

Information/Discussion Paper

Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny

5 September 2011

Review of neighbourhood management process

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 To keep members of scrutiny updated on the work of the council and its partners to support neighbourhood management in Cheltenham following the report to Cabinet in March 2010.

2. Background

- 2.1 In response to the establishment of the 14 neighbourhood co-ordination groups (NCGs) in Cheltenham by the Police, Cabinet on 16 March 2010 agreed to provide support to enable three regeneration partnerships to take on the co-ordination of some of the groups and to extend the scope of the meetings to address a wider range of issues with key partners and members of the community as the basis for neighbourhood management. One-off funding of £5k was offered to each organisation. Cabinet also agreed to explore similar arrangements with two parish councils; Up Hatherley and Charlton Kings.
- 2.2 In the other areas where consultation had showed that there was no appetite to change existing arrangements, it was agreed that the Police would continue to support the neighbourhood co-ordination groups but that £5k would be made available to encourage more community ownership over these NCGs.
- 2.3 It was also agreed that CBC officers would continue to act as a point of contact between CBC and the neighbourhood co-ordination group structure in liaison with elected members.

3. Progress

- 3.1 Since March 2010, there has been a significant shift away from the structure being police-led towards being community-led.
- 3.2 The table below details the current arrangements in the 14 neighbourhood co-ordination groups. Appendix A sets out current priorities relating to the 14 areas.

NCG	Progress	Funding from CBC
Leckhampton	Leckhampton Village Hall committee recently took over the co-ordination and chairing of the meetings.	£1000
Charlton Kings	Charlton Kings Parish Council took up the offer of a one-off grant to run the NCG and has renamed it Charlton Kings & Battledown Neighbourhood Management Forum. It was agreed that the boundary would include the West Ward of the parish council area.	£5000
Hatherley & Benhall	Meetings are still co-ordinated and chaired by the Police. Up Hatherley Parish Council declined to take it on.	
Tivoli	Meetings are still co-ordinated and chaired by the Police.	
Town Centre	The West End Partnership received a one-off grant to take on the running of the NCG.	£5000
Lansdown	Meetings are co-ordinated by the Police but chaired by an elected member.	
Fairview	The Fairview Community Association was recently set up and now runs the NCG meetings. A small grant has been offered to help with running costs.	Up to £1000 offered
Hesters Way, Fiddlers Green & Springbank	Hesters Way Partnership has now run 16 meetings and also runs a 6-monthly Community Soapbox meeting which is an open public meeting for all residents to feed local issues into the process. The partnership received a one off grant from CBC to run this NCG and St Marks NCG.	£5000
St Marks	Hesters Way Partnership has now run 16 meetings and also runs a 6-monthly Community Soapbox meeting as above.	
Swindon Village & Wymans Brook	Meetings are co-ordinated by the Police but chaired by Cheltenham Borough Homes.	
Whaddon & Lynworth	Oakley Regeneration Partnership co-ordinates and chairs the meetings with support from Whaddon, Lynworth & Priors Neighbourhood Project.	£5000
Pittville	Pittville was split from St Pauls and its own NCG meeting set up by the police in early 2011. It is currently police-led.	
St Pauls	St Pauls Road Area Residents Association has taken on the running of the meetings with a small grant from CBC.	£800
Prestbury	A local resident chairs the meetings and supports the police with co-ordination.	

3.3 A meeting of representatives of the 14 NCGs was held in July 2011 and a number of

positives were shared:

- The level of community leadership for the meetings is high, with only 3 of the 14 still being chaired by Police officers and with 8 of the 14 being co-ordinated by a local community organisation.
- All of the groups reported that there was good support in attending meetings and addressing issues from the Police, Borough Council and County Council. Cheltenham Borough Homes also attends relevant meetings.
- The meetings locally are seen as a good place to bring issues together and get things done.

4. Implications for Cheltenham Borough Council

- 4.1** Nine council officers act as points of contact for the 14 NCGs. They attend meetings, summarise issues for the council and co-ordinate a response in liaison with elected members. The Street Scene enforcement team also attend meetings in their patches when available, sometimes in place of the named officer to avoid duplication.
- 4.2** CBC has been involved in and led numerous community plans to address litter and fly tipping, the appearance of road blocks in Whaddon, parking issues, problems arising from new development, dog fouling and anti-social behaviour.
- 4.3** The NCGs have made a big difference to their local areas and the increased community ownership resulting from the support from CBC has led to wider community involvement and the embedding of the process into existing communication mechanisms with the community. Some examples of successes achieved recently are:
- Through the Hesters Way, Fiddlers Green and Springbank NCG, local residents were able to resolve an access issue between Howell Road and a new development (Persimmon Gardens). Through working with CBC Planning and Parks department via the named officer for the NCG and their elected member, ownership was resolved and a fit for purpose permanent barrier was erected.
 - Partnership work is ongoing through the Whaddon and Lynworth NCG to address parking and congestion issues outside the Tesco Express on Hewlett Road.
 - Hatherley and Benhall residents aired concerns about the impact of additional traffic on Hatherley Lane as a result of the new ASDA store opening and the potential for more accidents near the roundabout. The County Council lead officer was able to provide current casualty statistics and the Police and elected members agreed to send letters under the consultation on behalf of the NCG regarding traffic calming measures.
 - Hesters Way, Fiddlers Green and Springbank and St Marks NCGs have run 6 monthly Community Soapbox events over the last 12 months, organised by Hesters Way Partnership. These give NCG members an opportunity to hear issues from the wider public who want to air a concern but not commit to being an NCG member. These issues are then resolved through the NCG or by channelling them to the correct organisation. All of the soapboxes have attracted residents who have not been part of the process before.

- A number of the local organisations running NCGs use their own websites and newsletters to advertise NCG work, which means it is more widely known about.
- The NCGs provide a means to contact directly around 200 key individuals who regularly attend the meetings across the borough, as well a link to their networks. These key individuals also know how to contact service providers to alert them to issues in their community and can access funding sources, for example Community Pride, to run their own projects.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1** The guidance given to the Police about how the meetings should operate has become less stringent and therefore communities can run meetings in the way that suits them best. The number of meetings per year will depend on the area. The emphasis for Police involvement will be around harm that could be caused to communities by the issue, but other issues can still be taken on by the groups and community involvement in solutions is the goal.
- 5.2** County-wide, the work to embed neighbourhood management through the NCGs in Cheltenham is seen as best practice. Some of the groups use the meetings to look at relevant topics as well as identifying concerns for action. For example, the town centre NCG has considered the 20's Plenty initiative and Charlton Kings NCG intends to consider provision for young people at its next meeting.
- 5.3** Areas for further development were identified by the 14 NCGs at the review meeting in July:
- Finding community organisations to chair and /or co-ordinate the remaining 3 police led NCGs.
 - To explore ways that other organisations could contribute to the community engagement results that were brought to meetings and used as the basis for identifying priorities.
 - To work through Gloucestershire Stronger Safer Justice Commission to secure support for the process in terms of a named contact for each community from NHS Gloucestershire, Fire and Rescue and Gloucestershire Highways .
 - To explore measures for broadening the input to the process from a wider cross section of people, for example by using social media and improving communication about successes.
 - Creating borough-wide working groups for issues common to a number of NCGs, for example parking and dog fouling.
 - Discussing with the community 'opportunities' rather than 'issues' to give the meetings a positive focus and to move to other work for example around energy and transport.
- 5.4** All organisations that are receiving funding from the council are clear that this is one-off funding that is not built into base budgets and therefore there are no expectations that additional funding will be available. Instead, organisations seem keen to continue supporting their local NCGs into the future as they now see it as being part of their core work.

6. Summary

6.1 Following the Council's one-off investment we now have a network of neighbourhood organisations that are:-

- Coordinating a wide range of activities at street level that involve statutory bodies and community representatives in their resolution;
- Reinforcing community links by resolving issues that are relevant to local people and organisations - and thereby strengthening communities;
- Becoming more effective at holding some public sector partners to account and
- Representing local opinion on a range of practical issues.

6.2 Looking into the future there will be more opportunity for these neighbourhood groups to become influential in the commissioning of Council and other public services, but care needs to be taken not to overburden them.

Background Papers	Report to Cabinet 16.3.10
Contact Officer	Helen Down, Partnerships Officer, 01242 774960, helen.down@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Cllr John Webster, Cabinet member for community development and finance
Scrutiny Function	Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny