



Report of Director, Neighbourhoods and Housing Department

Outer South Area Committee

Date: Monday 26th February 2007

Subject: Neighbourhood Improvement Plans – A way forward.

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ardsley & Robin Hood
Morley North
Morley South
Rothwell

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity
Community Cohesion
Narrowing the Gap

Council
Function

Delegated Executive
Function available
for Call In

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call In Details set out in the
report

Executive Summary

The Outer South Area Committees response to the Narrowing the Gap agenda has in part been the commitment to priority neighbourhoods through the Neighbourhood Improvement Plans (NIPs). This report looks at progress of the NIPs so far and recommends future actions so that the NIPs can continue to make sustainable improvements to each area identified. Particular attention is given to the role of the Neighbourhood Worker in encouraging community involvement, how this process will be managed within the NIPs and how it will be evaluated.

1.0 Background

1.1 Narrowing the Gap forms one of three aims of the vision for Leeds 2004- 2020. There is a growing realisation that while the city continues to prosper some of the more deprived areas of the city continue to be marginalised and have not benefited from this increase in wealth and associated benefits. Therefore there is a substantial difference between areas of the city and the aim of narrowing gap is to look at interventions and actions that can address this inequality. Most importantly the emphasis is on making sure that all residents have equal opportunity and access to service provision. It is recognised that no agency alone can solve these issues, but through partnership working, Leeds can move forward in Narrowing the Gap.

1.2 In response to this aim, the Outer South Area Committee has developed Neighbourhood improvement Plans (NIPs). In September 2004 the Area Committee identified several Priority Neighbourhoods on the basis of levels of deprivation and instances of recurring issues such as anti social behaviour and environmental issues.

- 1.3 The below section was taken from the Area Committee report on how the Neighbourhood Areas would be managed.

“The development and delivery of the improvement plan, would, in each neighborhood be steered by a core working group of relevant officers, chaired by a ward member, and supported by the Area Management team. The make up of the working group will be dependent upon the nature of the key issues to be addressed. For example, in Newlands and Denshaws, the core group would need to include the police, the Primary Care Trust, Education, Skills and Training providers, and City Services.

It is anticipated that for each neighbourhood, between three and five key issues will be identified, and between one and four actions proposed to address each. Each action will be detailed, together with a description of the issue /s it will address, who will be involved in developing and delivering the action, and a lead officer identified for each. A timescale for the action will be provided, resource implications quantified, and the manner in which the success or otherwise of the action will be measured.”

- 1.4 Areas were identified in three phases. The first phase included Eastleighs Fairleighs, John O’Gaunts and Newlands and Denshaws. The second phase included The Harrops, Wood Lane, and Oakwells and Farefaxes. The third phase has not yet been developed in detail due to resource commitments and priorities in other areas.

2.0 Progress

- 2.1 Through consultation and statistical analysis key priorities were identified for the NIP areas. Because the community had been consulted there was a sense ownership for the NIP and a shared sense of purpose when creating and implementing solutions. This subsequently created a surge of energy around the NIPs and outputs and actions were achieved. Quick wins such as environmental clearance, community days and youth activities were achieved. Some other initiatives began to wane as it became apparent that some of the interventions planned were unrealistic, impractical and in some cases opposed by residents. Phase one began to be implemented in April 2005 and Phase 2 was agreed by Area Committee in December 2005 and is managed through a single steering group. Therefore the NIP steering groups have now been ongoing for a period of 12 month to two years.

3.0 Achievements

- 3.1 There have been a number of agencies involved in the steering groups of each NIP with a real commitment to bringing around change; this type of approach is recognised as key to “Narrowing the Gap”. Simply by the multi agency approach to the area, residents will have better access to mainstream services as they become more locally driven through the NIP. This has meant a greater sharing of resources but in most cases sharing of information and agreed priorities. There is no doubt that this has had a positive impact on the NIPS and is a credit to those agencies involved. Achievements include capital improvements to shops, fencing and improved facilities for young people. Revenue projects include community days, summer activities, partnership work with local schools such as the dog fouling campaign in Eastleigh’s Farleigh’s and drug misuse work in Newlands and Denshaws. There have been some elements of good community involvement with some community representatives being involved in the steering groups and playing a strong role. Please refer to **Appendix 1** for a summary of actions that have been achieved by NIP to date.

4.0 Concerns.

- 4.1 Initially it was anticipated that NIPs would be time limited, but through experience it has become apparent that a long term commitment is more appropriate when aiming to “Narrow the Gap”. Regeneration needs to be focused upon sustainable outcomes rather than short term outputs that will create a quick win effects. NIP’s need to increase people’s aspirations and faith in mainstream services and this will not be achieved overnight. It is only through the empowerment of local communities to address inequalities with the support and commitment of agencies to the long term issues, that real sustainable change will be created. Therefore it is a recommendation of this report that the NIP’s should aim to have a long term emphasis, and that they should only draw to a close once the community feel empowered to address local issues themselves.
- 4.2 Although there has been a strong representation from agencies at the NIP meetings this has waned over the last six months. There are a number of reasons for this such as resource difficulties in the Area Management Team which has meant actions have become less coordinated. Some actions have become out of date or unachievable such as the installation of youth shelters or community cabins, which has meant that meetings have become more like “talking shops” rather than output driven. It is paramount that agencies buy into the NIPs as they should be as much a priority for other agencies as they are to Area Management.
- 4.3 There has been a lack of revenue initiatives with clear outputs and outcomes which has limited the role of the NIPs in bringing around sustainable change. Revenue projects by their very nature require more long term commitment from inception through to completion and often require agencies to add additional work to their schedules. Nevertheless there is a need for small attainable projects that link in with the priorities for each Neighbourhood to be initiated. Some NIP’s have addressed this through discussing best practise from other areas but there is a real need for agencies to be proactive in producing proposals and presenting these to the NIPs.
- 4.4 Community involvement within the NIPs has been hit and miss. In some areas there already exists Resident Associations but formal links with the NIP steering groups has not been made, while in other areas there are no formalised Resident Associations at all. While the NIP steering groups are not intended as a place for the general public to attend, it is appropriate that resident representatives attend i.e. chairs and secretaries of groups. Community representation at the NIPs will assist in ensuring that real needs are addressed and that service provision and projects are appropriate, it is particularly important to work with recognised authorities such as the Parish councils. Resident representatives often provide the creativity for new projects that can be locally accountable. Following on from this there is a need to keep the community informed of what has been achieved through the NIPs and in some cases the reasons why projects have not come to fruition. In order for the NIPs to have the desired effect it is crucial that they are accountable and transparent to the local community. This type of update can be delivered through the Area Committee Newsletter or some other local device.

5.0 The future.

- 5.1 The Neighbourhood Worker Project commissioned by the Area Committee provides the opportunity to address some key issues for the NIPs, particularly around community capacity. The role of the Neighbourhood Worker is to empower local residents to bring forward their issues and provided them with the means to address them through the creation of Resident Associations. This will be achieved in each NIP via the model at **Appendix 2**. The model indicates the process for the delivery of community development in each NIP with timescales and outcomes. Crucially this model will form the evaluation process for what has been achieved by the Neighbourhood Worker at the end of the 12 months period. The real value of the project will lie in the capacity of community groups to take a lead role in the NIP steering groups.
- 5.2 An initial element of this work is the creation of community days. Not only will these help create community cohesion and pride in the local area, they will be a focus to re-energise the action plans by carrying out consultation work at the event. This will provide the means for agencies to use the event for consultation for specific projects such commissioning summer activity for young people or capital work to a local park. Crucially this is an area where the Neighbourhood Worker can work with residents to shape the community day early on in the community development process, which will increase capacity and empowerment. This work has already begun in Eastleigh's Fairleigh's and created the desired effect, residents have taken a keen interest in the community day and have provided a wealth of ideas, there has been an increase in the number of agencies that attend the NIP and general feeling that things are happening and projects are beginning to be formed again.
- 5.3 It is recommended that NIP steering groups should only be brought to an end once the community have created capacity through a Resident Association or the establishment of a Ward Forum. Already through the role of the Neighbourhood Worker the Resident's meeting are beginning to replica the issues and actions in the NIP steering group. However the continued attendance of all agencies would compromise the role of the Associations and would be a drain on resources. Therefore it is proposed that in the long term Ward Forums are set up such as the Rothwell interagency where Resident representatives from each NIP can bring their issues to the table. This would provide a more holistic approach as issues could be considered on how they affect the whole ward rather than isolated work in each NIP.

6.0 Timescales

- 6.1 It is recommended that a further commitment is given to Phase 1 NIPs for another twelve months with a view to handing over further development to an established Resident Association or Ward Forum.
- 6.2 All of the 3 NIPs in phase 2 are currently being managed by one steering group. Each NIP needs to be locally driven and this is enhanced by having the steering groups meet in the area, it also increases the links between the NIPs and Resident groups and likely community representations at meetings. Therefore it is recommended that Phase 2 NIPs adopt separate steering groups from June 2006.

In line with this the Neighbourhood Worker should begin the model of intervention (**Appendix 2**) from June 2006.

- 6.3 Members are asked to note that given the above it will not be possible to action further NIPs for the foreseeable future. To begin a programme of action in these areas in the next twelve months would jeopardise work in the phase one and two in terms of sustainability and progress of work due to resources.

7.0 **Evaluation**

A report summarising the progress in the NIPs will be presented to the Area Committee every 6 months. The report will provide NIP budgets and actions completed or in progression. The evaluation of work carried out by the Neighbourhood Worker through the Model in **Appendix 2** will also be presented.

8.0 **Finance**

In view of the lack of project proposals for revenue projects it recommended that a clear process is implemented. Attached is a template for draft proposals to be presented to the NIPs (**Appendix 3**). These proposals will then be discussed at steering group meetings and consideration will be given to how these meet NIP objectives.

9.0 **Recommendations**

Members of the Outer South Area Committee are requested to:

- (a). Note the contents of this report and consider any actions
- (b). Note the summary of actions at (Appendix 1)
- (b). Agree the proposed model of community development for all NIPs (Appendix 2)
- (c). Agree the timescales for the roll out of the NIPs
- (d). Agree the process for evaluation and review
- (e). Agree to receive a report to a future meeting exploring the establishment of Ward Forums
- (f). Agree the proposal proforma for revenue spend through the NIPs (Appendix 3)