



Report Title

Neighbourhood Model

AGENDA STATUS:

PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	3 March 2010
Key Decision:	NO
Listed on Forward Plan:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Environment & Culture
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Trini Crake Councillor Paul Varnserry
Ward(s)	Non-specific

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Council aims to make Northampton a better place to live by improving the way it engages with local people to give them more say in the opportunities and issues in their communities that affect their quality of life.
- 1.2 A new neighbourhood model is proposed that will enhance the way we consult, involve and deliver services to the public that will enable us to achieve this aspiration.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's in principle approval of the proposed new neighbourhood model and to request Cabinet's agreement to commence implementation, subject to constitutional changes being agreed by Full Council.
- 1.4 A description of the proposed model and how it will work is provided within the report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves in principle the model for neighbourhood working proposed within this report as a means of improving engagement with local communities and making public services more responsive to their needs.
- 2.2 That any constitutional changes required to implement the neighbourhood model are referred to the Constitutional Review Working Party, for its consideration and to make recommendations to Full Council.
- 2.3 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Environment and Culture, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, to take any actions necessary to further refine the model.
- 2.4 That Cabinet notes the financial implications for the council arising from the implementation of the neighbourhood model, as set out in paragraph 4.2.
- 2.5 That Cabinet agrees to receive a further report after a period of experience, review and consultation on the proposed neighbourhood model to monitor its implementation and to agree any amendments to the model that may be required.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 It is the ambition of Northampton Borough Council to be amongst the best Councils in terms of public services by 2013. We have agreed this ambition because we believe that this is what the people of Northampton deserve and have a right to expect.
- 3.1.2 The Council believes it will only achieve this ambition if it is able to properly listen to its communities and starts to empower local people to make decisions about the opportunities and issues in their neighbourhoods that affect their quality of life.
- 3.1.3 At times of tremendous financial challenge it is even more important that we keep this ambition at the forefront of our minds. Finding a way to work closely with our partners to engage and involve local people, effectively support councillors in their role of community champions and deliver services that are flexible and responsive to customer need is essential to the achievement of this ambition.
- 3.1.4 The purpose of the neighbourhood model is to put in place a new way of working focused around neighbourhoods and communities that has the potential to deliver real change to all areas of Northampton. It must however be recognised that dramatic change will not happen overnight. The proposed model, once implemented, will need to be given the necessary support to allow it to grow, develop and mature. Improvement flowing from the model will be incremental and will build up over time, rather than delivering immediate transformation.

- 3.1.5 The scope of the project to deliver the neighbourhood model has extended beyond council services and responsibilities. Key delivery partners such as Police, Fire and the County Council have been involved.
- 3.1.6 Through the proposed neighbourhood model the Council aspires to:
- agree with partners shared neighbourhood boundaries based on natural neighbourhoods and electoral wards, covering the whole of the borough
 - ensure that a deep understanding of the needs and attributes of neighbourhoods and communities informs the way local services are designed and delivered in the future
 - put the frameworks in place to promote local democracy and support councillors in their local leadership role
 - develop robust mechanisms to consult, involve and empower communities (including those who are hard to reach)
 - put arrangements in place that will support targeted interventions to close the gap between the poorest and most affluent neighbourhoods so that nobody in Northampton is disadvantaged by where they live
 - make mainstream public services more accessible and responsive to local needs through devolvement, colocation and integration
- 3.1.7 A variety of measures have already been implemented in Northampton aimed at advancing this agenda, including neighbourhood services, neighbourhood managed areas, neighbourhood coordinators, environmental wardens and neighbourhood partnerships. These initiatives have not been coordinated or embedded in the day to day business of the Council and its partners. Furthermore they have been based on a range of different neighbourhood boundaries and have resulted in a two tier system. They have however been, to some extent, effective in their own right in delivering improved outcomes and will provide some learning for the future.
- 3.1.8 This report proposes that we move to a single model for neighbourhood working that is embraced by local people, elected members and all key partner agencies across the town. It is proposed that the model is implemented borough wide and becomes a part of the way we do things in Northampton. To ensure our model has sustainable impact it is important that we join partners, elected members and citizens together at the strategic, democratic and community level. This type of coherent, systematic approach will enable us to maximise the impact of collective resources on priority outcomes.
- 3.1.9 Recent government White Papers (Strong and Prosperous Communities (2006), Communities in Control – Real People, Real Power (2007)) send out a clear message that a key role of local government is to work with public service partners and communities to sustainably improve the quality of life of local people. The White Papers set out a clear agenda for local government in relation to community leadership, working with partners, local democracy and community empowerment that requires the type of coherent, systematic approach to neighbourhood management that is proposed in this report.

There is a clear indication that this message would not change in the event of a change of government.

3.1.10 From April 2009, through comprehensive area assessment (CAA), Councils will be judged on how effectively they work with their partners and communities to deliver more responsive services and better local outcomes. CAA recognises that what matters locally varies from place to place and requires us to demonstrate how local services work together to make efficient and effective use of collective resources to meet the needs and priorities of the community. The proposed neighbourhood model will enable us to respond better to the requirements of CAA.

3.1.11 As part of the CAA process, The Place Survey is undertaken. The survey focuses on quality of life by asking people about their perception of the area where they live. It provides us with a useful source of data to understand how we need to change and what our areas for improvement should be. One such area for improvement highlighted by the Place Survey is in relation to the perception of local people of their ability to influence decisions in their locality. The neighbourhood model will be a vital tool in enabling us to improve performance against this indicator, as well as having a positive impact on Place Survey results overall.

3.1.12 The police have now moved to a single target on local confidence. The single confidence measure is a target they share with local authorities. It is intended to focus energy and resources on the most serious issues that blight communities.

3.1.13 The single confidence measure is as much an issue for the Council as it is for the Police. It requires public services to come together to:

- work in partnership
- identify local concerns
- tackle those concerns
- report back to people on how their concerns have been responded to and what action has been taken

3.1.14 The neighbourhood model proposed within this report provides the type of framework that is essential if we are to respond effectively to the challenges of the single confidence measure.

3.1.15 The proposed neighbourhood model recognises the strategic significance to the borough of the town centre, which sits within the central area, and as such also provides for appropriate additional engagement arrangements for the town centre business community.

3.2 Neighbourhood Model

3.2.1 The proposed neighbourhood model is primarily about more effectively engaging and involving people in what goes on in their communities so that they take ownership of local opportunities and issues and feel empowered to address them.

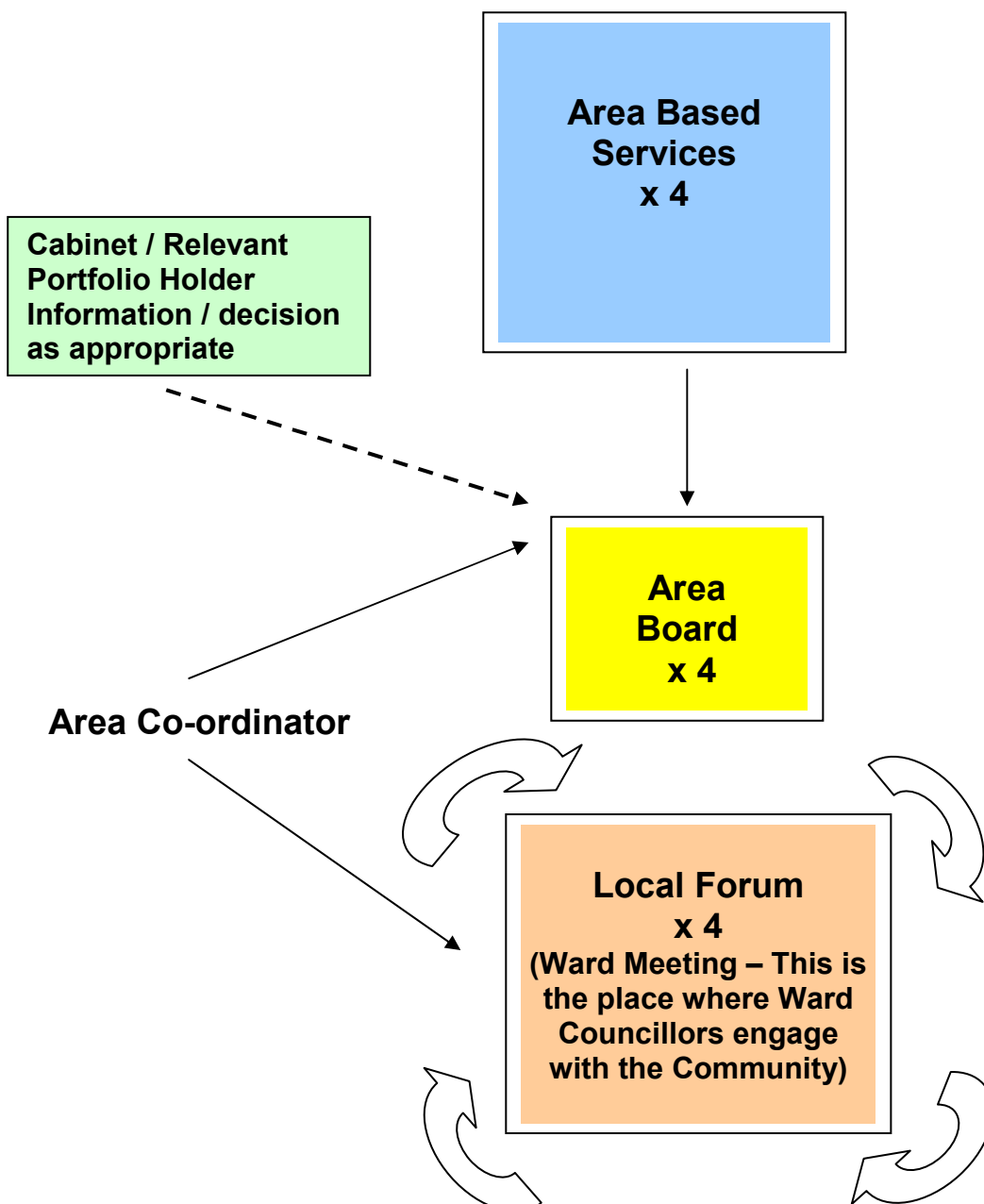
3.2.2 The concept of the proposed neighbourhood model is that it sits within a wider public service framework that ensures a structured and systematic approach at the strategic, thematic and local level.

3.2.3 The purpose of such a framework is to ensure that at all levels, there is a coherence around public services that means we are able to work effectively together and target resources at agreed priorities.

3.2.4 Four areas have been identified as the potential boundaries for the neighbourhood model – North, East, Central, South West.

3.2.5 A diagram of the proposed neighbourhood model is provided below. As illustrated, its key element are as follows:

- Area based services
- Area boards
- Local forums



3.2.6 It will be the responsibility of the relevant director to keep the relevant portfolio holder informed of activity, issues and progress arising from local forums and area officer boards, as appropriate. Matters requiring an executive decision will be referred by the relevant portfolio holder to Cabinet for its consideration.

3.2.7 **Constitution**

To further enhance the governance of the Neighbourhood Model, it is proposed that the Constitutional Review Working Party incorporates the Neighbourhood Model within its current work programme and recommends changes to the constitution to Full Council.

3.2.8 **Area based services**

The purpose of the area services teams will be to keep neighbourhoods clean and tidy by providing effective environmental services, helping to reduce crime, fear of crime, ASB and the visible impact of crime on the environment, e.g. graffiti, fly tipping, vandalism. The establishment of area services teams will make it easier to identify opportunities for coordinated activity, joined up working, integration and further devolvement of services.

3.2.9 Plans are currently being developed to consider colocation with the Police at a location in each of the four areas. It is envisaged that Police SCT and council staff would be permanently based at these sites and there would also be 'hot desk' facilities in each location for officers from other agencies or council staff whose permanent base is elsewhere.

3.2.10 **Area boards**

The purpose of the area boards is to receive for action information about local issues and priorities from local forums. It is proposed that their membership consists of the area coordinator and appropriate senior officers from services such as street care/grounds, housing, public protection, police and youth, as well as officers from other partner agencies such as Fire and PCT.

3.2.11 There is potential for area boards to take the lead on place shaping and neighbourhood regeneration. It is suggested however that their initial focus is likely to be environmental issues and community safety, but their remit should not be considered to be limited to these issues and, in any case, there should be an ambition to broaden their focus in the future.

3.2.12 **Local forums (ward meetings)**

The focal point of the proposed neighbourhood model is councillors and the people they represent. It is therefore entirely dependent on effective community engagement. Whilst it is intended that local forums will be the key vehicle for engaging local people at ward level, the proposed neighbourhood model will require a flexible approach to working with councillors and communities that is based on what works for them. It will be the role of the area coordinator to take the lead on developing a range of means for effective engagement, involvement and empowerment.

3.2.13 Local forums will operate at ward level and should be regarded as ward meetings. Their focus will be very local to ensure close engagement with the

public. It is proposed that there will be four local forums, one for each area. The local forums will rove within their area, meeting in different locations, on a regular basis and returning to each location at regular intervals. Attendance at local forums is proposed as follows but will vary depending on the issues to be discussed:

Attendee	Purpose
Councillors	Community leadership
Public	Engagement/ involvement
Area coordinator	Support/facilitation
Police SCT rep	Local identified priority setting
Council/County Council officers	Information/advice
Others – as requested	Information/advice

3.2.14 It is proposed that local forums replace other existing public engagement forums so as to ensure a 'single conversation' between local people and public services.

3.2.15 The proposed purpose of local forums is to provide a regular public meeting at ward level that is clearly identified by all stakeholders as the place where local people go to meet with councillors and partners to determine local priorities for improvement, raise issues and concerns and find out how to become involved in improving their neighbourhood.

3.2.16 It is proposed that local forums are supported and facilitated by area coordinators who will work on behalf of councillors by taking the priorities determined at ward level to the area boards to be addressed and will keep councillors informed of progress and actions, so that they can update the public at subsequent local forums when it returns to their ward.

3.2.17 **Local forums (ward meetings) – role of elected members**

An effective neighbourhood model should be driven by elected members from the very heart of the communities they serve. It should provide front line councillors with a clearly defined place within their ward for undertaking their community leadership role and ensure that they have easy access to the public resources they need to influence and improve their communities and get things done quickly and effectively.

3.2.18 It is proposed that councillor involvement in the neighbourhood model is, in the main, through the leadership they provide to local forums, which operate at ward level. It is envisaged that, in addition to borough councillors, county councillors may also be invited to attend the local forum when it is in their ward, if they wish to.

3.2.19 The local forums will provide the venue for councillors to determine local priorities for their ward, and through their area coordinator, ensure that these issues get appropriately addressed.

3.2.20 Existing community meetings such as JAGs/community panels will evolve into local forums as the model is rolled out.

3.2.20 Area coordinators

It is proposed that four area coordinators are appointed, one for each area. Their purpose will be to make the neighbourhood model work by providing effective support to councillors in their wards through ensuring that there is a robust interface between local forums and area boards. The suggested role of the area coordinator will be to support and facilitate the neighbourhood model at area level.

3.2.21 Duties will include:

- Supporting frontline councillors in their involvement in local forums
- Supporting, facilitating and coordinating the activity of the relevant area board
- Supporting, facilitating and coordinating the activity of the relevant local forum
- Ensuring the coherence and coordination of all elements of the neighbourhood model

3.2.22 Once options and choices have been considered an implementation plan will be developed. A proposed 'go live' date of April 2010 is suggested, subject to Full Council approving constitutional changes.

3.2.23 Care will be taken to ensure a smooth and gradual transition from current to new arrangements in order to ensure changes are viewed as an evolution from existing arrangements rather than a change in direction.

3.3 Choices (options)

3.3.1 If Cabinet choose to Implement the proposed neighbourhood model it will help to empower local people to make decisions about the opportunities and issues in their communities that affect their quality of life and will therefore ultimately help to make Northampton a better place to live.

3.3.2 Cabinet could choose not agree to implement the proposed neighbourhood model and should do so if they are not satisfied that it will ultimately achieve its high ambitions for the communities of Northampton.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 The proposed neighbourhood model does not directly impact on policy, although it will provide a framework for neighbourhood working against which future policy may be developed.

4.2 Risk and resources

4.2.1 Implementation of the proposed neighbourhood model will deliver annual savings to the council of approximately £300k. These savings are mainly derived from the implementation of area working arrangements.

4.2.2 The Council will fund two of the area coordinator posts and the Police will also fund two. Funding of these posts will be reviewed after 12 months.

4.2.3 As with any major transformation there are risks associated with the changes that will need to be implemented. It is important that these risks are identified, assessed and appropriately mitigated.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report

4.4 Equality

4.4.1 There are no equalities issues directly associated with this report. The Council has stringent standards in relation to equalities and any changes introduced will be fully consistent with these standards and, as appropriate, will be subject to equality impact assessment.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 A range of stakeholders have been consulted on the development of the proposed neighbourhood model, including councillors, officers, Police, County Council, Fire Service, PCT and other agencies.

4.5.2 Further consultation will take place throughout the initial implementation phase so that the model can be developed and improved.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 The proposals contained in this report have the potential to contribute to all five of the council's priority outcomes.

4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 None

5. Background Papers

5.1 None

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