

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

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Review of Neighbourhood Management**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To present to Members the outcome of an independent review of the existing Neighbourhood Management service, which contains the key recommendation that the service should refocus upon the City Strategy initiative to provide a more sustainable and targeted approach to tackling deprivation in the Borough.

**Background**

2. The existing Neighbourhood Management service was established by the Council to address the need to promote greater community engagement and access to services in the areas of greatest disadvantage. It was originally established through the identification of the 23 local neighbourhoods evidencing the greatest level of need. Over the last 7 years, the initiative has developed different patterns of supporting managed neighbourhoods to reflect local circumstances, and has been funded by a combination of Local Authority and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. There are currently 14.43 FTE staff posts working in neighbourhood management.
3. For some time, the future direction of Neighbourhood Management has been an issue for consideration, given the likelihood that there was no NRF provision committed from April 2008, and the wider need to determine how best to deliver a neighbourhood focussed approach. Through the Dudley Community Partnership and Government Office West Midlands, a specialist Neighbourhood Renewal Adviser – Lesley Silverlock - was contracted to lead a review of Neighbourhood Management, to examine the current operation, and in the light of best practice nationally to advise on possible future options for the service. Following an interim report in March 2007, Lesley Silverlock presented his final report and recommendation to the Dudley Community Partnership in June. This report is attached in full as appendix 1.

The key conclusions of the report being:-

- That there was a strong case for retaining some level of neighbourhood working in the borough to deliver the partnerships strategic objectives.

- That the future national agenda for the Council, including the Local Area Agreement and move to Comprehensive Area Assessment would require a neighbourhood focus.
  - That there would not be any additional partner contributions to meet the shortfall in NRF reductions, leaving a Council contribution of £328,000 which is insufficient to sustain the current initiative.
  - In the light of this financial constraint that any future neighbourhood management service would need to be reduced and more streamlined.
  - That there were strong arguments to link the future initiative to City Strategy, and refocused on local neighbourhood renewal. The City Strategy focus is upon 5 wards - St. Thomas's, Castle and Priory, Brierley Hill, Netherton and Woodside, St. James's. In addition, the report recommends two peripatetic posts to sustain existing neighbourhood based working outside of these 5 areas. It will also require a management post to oversee the team, and ensure effective neighbourhood delivery of the City Strategy agenda.
  - This refocused initiative could run for the three years of the City Strategy and can be evaluated to identify how effective it can improve services for local people, and achieve cost savings for local agencies through better targeting and co-ordination.
  - By adopting a focus upon City Strategy there is an opportunity for the Borough to attract new funding from the Deprived Area Fund, although at this stage it is not clear about the nature and extent of this pot.
  - That Neighbourhood Action Teams be set up in each of the 5 wards, together with an overall Steering Group to ensure effective management and direction of the initiative.
4. It is proposed to take a report to the Cabinet on the 31<sup>st</sup> October to seek a decision on whether the Council accepts the recommendations of the Silverlock report.

## **Finance**

5. The current budget of neighbourhood management is £653,000 of which the Council contribution is £328,000. There is no NRF earmarked from March 2008, with no indications yet whether there will be an extension of the national programme, and if so whether Dudley will continue to benefit.

## **Law**

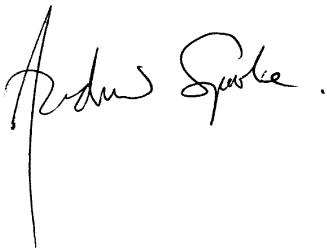
6. Section 2 of the Local Government Act, 2000, enables the Council to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well being of the Borough or any part of it.

## **Equality Impact**

7. The revised focus for neighbourhood renewal, is intended to target the residents of the Borough in greatest need, and to bring agencies together to target local needs more effectively. The approach outlined in the Silverlock report is primarily aimed at residents, including children and young people, in wards that are recognised as being disadvantaged in economic and social terms.

## **Recommendation**

8. It is recommended that:-
  - Committee considers the comments and recommendations of the Silverlock report.



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**Chief Executive**

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## **List of Background Papers**

**A COMMUNITY REGENERATION STRATEGY FOR DUDLEY – Report by Leslie Silverlock**

## **A COMMUNITY REGENERATION STRATEGY FOR DUDLEY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### 1.1 The Audit Commission wrote to Dudley in March 2007

*'The new shared agenda in the community plan has addressing disadvantage as a core challenge. The Council has examples of trying to impact on deprivation and 'closing the gap' but its activities are not co-ordinated. Political commitment to tackling deprivation is not clearly stated although there is a strong need in the borough. There is a need to develop a coherent strategy across the Council on how services with partners can improve quality of life in the most deprived areas of Dudley and realise the goals in the community strategy.'*

#### 1.2 Dudley's future rewards rely on reaching this goal. Borough-wide providers wish to deliver their services more efficiently and effectively, together, at a neighbourhood level to achieve this. They want to address family problems, including unemployment, health, poverty, education, housing, crime, and exclusion in more coordinated ways. Without this coordination Dudley's poorest neighbourhoods will fall further behind the expected liveability norm.

*'The focus will be on key wards where there are nationally significant levels of deprivation, as judged by use of deprivation measures, as well as on smaller neighbourhoods where there are similarly intense levels of need located in wards where the overall level of deprivation is not so evident.'* Chief Executive, DBC.

#### 1.3 Dudley currently directs a substantial range of initiatives and funds designed to deliver effective neighbourhood engagement in service improvements; recent research tells us that a neighbourhood of 14.5 thousand people costs the statutory partners up to £100 million per year for health, education, social services, and benefits. Dudley, with coordination, can use these resources to close the gap between the borough's poorest communities and the norm.

#### 1.4 To illustrate this need for greater coordination, Dudley already has 10 strategic borough strategies and a minimum of 16 identified partnerships which currently focus on the neighbourhood delivery of services, engaging communities in those areas which inhibit the borough's performance compared to those which are more richly 'liveable'. DMBC and partners therefore already invest a substantial proportion of their resources in delivering specialist services through a neighbourhood approach.

#### 1.5 The Local Government White Paper requires the empowerment of communities. It proposes to increase choice in public services and devolve power to the community level. Included is a 'community call for action' enabling citizens to address serious or persistent problems across local public services. Ministers are currently indicating that resources will be released to focus pragmatically on this 'community call to action'.

### **2. WHY A NEIGHBOURHOOD APPROACH?**

#### 2.1 It is necessary for the Borough to adopt a Neighbourhood approach because:

- a. The borough's Comprehensive Performance Assessment requires an improvement in narrowing the gap between the poorest communities and the average.
- b. Funding streams are increasingly being linked to the localisation of services.

- c. Dudley's current strategies and action plans already aspire to improve services and engage local communities in delivery, as the new, Best Value duty requires.
- d. There is cross party support for taking services closer to their users.
- e. Current legislation requires that communities are consulted, involved and engaged in the performance of local services e.g. the Local Government White Paper, the Children's Act, the Crime and Disorder Act etc.
- f. National priorities and funding continue to shift closer to a ward-based approach to renewal.
- g. Without joined up delivery of public services at a local level, Dudley is likely to continue to under-perform in its aspirations for raising standards in its most depressed communities.
- h. CAA will require a comprehensive and coordinated approach to tackling deprivation.

2.2 Borough services need to adopt a neighbourhood approach in order to:

- a. connect with other services.
- b. focus on specific outcomes.
- c. avoid inadvertently impeding one another's interventions.
- d. obtain advice on overlapping delivery.
- e. avoid duplication, often a characteristic of targeted youth support, for example.
- f. be aware of urgent needs which may only touch their service peripherally.
- g. employ existing and potential community resources.
- h. adopt a holistic approach.
- i. act as a conduit to unreached parts of the community.
- j. reduce costs by amalgamating interventions and viring savings to other priorities.

### 3. FURTHER BENEFITS

3.1 A neighbourhood approach to service delivery in the priority areas will add value by:

- a. engaging with people closest to the problems i.e. community leaders, community groups, voluntary organisations.
- b. providing an entrée for services to neighbourhood based solutions.
- c. joining up the interventions of individual services addressing multiple and complex problems.
- d. saving the extra resources of more than one service tackling the same problem.

### 4. A FRESH APPROACH

4.1 In order to improve liveability for Dudley's residents and workers, achieve the rewards of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, action Dudley's commitment to a neighbourhood approach, as stressed in all of its service plans, it is recommended that DMBC and the Partnership refocus its attention on fewer neighbourhoods and seize the opportunity to link its neighbourhood approach with the new City Strategy Initiative. To that end it is recommended that it focuses its revised neighbourhood approach in the areas of:

- ❖ St.Thomas
- ❖ Castle and Priory
- ❖ Brierley Hill
- ❖ Netherton and Woodside
- ❖ St.James

NB: While City Strategy limits focus to these areas on a ward basis partners would have discretion to realign their areas of focus to include broader areas e.g. Brierley Hill & Pensnett, if this was needed to link into existing structures, so long as the link with City Strategy is not lost in terms of its particular performance management needs.

- 4.2 This approach would require dedicated resource for each of the five areas and it is recommended that the new approach recognises that the term “neighbourhood management” is best avoided so as to ensure a clear break between the current structure and this new approach. It is suggested instead that each area be allocated a Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor to reflect the role envisaged.

## **5. NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL ADVISORS**

- 5.1 In the five identified areas, a neighbourhood renewal advisor would be appointed to work on behalf of the major services, with their neighbourhood action teams, in order to join up services’ interventions and accelerate productivity. These appointments will be linked to the City Strategy which itself is seeking to reduce deprivation, starting with worklessness, and affecting related indicators in crime, health, education, environment, and housing.
- 5.2 It is recommended that in addition, two peripatetic neighbourhood renewal advisors be appointed to maintain Dudley’s commitment to the next four most deprived wards, as well as supporting the civic engagement already stimulated in these areas. Support to existing local groups, already active in regeneration in Dudley, is vital if disillusionment with public service delivery is to be managed effectively during the change over.
- 5.3 Neighbourhood renewal advisors would:
- a. Work towards joined up strategies for tackling deprivation with each of the public services
  - b. Act as a conduit between the stakeholders in public services, related agencies and community interests.
  - c. Facilitate the engagement of the voluntary and community sectors.

## **6. NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION TEAMS**

- 6.1 It is further recommended that a Neighbourhood Action Team be formed in each priority area, drawn from front line professionals in the key services which are addressing deprivation in the targeted wards e.g. education, housing, policing, adult services, health, environment, economic development, planning. Staff would need to be allocated time, by their strategic leaders, to facilitate this fresh approach. In return, the teams would enhance the performance of their agency’s service delivery by joining up interventions and initiatives to:
- a. address the issues of families most in need.
  - b. reduce gaps in service.
  - c. avoid overlaps and duplication.
  - d. enable savings to be vired.
  - e. engage consistently with the poorest communities.

## **7. STEERING GROUP**

- 7.1 It was clear during the review that careful management of this initiative is critical to its future success as change management is invariably difficult to achieve without high level support. It is therefore recommended that a high level steering group be established, drawn from key partner agencies, and that such steering group project manage this change in approach.

As well as assisting in removing obstacles to successful implementation such group could usefully determine success criteria for the approach as well as agreeing key milestones for delivery.

## 8. AREA COMMITTEES

- 8.1 Area Committees, already serving the townships add value to this neighbourhood approach, and provide stable foundations for a ward based focus on relieving poverty, tackling worklessness, improving educational attainment, reducing crime, and making every family, school, health service, and community matter. They should continue to receive reports on the neighbourhoods within their townships.

## 9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The suggested approach provides a much sharper focus to service delivery at neighbourhood level, and if linked with the methodology employed in City Strategy provides a strong framework for both delivery and performance management. Although far from clear, there are indications within the City Strategy initiative that additional resource will be made available to support the process (e.g. deprived area fund) albeit the initiative itself will require additional resource to ensure delivery. The suggested approach would therefore benefit both the neighbourhood and City Strategy agendas and recognise that delivery on a worklessness agenda encompasses all the key aspects of neighbourhood renewal that Dudley is committed to delivering. Whilst a narrower focus is being suggested elsewhere, supported by two peripatetic NRAs, with appropriate monitoring and measurement it is suggested that a strong case could be made for this approach to be extended after the three year expiry period for City Strategy. Whilst partners remain committed to delivering the neighbourhood agenda, they have yet to see the real added value of joining up services in this area and only by being able to do so will there be any hope of future enlargement of the approach across other deprived areas. Good performance management is therefore critical to this approach.

## BACKGROUND NOTES

*'We therefore intend to ensure that not only do communities have better access to services, but that increasingly they feel better able to influence decisions around service delivery.'*

*We are empowering local people to have a greater role in public service delivery.'*

Dudley Borough Council

1. This paper has been constructed for Dudley Community Partnership following:
  - A Review of neighbourhood working with 37 public service partners, conducted in February and March this year.
  - Advice from the May and June meetings of the partners.
2. The Borough can expect partners to donate substantial resources in kind to this plan, because they are already doing so, e.g. staffing, premises, time etc. The expectation that partners will be able to contribute financially to this strategy, in the early stages, is unrealistic and not evidenced anywhere else where a neighbourhood approach is employed to deliver more effective services in deprived neighbourhoods. One of the Dudley partners recommends that strategists currently involved in these negotiations examine the excellent work in this respect being conducted in Darlington ([www.darlington.gov.uk/living](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/living)).
3. Communities find it difficult to identify which service or partnership does what. This is especially so in those communities which require the most support. A neighbourhood approach can reduce this confusion.

4. In order not to lower expectations of public services, or break promises to existing community organisations and partnerships, special provision will need to be made to maintain service commitment in those areas which have been encouraged to date in neighbourhood working but which may experience a reduction in support during the transition to this fresh approach.
5. In managing the realignment of its neighbourhood services, DCP and the new neighbourhood renewal advisors will need to take particular care not to withdraw incautiously from these neighbourhoods where investment in community engagement is showing promising progress.

*‘.....neighbourhood management success has inspired local authorities across the country to roll out the approach to hundreds of neighbourhoods. The problem comes when the town hall bureaucracy loses the local focus and simply dilutes a neighbourhood service over bigger and bigger areas.....City neighbourhoods will work if small-scale, local services are focused on tackling immediate problems, as our long-run area study shows.’*  
Smart Cities Work,  
in ‘Jigsaw Cities’ 2007

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Commissioned by Dudley Community Partnership, Spring 2007