

## **Overview & Scrutiny Management Board**

### **Localities and Neighbourhood Working Task & Finish Group**

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I manage the Private Sector Housing and Neighbourhood Regeneration Teams. The Neighbourhood Regeneration Team works in deprived neighbourhoods and provides the Neighbourhood Liaison Office (NLO) role for 8 of the city's 43 neighbourhoods – Barne Barton, Devonport, Efford, Honicknowle, North Prospect, Stoke, Stonehouse and Whitleigh. I am also the Locality Manager for the North West locality.

#### **Localities and Neighbourhoods**

I believe that there is a clear distinction between locality and neighbourhood working. The identification of 6 localities has helped to articulate the make-up of the city but it is the 43 neighbourhoods that are the true 'building blocks' of the city.

Locality working, especially through the NLO's and 'Neighbourhood Meetings', has helped to encourage a better understanding of the need for more localized services, as opposed to citywide provision only, but there is more to be done here. Localities may be well suited to the needs of some services (e.g. Children and Young People) but I feel that the areas are too big and too varied to denote 'place' as residents might understand it and what happens in one neighbourhood within a locality may have little or no bearing on another, e.g. Peverell and Widewell (C&NE) or Barne Barton and Southway (NW).

#### **Locality Teams**

I think the locality approach is only relevant for some services and that it is the neighbourhood level that is most relevant to communities. Some issues have been considered at NW Locality Team level (e.g. Budshead Trust, at the request of Overview & Scrutiny Management Board; Tobacco Control, at the request of the LSP; and a school / ASB related issue in Southway.) Full 'sign up' to addressing these issues hasn't always been possible, or required, and in most instances it has involved individual action with key offers of support (often outside of the Locality Team membership) in order to address these issues. I support the move to a single, citywide team but this will require strong support and commitment from key members of other services. I feel that there could still be a role for 'virtual' Locality Managers who can be called upon for support by a citywide team as required and might act as the link to the NLO's in that locality. This might operate alongside or instead of the proposal for Senior Management

Team members to cover a Ward. This would almost certainly require all of the Locality Managers to be Council staff.

### **Neighbourhood Boundary changes**

I support the proposed changes to neighbourhood boundaries to achieve alignment with ward boundaries. In some situations, communities might feel they are losing elements of their identity but I believe that the pros (political fit, more efficient use of time, data collection, potential for combined meetings etc.) far outweigh the cons.

### **NLO's and Neighbourhood Meetings**

By and large, I believe the reason that so few issues have been 'taken up' to locality level is because the NLO's have been able to resolve them at neighbourhood level (the correct level). Neighbourhood Meetings have played an important role in identifying local priorities. This is a relative success story that we should build on.

### **Community Engagement**

We need to further develop means of engagement with local people. Not everyone can or wants to attend a Neighbourhood Meeting and so other means of expressing concerns and having them identified as priorities should be considered. This will help to avoid the potential criticism that Neighbourhood Meetings aren't representative.

A mechanism to take account of the views of smaller groups and individual feedback would be helpful. This might take the form of bringing other key pieces of information/ data capture to Neighbourhood Meetings, e.g. an extension of the 'PACT' card system, but we should also find ways whereby other means of voicing a concern are taken into account, e.g. logged complaints. Councillors clearly have a crucial role here. Innovative use of social media (e.g. twitter, facebook etc) could help to enliven the debate, especially amongst young people.

Following on from any boundary changes, it will be important that local communities feel able to express their choice about the best ways of holding meetings. I believe that in most cases it will still be preferable to hold individual Neighbourhood Meetings rather than combining them to form a single Ward Meeting which would cover larger areas and could make access to venues an issue.

To get best engagement, we need NLO's with the right skills who are able to devote time and energy to this work. I believe that the Neighbourhood Regeneration Team is uniquely able to achieve this as it is part of the 'day job', and there are some excellent examples from other services, but I'm not clear that everyone can.