

Birmingham Strategic Partnership Programme Board 15th May 2007

Action for Neighbourhoods - Developing a Single Neighbourhood Programme

Purpose of Report

1. To propose a more coherent approach to managing 'the neighbourhoods agenda' in Birmingham.
2. This is, in essence, about how local residents and agencies work together to improve neighbourhoods. We want to do this by helping neighbourhoods draw on best practice and do 'what works' so a much bigger impact will be made on the problems that most concern them.
3. This approach will help the council and its partners prioritise resources and achieve better value for money. It will also enable the council to respond to the scrutiny review of devolution and localisation (July 2006) and to the Local Government White Paper. The Cabinet Committee on Devolution is committed to producing a Framework for Neighbourhood Action during the summer 2007.

Recommendations

4. The Board is asked to consider
 - a) the merits of creating a single neighbourhood programme
 - b) the next steps outlined at the end of this paper; and
 - c) setting up a neighbourhoods performance board

Background

5. The city has, to date, piloted a number of approaches to neighbourhood working. These include work funded through the 'neighbourhood element' grant, setting up the 'guide neighbourhoods' and taking forward neighbourhood management. All aim to deliver improved outcomes and contribute to improved performance against a range of measures. These, in turn, build on earlier neighbourhood interventions such as the, award winning, Safer Neighbourhood Projects, Safer Estates Projects, Neighbourhood Policing and Neighbourhood Tasking.
6. Birmingham also has a strong community sector with a wealth of experience in neighbourhood development. Constituencies are supporting this in a number of ways, identifying "natural neighbourhoods" and considering the level of support they may need. And we are currently reviewing how better to manage community engagement in the city.

7. This report aims to find a way of building on our experience to date, which has had only limited geographical coverage, by putting forward a more consistent approach to neighbourhood delivery that can – in time - be rolled out across the City.
8. We also need to clarify who is responsible for neighbourhood working, especially for initiatives that are funded by Government grant. This seems to be currently shared between
 - The Neighbourhoods Policy Network
 - The Safer and Stronger Communities Board
 - The Constituency Strategic Partnerships
 - BCC Housing and Constituencies Directorate
 - BSP Support Team
9. We need to identify who should be responsible for performance managing this work and reporting to both the City Council and the BSP Performance Board.

Why a Single Neighbourhood Programme?

10. We think we need a clearer framework for neighbourhood working across the city which involves:
 - A clear assessment of need , based on classifying neighbourhoods into three groups: Level 1-Stable neighbourhoods, Level 2 – Neighbourhoods at risk, Level 3 – Priority neighbourhoods (see para 16 below)
 - A clear delivery focus – priority outcomes for each neighbourhood, linked to the Council Plan, LAA and Community Strategy, but allowing individual neighbourhoods to set their own priorities as well
 - A clear delivery framework – ie a simple model to enable local agencies and communities to deliver an outcome-focused neighbourhood plan , that draws on ‘what works’ and is backed up by sound project management to ensure real impact.
11. So the emphasis is outcome-based, simple, deliverable and adaptable to a variety of neighbourhoods. Residents’ priorities will vary across the city but surveys suggest they will be:
 - Reduced Crime
 - Cleaner streets
 - More activities for teenagers
 - Better services for children
 - Better parks and open spaces
 - Community cohesion

12. A single neighbourhood programme for the city could bring many benefits:
- It can bring coherence and effective performance management to a range of neighbourhood renewal activities
 - It will create opportunities to spread best practice
 - It can help partners to deliver LAA outcomes by ensuring key services and interventions are delivered at a local level
 - In particular, it can help 'close the gap' by targeting interventions in priority neighbourhoods
 - It is a promising way of making contact with hard to reach groups
 - It will help build stronger and more confident communities that are better able to face shared challenges
 - It can promote community engagement and support individuals to become active citizens

What would be in a Neighbourhood Programme?

13. It is suggested that a single neighbourhood programme would include the following:
- The 3 Guide Neighbourhoods testing out Neighbourhood Area Agreements
 - The 15 neighbourhoods receiving funds through the Neighbourhood Element grant
 - Other neighbourhoods assessed as Level 3 priorities by Constituencies
 - Neighbourhoods assessed as 'at risk' by Constituencies (Level 2)

The programme would be managed through central co-ordination and local management.

14. Central co-ordination would involve:

- Negotiating funding for priority neighbourhoods
- Agreeing a clear set of aims and objectives
- Agreeing a light touch performance management regime
- Providing training and technical support

- Monitoring progress and evaluating impact
- Reporting to BCC and BSP Programme Board

This would be undertaken by a Neighbourhoods Unit within the BSP Support Team.

15. Local management would be undertaken by the Constituency Directors, working closely with Neighbourhood Managers and their Boards within the framework set out above. Oversight would be assigned to the Constituency Committees and Constituency Strategic Partnerships.

16. We propose that each Constituency prepares a neighbourhood strategy that:

- Identifies its principal neighbourhoods based on 'natural neighbourhoods' and neighbourhood policing areas
- Prioritises action in each neighbourhood according to need:

Level 1 - Activities available to all neighbourhoods, including service standards and ways of influencing local decision making

Level 2 -Neighbourhoods with a higher priority for intervention, which may tip into decline without preventive action

Level 3 - Neighbourhoods with the highest priority for action, based on crime and deprivation indicators

17. The Constituencies will be responsible for ensuring action plans are drawn up for each neighbourhood and for overseeing their delivery. Neighbourhood work across the city will be overseen by the relevant Cabinet Members and Birmingham Strategic Partnership will receive regular progress reports.

18. The aim of this twofold approach – central co-ordination and local management - is to put in place the conditions necessary for successful delivery while maximising opportunities for local determination.

Next Steps

19. It is proposed that BSP undertake the following to develop these ideas further.

- 1 Arrange further discussions with partners to test out the idea.
- 2 Consult with priority neighbourhoods and constituencies.
- 3 Consult with the BCC Policy network

- 4 Produce a joint BCC/BSP proposition on a single neighbourhood programme for the July Programme Board meeting.
- 5 Set up a shadow Neighbourhoods Performance Board to (a) consult further and refine the proposals set out in this note and (b) oversee work already underway on the Neighbourhood Area Agreement and Neighbourhood management in the neighbourhoods receiving neighbourhood element grant.