will have cover removed.
  - c) Those wards covered by the so-called 2-peripatetic officers.
- 10) City Strategy, according to the Local Area Agreement, clearly states, "**Over-riding strategic objective is to close the gap between the City Region employment rate and that of the target 55 wards and by 2010**".

**Halving the gap between City Region employment rate and that of the target wards.**

**Reducing the number of people claiming working age benefits by at least 17,320.**

**Removing 3,456 people a year from benefits.**

Whilst they are commendable targets, where do the following fit into this plan-?

- a) The elderly?
  - b) The Mentally ill
  - c) Those with learning difficulties.
  - d) One parent families
  - e) Members of society that are unemployable.
- 11) The Black Country Bid for City Strategy includes Sandwell, Birmingham, Walsall and Dudley. This is 55 deprived wards. Should we win the bid there is still a very good chance that we will receive less of the bid money than we anticipated leaving us worse off than on Neighbourhood Management. I believe that chances of receiving more are very remote. Where would this leave us regarding City Strategy and Neighbourhood Management?
- 12) With the above question in mind, City Strategy involves cutting jobs and reducing areas. Have we considered doing this and remaining on Neighbourhood management without DCP cap-in-hand support? Has a feasibility study been carried out to evaluate the current arrangements, the cost to maintain the status quo and has any alternative sources of funding been explored.
- 13) I would like to examine the evidence of the above please.
- 14) Why did we have very positive reports from Mr Andrew Sparke and Mr Denis Hodson regarding Neighbourhood Management only to find they now agree to change it to City Strategy? It appears that we are going for City Strategy because of the recourse implications only, which is very short sighted. Is that the case?

I formally request answers to all questions in the numerical order that they have been asked. In order that discussions can take place at this special committee it is imperative that the evidence requested must be readily available.

#### B. Questions received from Councillor Burston

1. The Halesowen neighbourhood manager currently works with the Chief Executive's/Legal & Property directorates to combat anti-social behaviour; he works with DACHS through the tenants and residents associations and forums; he works with the Children's Services directorate through schools and youth agencies; he works with the DUE to establish friends of parks groups; he also work with the Council's partners (police, fire and other agencies) with regard to behaviour and parenting. Given these varied roles, can the directorates themselves not part-fund neighbourhood managers through their existing budgets - in the case of DACHS by maybe assimilating their duties with those of the existing tenant participation teams?
2. Otherwise, how is it envisaged that the 'roving' neighbour managers who are being proposed as replacements will allocate and their time, and to which estates? Will this inevitably result in them being able to devote less time to 'deprived' estates, such as Highfields and Olive Hill in Halesowen, that fall outside of the Council's core 'deprived' wards - with those neighbourhoods suffering as a result?