**Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

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

July 2011

Localities and Neighbourhood Working Review July 2011

Plymouth City Council

Contents

1. Foreword

1.1   Every Council faces challenges in finding ways to enable residents to influence and challenge the way that all services are delivered, and to enable Councillors to make the most of their role in understanding and championing the issues that matter most to their communities. Plymouth is no exception. Despite the progress that we have made over the years and the clear commitment of both political parties to getting it right, our citizens are telling us that there is still more to do.

1.2   Back in 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board took part in a significant review of what we then called Locality Working. It is worth restating what our original objectives were, as they remain as important now as they were then. They were to:

- Enable residents to influence and challenge service delivery
- Make services provided by different agencies and Council departments more 'joined up'
- Improve Councillor involvement
- Reduce inequalities between communities
- Focus money and staff more effectively
- Improve the sharing and use of information
- Monitor service provision more effectively
- Meet agreed local and national targets

1.3   As a result of our recommendations, the Council decided to replace its eight Area Committees in February 2010, introducing new arrangements based on engagement with communities in 43 Neighbourhoods, with multi-agency teams operating in six Localities. At the time, we promised to review the new arrangements after a year to check whether our original objectives were being met.

1.4   During the last year, the Council and its partners have renewed the city's vision, to be one of Europe's finest, most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone. It has focused its over-riding priorities to four – promoting growth, raising aspiration, tackling inequality and providing value for communities. To deliver against these priorities it is now even more important that our objectives for neighbourhood working are fulfilled. In addition, following the change of government, the Localities Bill, which is likely to become law at the end of 2011, will give more power and influence to communities at neighbourhood level; we will therefore have to be sure that our neighbourhood arrangements are robust enough to deliver these new responsibilities when they are given to us.

1.5   This report sets out our findings following the review, and makes recommendations that we hope will further improve the Council and its partners' approach to understanding and responding to the needs of our communities across the city.

1.6   The findings and recommendations of this report represent the shared views of the Task and Finish group.

1.7   I would like to extend my thanks to members of the Task and Finish group for their commitment in conducting this scrutiny review, and to the officers who supported us. I would also like to thank Pete Aley, the Council's Assistant Director for Safer Communities and Nick McMahon, our Localities Officer, for their continued commitment and support to us in this work.

1.8   Finally, my thanks go to the witnesses who took time to attend and contribute to the review, representing the views of Council officers, Members, partner agencies and, most importantly, our communities.

**Councillor James,
Chair**

**Councillor
McDonald**

Councillor Stark

**Councillor
Thompson**

Councillor Wildy

2. Scrutiny Approach

2.1   Given the wide scope of this review, the Scrutiny Management Board decided in March 2011 that the membership of the Task and Finish Group should be drawn from its own members rather than that of an individual scrutiny panel. The Task and Finish Group comprised the following members:

Cllr David James (Chair)
Cllr Sue McDonald
Cllr David Stark
Cllr Jack Thompson
Cllr Nicky Wildy

2.2   The Project Initiation Document for the review specified evaluation criteria agreed by the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel against which the original objectives set out in the Forward above could be considered, and set out suggested issues where recommendations could be made, all of which have been included in the recommendations contained within this report.

2.3   A full list of the written evidence considered by the Panel is appended to this report, and included:

- The original Localities Working scrutiny review report from November 2009
- A detailed report to the Task and Finish Group in the name of the Cllr Glen Jordan, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Localities. The report gave an overview of progress against original objectives, a summary of performance against the specified evaluation criteria, and the results of surveys into the views of Councillors and Staff.
- The report drew a number of conclusions for consideration by the Task and Finish Group, all of which have been addressed in the recommendations of this report.
- A number of other documents were available to the Task and Finish Group, and were used during the sessions to aid questioning of the witnesses and in debate. These included summaries of all neighbourhood meetings that had taken place, directories of locality and neighbourhood personnel, maps with existing and proposed boundaries and survey base data.

2.4   The Task and Finish Group met over two days, on 11 and 12 July 2011. During these sessions, 17 witnesses attended, from most stakeholder groups from the statutory and community sectors and members of the public, presenting their perspective on the impact of the revised locality arrangements, and responding to questions asked by Members.

2.5   Finally, the Task and Finish Group considered and debated the issues raised by the evidence submitted and the contributions of the witnesses. The findings and recommendations of this report represent the outcome of that debate.

3. Summary of findings

3.1 Neighbourhood Working

3.1.1   There was a consensus among members of the Task and Finish Group that development of the arrangements that have been in place since 2010, with a focus on neighbourhood working, would better serve the Council and its partners' vision for the city than a return to previous, Area Committee arrangements.

3.1.2   Survey results submitted as evidence showed that an overwhelming majority of the public and of Council staff surveyed, and a significant majority of Councillors and Police staff were satisfied or very satisfied with neighbourhood meetings, albeit from a relatively small sample of opinion.

3.1.3   All witnesses suggested areas where work at neighbourhood level could be improved, and the outcome of these suggestions has informed the recommendations of this report. However no witnesses, even those who had major concerns about the way that their neighbourhood and locality arrangements were being delivered requested a return to Area Committee arrangements.

R1	Locality and Neighbourhood Working should be renamed Neighbourhood Working

3.2 Locality Teams

3.2.1   Members felt that the role originally envisaged for 'virtual' multi-agency Locality teams in dealing with issues that could not be resolved at neighbourhood level could be achieved more effectively in different ways. Locality based arrangements for service delivery however, such as those for children and young people's services and health should continue to develop.

3.2.2   Evidence submitted suggested that there is a lack of clarity and transparency about the membership, accountability and activities of Locality Teams. Neighbourhood Liaison Officers described difficulties in communicating with them, and in getting issues resolved when they were raised. It also seemed clear that far fewer issues had been raised by neighbourhoods for resolution at Locality level than had been envisaged.

3.2.3   Locality Managers themselves did not feel that Locality Teams had made a significant contribution to identifying and resolving complex, multi-agency issues. Members heard that issues that had been dealt with through Locality Teams, such as the Public Place Order in Mutley and Greenbank, and promotion of the 'Peer Assist' stop smoking campaign in schools could probably have been implemented through other means. The benefits described of senior manager support for the delivery of solutions to problems raised at neighbourhood level, and the informal learning opportunities for managers could be delivered through the proposal to allocate an officer from the Council's senior management team to each Ward to support Councillors in their neighbourhoods.

3.2.4   The Task and Finish Group felt that it is important to differentiate, however between 'virtual' Locality Teams put in place as part of the Localities and Neighbourhood working arrangements, and the place-based multi-agency service delivery teams based on localities being implemented by Children and Young People's Services and health agencies, Adult Social Care and others, which are aiming to deliver more localised and better aligned services.

R2	Locality Teams as set up as part of Locality and Neighbourhood Working arrangements in February 2010 should be discontinued. A member of the Council's Senior Management Team (SMT) should be nominated for each Ward within the city, with designated duties with respect to support for Ward Councillors and Neighbourhood Working. The Lead Ward Councillor decision role should be rescinded

3.3   Neighbourhood Meetings

3.3.1   The Task and Finish group concluded that if the characteristics of the most successful neighbourhood meeting arrangements were replicated more consistently across the city, the neighbourhood working model could deliver better against the original objectives set.

3.3.2   A large number of examples of good practice were given by witnesses of effective ways of advertising, promoting and chairing neighbourhood meetings which maximised attendance and effectively identified local priorities, and promoted community confidence in statutory agencies' effectiveness in responding to them. Unfortunately, other examples were given of neighbourhood meetings where this was not the case. The Task and Finish Group felt that more should be done in promoting good practise, and ensuring that it was applied consistently across all neighbourhoods.

R3	Best practice protocols regarding neighbourhood meeting arrangements should be produced and shared amongst Neighbourhood Liaison Officers and newly designated SMT members with a view to promoting, implementing and monitoring consistent high quality arrangements

3.4   Support for Councillors

3.4.1   Members felt that greater recognition is needed of the pivotal role that Councillors play in supporting and championing the neighbourhood agenda. This should be reflected in the support arrangements available to them in undertaking their community advocate role in neighbourhoods.

3.4.2   The suggestion that members of the Council's senior management team should be formally allocated the responsibility for support of Councillors in each Ward in the city in their Neighbourhood work was supported. It was also suggested that Councillor should feature on publicity associated with Neighbourhood meetings.

R4	The role and identity of members should be included in publicity regarding neighbourhood meetings

3.5   Neighbourhood Liaison Officers

3.5.1   Members felt that significant attention needs to be given to ensuring that all Neighbourhood Liaison Officers are able to perform as well as the best do currently

3.5.2   The Task and Finish Group heard evidence of some extremely effective Neighbourhood Liaison Officers (NLO), who had supported Councillors, ensured meetings met with objectives and had played an active role in problem solving. There were, however, other examples given where this was not the case, and the resulting negative impact on the neighbourhood meeting was significant. Features of effective NLOs appeared to include the right professional background, access to appropriate support arrangements within their teams, and the appropriate priority being given to the role within their overall work responsibilities. Members did not feel that the 'voluntary' description given to the role does justice to its significant contribution to effective neighbourhood working.

R5	Neighbourhood Liaison Officer (NLO) roles should be reviewed to ensure that skill sets of individuals match the demands of the job. Specific training needs analysis should be carried out to ensure training and development is available where needed. Line managers of NLOs should include the role within the NLO's personal objectives, and seek feedback from Members at appraisal. NLOs and their line managers should ensure that the role is integral to, rather than in addition to their work programme, and that adequate support is available to assist them in the role.

3.6   Stakeholder understanding of Neighbourhood Working arrangements

3.6.1   Members observed that more work needs to be done to ensure that there is a broad understanding by all stakeholders of the structure, support and leadership arrangements for neighbourhood working.

3.6.2   It was notable that few of the witnesses, and not all of the members of the Task and Finish Group had a clear understanding of the structure, leadership and accountabilities within the Locality and Neighbourhood working arrangements. A clear need was identified to address this issue following the review.

R6	Revised arrangements should be commended to Plymouth 2020 partnership and, subject to agreement be publicised and briefed to relevant stakeholders from all agencies and to residents.

3.7   Police support for Neighbourhood Working

3.7.1   The continuing commitment of the Police to neighbourhood working was commended by members, but it was agreed that both the Council and Police have more to do in fully aligning the two agencies' approach to neighbourhood working.

3.7.2   The police received a high degree of positive feedback on their contribution to effective neighbourhood working, and Members felt that it was useful that Police principles for effective neighbourhood working were reiterated:

- Promoting community access to services
- Promoting community influence over services
- Supporting joint interventions
- Ensuring accountability

3.7.3   The issue of improving learning from repeat problems experienced in neighbourhoods was raised, as was the importance of joint working not just at neighbourhood meetings, but outside them.

3.7.4   During police evidence, an example was given of Neighbourhoods containing large institutions, such as Derriford Hospital, which were not represented at the meetings.

R7	Analysis of 'repeat issues' in Neighbourhoods, and of complaints should be undertaken to ensure that the necessary learning is taking place. This practice should be included in best practice protocols for Neighbourhood Working

3.8   Community and Voluntary Sector support for Neighbourhood Working

3.8.1   The community and voluntary sector was recognised as having a major role to play in supporting neighbourhood working, but Members felt there is more to do in clarifying how 'community anchor' organisations work alongside elected Members in supporting neighbourhood working

3.8.2   There was some evidence submitted that the sharing of issues, priorities and intelligence between community organisations and neighbourhood staff could be improved.

R8	A review is undertaken by the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and a report submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board with respect to the role of community infrastructure and community anchor organisations in supporting neighbourhood working

3.9   Health agencies and Neighbourhood Working

3.9.1   Members recognised that, with major legislative changes affecting health agencies, further work is needed to identify how health agencies, including providers, commissioners and public health professionals operate at neighbourhood level

3.9.2   As Health legislation is implemented, the links between new and existing health agencies and neighbourhoods need to be identified and included in engagement structures where appropriate.

R9	The Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board takes responsibility for ensuring that neighbourhood level interaction takes place with key health agencies

3.10   Proposed Neighbourhood boundary Changes

3.10.1   The Task and Finish Group heard that concerns had been raised that Locality and Neighbourhood boundaries are not co-terminous with Ward boundaries, making Councillor involvement difficult. Some minor anomalies had been addressed to better fit in with Ward boundaries, but a broader proposal was set out in the Overview Report, reducing the number of Neighbourhoods from 43 to 39. The proposed arrangements would make all neighbourhoods co-terminous with Wards. Members were told that informal discussions suggested that such changes would be supported by Ward Councillors and the Police, Health agencies and data analysts have indicated that they are willing to work with or adjust to these boundaries.

3.10.2   It is acknowledged that there is a resource implication in updating profiles to reflect revised boundaries.

R10	Plans are put in place to adopt the proposed boundary changes set out in the overview report.

3.11   Neighbourhood Profiles

3.11 1   Members felt that neighbourhood profiles have proved beneficial in providing relevant data to inform priority setting and decision making, but need to be kept up to date, and to include qualitative information about people's views as well as quantitative data about performance and conditions. They should also be adjusted to reflect proposed boundary changes, and the format should be consistent.

R11	Neighbourhood Profiles are reviewed, updated and made consistent in line with the findings and recommendations of this review

3.12   Communication Methods

3.12.1 A review of methods of communicating with the public about meetings, and of seeking and responding to the views of people who don't normally attend meetings is needed.

3.12.2 Several examples of good practise were given during evidence, but a lack of consistency in good practise was evidence. Several witnesses also raised the potential of use of electronic social media to communicate more widely.

R12	A review is undertaken of communication methods around neighbourhood working, with recommendations back to the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

3.13   Constitutional Arrangements

3.13.1 The Council's constitution should reflect the formal role of neighbourhood working in our democratic arrangements

3.13.2 Given the importance of neighbourhoods in demonstrating the Council's accountability to neighbourhoods, the member and officer accountability arrangements should be formalised in the Constitution.

R13	The Constitution be updated to reflect revised member and officer accountability arrangements for Neighbourhoods and Wards

3.14   Review

3.14.1 The revised arrangements that we have proposed should be the subject of continuing review.

3.14.2 Given the proposed revisions in approach, and the fact that new localism legislation is likely to be law within the next year, another formal review should take place in July 2012.

R14	A review of these arrangements is carried out as a Task and Finish Group in July 2012

4. Recommendations

R1 Locality and Neighbourhood Working should be renamed Neighbourhood Working

R2 Locality Teams as set up as part of Locality and Neighbourhood Working arrangements in February 2010 should be discontinued. A member of the Council's Senior Management Team (SMT) should be nominated for each Ward within the city, with designated duties with respect to support for Ward Councillors and Neighbourhood Working. The Lead Ward Councillor decision should be rescinded

R3 Best practice protocols regarding neighbourhood meeting arrangements should be produced and shared amongst Neighbourhood Liaison Officers and newly designated SMT members with a view to promoting, implementing and monitoring consistent high quality arrangements

R4 The role and identity of members should be included in publicity regarding neighbourhood meetings

R5 Neighbourhood Liaison Officer (NLO) roles should be reviewed to ensure that skill sets of individuals match the demands of the job. Specific training needs analysis should be carried out to ensure training and development is available where needed. Line managers of NLOs should include the role within the NLO's personal objectives, and seek feedback from Members at appraisal. NLO's and their line managers should ensure that the role is integral to, rather than in addition to their work programme, and that adequate support is available to assist them in the role.

R6 Revised arrangements should be commended to Plymouth 2020 partnership and, subject to agreement be publicised and briefed to relevant stakeholders from all agencies and to residents.

R7 Analysis of repeat issues in Neighbourhoods, and of complaints should be undertaken to ensure that the necessary learning is taking place. This practice should be included in best practice protocols for Neighbourhood Working

R8 A review is undertaken by the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and a report submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board with respect to the role of community infrastructure and community anchor organisations in supporting neighbourhood working

R9 The Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board takes responsibility for ensuring that neighbourhood level interaction takes place with key health agencies

R10 Plans are put in place to adopt the proposed boundary changes set out in the overview report.

R11 Neighbourhood Profiles are reviewed and updated in line with the findings and recommendations of this review

R12 A review is undertaken of communication methods around neighbourhood working, with recommendations back to the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

R13 The Constitution be updated to reflect revised member and officer accountability arrangements for Neighbourhoods and Wards

R14 A review of these arrangements is carried out as a Task and Finish Group in July 2012

A1 Schedule of Witnesses

Localities and Neighbourhood Working

Task and Finish Group – Witness Schedule

11 and 12 July 2011

Monday 11 July 2011

Time	**Witness**
2.30 pm	Cllr Jordan, Cabinet Member
2.50 pm	Mark Rich, Neighbourhood Liaison Officer (Mutley/Greenbank)
3.10 pm	Jo Atkey, Neighbourhood Liaison Officer (Southway)
3.40 pm	Ruth Walls, Third Sector Consortium
4.00 pm	Dave Brown, Devonport Neighbourhood Board Chair
4.20 pm	Nigel Pluckrose, NHS Plymouth

Tuesday 12 July 2011

Time	**Witness**
9.30 am	Gill Peel, Neighbourhood Liaison Officer (Morice Town)
9.50 am	John Emery, Plymstock Resident
10.10 am	Phil Mitchell, Locality Manager (North West)
10.30 am	Pat Patel, Tamarview Community Centre
1.30 pm	Chief Superintendent Andy Bickley
1.50 pm	PCSO Sarah Wilkins (Derriford Neighbourhood Team)

Time	**Witness**
2.10 pm	JP Sanders, Locality Manager (South East)
2.30 pm	Russ Moody, Stop Smoking Service Manager, and Dan Preece, Public Protection
3.15 pm	Claire Oatway, Children's Services / Local Strategic Partnership and Maggie Carter, Children's Services
3.40 pm	Peter Flukes, Wolseley Trust
4.00 pm	Sarah Hopkins, Neighbourhood Liaison Officer (Ford), and Paul Squire, Ford Resident

A2 Background Papers and Written evidence

Project Initiation Document

2009 Locality Working Task & Finish Report

Localities and Neighbourhood Working Overview Report

List of Witnesses

Morice Town Newsletter

Morice Town Progress Report - 20.06.2011

Witness Submission - Debbie Burton