1. **Meeting:** Communities and Involvement Members Panel

2. **Date:** 7 February 2008

3. **Title:** Neighbourhood Governance Pilot Project: Eastwood & Springwell Gardens (Developing a model that enables communities and stakeholders to engage in the governance of their neighbourhood)

4. **Programme Area:** Neighbourhoods & Adult Services

5. **Summary**

   The Panel will recall that the Eastwood and Springwell Gardens Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (NMP) commissioned Communities & Organisations: Growth & Support (COGS) Consulting to develop a pilot model of neighbourhood governance for the NMP area.

   This report is an update to that work and a summary of the findings of the Final Report now prepared by COGS.

6. **Recommendation**

   The Panel is asked to note that, at its meeting on 31 January 2008, the NMP Board will be asked to

   1. **agree** a model of Neighbourhood Governance for the NMP area

   2. **discuss and agree** the implementation plan and

   3. **approve the resource** necessary to implement the model
7. Proposal and Details

Background
The NMP commissioned Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) to manage a contract to develop and review a neighbourhood governance structure/model to engage the communities and stakeholders that comprise Eastwood and Springwell Gardens in the governance of that neighbourhood.

After a tendering procedure a contract was agreed with COGS Consulting in May 2007. The aims of the contract were to

1. Provide clear, evidenced based recommendations and an implementation plan for the development of a new sustainable model of neighbourhood governance for Eastwood & Springwell Gardens and

2. Identify good practice in developing neighbourhood governance models which may be rolled out to other communities across Rotherham

A Steering Group comprised of representatives of VAR, the NMP Board and Team and elected members and officers of RMBC was established to oversee the contract

The COGS final report identifies 4 possible models of Neighbourhood Governance

A. A Community Panel recruited annually from residents across the area ensuring a good cross-section of representation by geography, ethnicity, gender and age. It might meet perhaps 2 or 3 times per year, and is used as a sounding board by those with ‘power’.

B. A Neighbourhood Committee made up of street representatives, each covering a small area of several streets around their own house. Each street rep would be responsible for communicating with residents in their patch in between meetings held every 2 to 3 months attended by local Councillors and service providers. At each meeting reps would discuss and identify priorities for consultation and report back on consultations carried out in the previous period. Meetings would need to be structured and facilitated. There would be potential for a newsletter to support street consultation, and potentially an executive committee to help manage the process.

C. A Neighbourhood Forum open to residents and community groups providing a public space for consultation and debate on local issues, probably with a constitution, an executive and representatives going to other structures. It could have a partnership approach to working with service providers and would involve local Councillors in an ex-officio role. It could have a small budget and informal powers and be a first step towards a more formal neighbourhood council.

D. A Neighbourhood Council with elected neighbourhood councillors. These could be a mix of councillors elected from small geographical constituencies and co-opted places to ensure effective ‘coverage’ of all interests. Ward Councillors could be eligible to stand or perhaps have an ex-officio seat. The
Council would have negotiated terms of reference with RMBC including a budget, powers and constraints, agreed role within the democratic structure and operational procedures. It would draw on best practice from similar models such as parish Councils or Tenant Management Organisations. It could also manage a neighbourhood budget (perhaps a percentage of the council tax for that area, or a RMBC neighbourhood allocation) for devolved services.

**COGS recommend** a combination of option C a *Neighbourhood Forum* with *Street Representatives* for appropriate areas (option B) and *budget management* (option D).

8. **Finance**

A draft implementation plan and budget is being considered by the NMP Board on 31 January 2008.

9. **Risks and Uncertainties**

Every endeavour has been made to engage with key individuals and organisations and the community and “there is enough goodwill from residents, officers and members to embark on a community governance development”

10. **Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

Improving the level of involvement of local people is a major part of the Government’s agenda to delivering improved services and policies and greater user satisfaction, nationally and locally.

The work being undertaken by the NMP anticipates the proposals in the *Local Government White Paper Implementation Plan* for new powers for principal authorities to carry out community governance reviews. It will provide an early indicator of how such reviews may be conducted and implemented.

The proposed Neighbourhood Governance Pilot Project for Eastwood and Springwell Gardens is at the forefront of national policy; it is the only one to have benefited from a precursor piece of work exploring the options available and recommending how the favoured option might be implemented.
Background Papers and Consultation

Neighbourhood Governance Pilot Project Final Report by Communities & Organisations: Growth & Support

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