

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	19th January, 2011
3.	Title:	Review of Neighbourhood Partnership Service
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This report describes the progress made in reviewing the structure and functions of the Neighbourhood Partnership Service and recommends a new operating model.

The proposals contained within the report primarily concern a reduction in senior management posts whilst retaining frontline positions. In the light of the current economic climate it is expected that partnership working will have to be more direct and operationally focussed. These proposals take account of such anticipated changes whilst maintaining the capacity to still deliver an effective neighbourhood partnership service.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- **Notes the content of the report, the staffing implications arising from the proposals and the timescale for implementation.**
- **Agrees the structural changes set out in the report.**

7. Proposals and Details

Background

Cabinet has previously agreed (10/8/10 min. ref. C47) that the Neighbourhood Partnership Service should be reviewed. This review was instigated because, whilst the service has a significant impact on a wide range of council priorities, in itself it is a discretionary service. It was also apparent that the service had a significant number of managerial posts relative to its size and that in view of the significant pressures facing the Authority; the current organisational arrangements were felt to not be financially sustainable.

This review commenced on the 22nd September and concluded one month later. The review had two main objectives:

- 1 To develop proposals for a service fit for purpose in the light of current and future anticipated demands, and
- 2 To reduce costs to a more sustainable level.

Principles

The service has been reviewed in order to create an operating model capable of:

- 1 Undertaking wide ranging area based needs assessments and translating them into action focussed service plans.
- 2 Providing support and stewardship of local communities, and directly influencing housing, environmental and community safety agendas, making it easier to get things done.
- 3 Promoting civic participation and supporting local democratic processes.
- 4 Becoming a critical element of integrated locality based services.

The proposals contained within this report have been developed in anticipation of the need to streamline both decision making and service delivery processes. Currently this service provides a critical role in coordinating the activity of a range of service deliverers. Some of this activity takes place at a strategic level, for example through LSP theme groups, other coordination takes place at a more operational level. This work has been important in ensuring that the services of a range of departments and organisations work together effectively for the benefit of local people. However as we move forward there will be less additional financial resources available for allocation through partnership processes and less organisational capacity to sustain such activity. Consequently it will be critical that focus is placed on significant priorities and operating process are developed that are sleek and efficient.

Consideration is being given at various levels regarding the need to streamline such activity, for example in relation to LSP theme boards. Similarly at the operational level it is widely recognised that the full existing arrangements for operational coordination are not sustainable, and that processes are required which promote cooperation and coordination between staff without the reliance

on so many meetings. One of the ways of doing this will be to promote service integration, and reduce the existing barriers between services which stifle cooperation. The Cabinet has previously been consulted on work taking place to bring about a closer integration of locality based services (10/8/10, min c45), the proposals relating to the Neighbourhood Partnership Service have been developed in anticipation of its future incorporation within a wider range of locality services.

It is also anticipated that the nature of the work undertaken by the NPS will need to contract. Over the years the service has become increasingly involved in an ever increasing wider range of activities. In the future the service will need to focus activity on those issues which it can have the greatest impact upon and those issues which have the greatest affect on communities. In practice this will mean there will be an increasing emphasis placed on support for community engagement and democratic processes particularly in relation to housing, environmental and crime (including ASB) based issues. Issues out side of these themes will not be ignored but there will be an increasing expectation that other services will through NPS supported processes undertake primary responsibility for them.

The Proposals

In the future it is proposed that the building block for the NPS will remain the Area Assembly geography and that the 7 Area Assemblies and their coordinating groups are retained; however it is proposed that services will be delivered from three teams, each with its own manager. It is expected that these teams will operate from three locations, and it is anticipated that in time, they may be joined by other services as part of a wider locality based neighbourhood management service.

It is proposed that the number of Neighbourhood Partnership Managers will reduce to one (from the existing three) and the number of Area Partnership Managers will reduce to three (from the existing seven). It is further proposed that there will be no change to the number of Community Support Officers or Community Involvement Officers. There will be a net loss of six posts.

Since the start of this review, 5 members of staff have taken advantage of the Councils offer of voluntary severance or early release and have either left the service or are to do so imminently.

8. Next Steps

If the proposals contained within this report are supported by Cabinet it is intended that 12 week notices will be issued on the 3rd January 2011. Expressions of interest will be invited during the following week with subsequent interviews completed by the middle of January. The new arrangements will be implemented by early February. Compulsory redundancies may need to take place dependant upon the outcome of the restructuring exercise and the ability of remaining staff to either secure other positions within the council or employment elsewhere.

9. Finance

This will generate annual savings of £360k in a full year, once exit costs have been accounted for.

10. Risks and Uncertainties

This review presupposes that the NPS will at some future point be assimilated within a wider locality based service. This development will be important in ensuring that we can develop effective streamlined processes. However the NPS is capable of existing without this wider service, but it will be harder and more time consuming to deliver the improvements in services which communities require.

There is a risk that the size of the geographic areas covered by each of the new teams will be too large to make an effective impact. This will need to be carefully monitored and consideration given to any learning when finalising the locality review.

There is a risk that the service will no longer be able to support wider partnership processes as desired by other departments and organisations. SYPF understand this potential and are also keen to streamline coordination activity to make it more effective, however services delivering wider agendas such as those relating to health, children's services and economic development will also need to take account of the reduced capacity of the NPS service.

11. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This service has an impact on a wide range of performance agendas. In the future it will primarily focus on housing, environmental and crime based issues. Careful consideration will need to be given to ensure that the lack of capacity to assist other agendas does not result in a detrimental impact on wider performance.

12. Background Papers and Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken within the service but not with a wider audience. No formal submissions were received from the service objecting to the specific proposals.

There will be a need to hold further meetings with all staff and trade unions to make them aware of the outcome of the consultation process and the agreement to implement the new structure, should it be supported.

Reports: Cabinet Reports: Tackling the in year budget pressures C47 10.8.10
Localities Review Strategy C45 10.8.10

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