

## PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

**Subject:** Localities and Neighbourhood Working  
**Committee:** Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel  
**Date:** 12 March 2012  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Jordan  
**CMT Member:** Director for People  
**Author:** Nick McMahon, Localities Officer  
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**Ref:** NJM  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Part:** I

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### **Executive Summary:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board's Task and Finish Group carried out a Review of Localities and Neighbourhood Working (July 2011). The findings were agreed by the Board and subsequently confirmed by Cabinet (13 Sept 2011) and Council (10 Oct 2011).

Feedback was requested on the following:

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

This report outlines the progress that has been made to ensure that these decisions have been fulfilled.

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### **Corporate Plan 2012 – 2015:**

Neighbourhood working supports priorities for delivering the City's vision: Raise aspirations (take pride in the city); Reduce inequalities (narrow the inequality gap between communities); Provide value for communities (work together to maximise resources).

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### **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land**

None – this work is met within core budgets.

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### **Other Implications: e.g. Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:**

Overall Neighbourhood working aims to make neighbourhoods safer with better community engagement and reduced community tension.

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**Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

1. Neighbourhood Liaison Officers should continue to involve community infrastructure organisations in neighbourhood working.
2. Neighbourhood Liaison Officers should continue to develop communications with the public to improve engagement in meetings and outside them.

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**Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:**

None.

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**Background papers:**

(1) Background report attached.

(2) Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, Task and Finish Group, Localities and Neighbourhood Working Review, July 2011.

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=30203>

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**Sign off:**

Fin		Leg		HR		Corp Prop		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member:											

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board's Task and Finish Group carried out a Review of Localities and Neighbourhood Working (July 2011). The findings were agreed by the Board and subsequently confirmed by Cabinet (13 Sept 2011) and Council (10 Oct 2011).
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board requested feedback on the following decisions by Cabinet on 13 September 2011:

*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*

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

- 1.3 This report supports these reviews.

## **2.0 Role of community infrastructure and community anchor organisations in supporting neighbourhood working**

- 2.1 The community and voluntary sector has a major role to play in supporting neighbourhood working. Our aim is to invite all relevant organisations to be part of our neighbourhood working process as we recognise their local knowledge and ability to provide insight from 'seldom heard' people. We know that they also have a role in the running of meetings and events, including valuable feedback on our performance. While the involvement of community infrastructure organisations (e.g. area-based groups such as established residents' groups) is variable, there are some neighbourhoods where engagement is proving very positive, for example, Barne Barton, Elburton and Dunstone and East End.
- 2.2 A register of city-wide community infrastructure organisations is available to Neighbourhood Liaison Officers (NLOs). This register is shared with Community and Social Action Plymouth (CASAP), inviting suggestions for any additions or changes. NLOs invite organisations to join in neighbourhood meetings and try to maintain a good dialogue with them so that issues and feedback can be identified. NLOs are being given guidance through a new Advice Note/Protocol to make sure that this improves where necessary and continues where it already works well.
- 2.3 Some current examples of active involvement include holding meetings in community premises; community organisations chairing meetings and/or taking minutes; putting links on the Council's neighbourhood web pages and vice versa, and jointly running events such as fun days and environmental clean-ups.
- 2.4 CASAP has undertaken work to identify the anchor groups in neighbourhoods and has advised them about Neighbourhood working and how they can get involved. As part of its proposed contract with CASAP, the City Council requires CASAP to assist in increasing representation at meetings in 5 neighbourhoods where there is currently high deprivation but poor representation at meetings.

2.5 In conclusion, we will continue to work with CASAP and individual community infrastructure organisations to ensure greatest value is obtained from the neighbourhood working process. NLOs will be further encouraged to develop links with organisations where there is scope to do this. CASAP's offer to endeavour to develop the community and voluntary sector in neighbourhoods where the sector is weak will be a positive development and this is supported by the contract CASAP has with the City council.

### **3.0 Communication methods around neighbourhood working**

3.1 There were two issues requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board's Task and Finish Group for reporting back:

- Communicating with the public about meetings
- Seeking and responding to the views of people who don't normally attend meetings

3.2 To help exploit best practice on both these issues, a new Advice Note for Neighbourhood Working has been prepared, for use by NLOs and police colleagues.

### **3.3. Communicating with the public about meetings**

3.3.1 With 18 months' experience of running neighbourhood meetings, considerable effort is already being made at publicising meeting dates. Given the economic climate, local priorities and resource implications we have taken a sensible and proportionate approach to ensure that people and organisations can get involved.

3.3.2 Here are some of the communication methods that have already proved effective in increasing participation within some neighbourhoods:

- Agreeing 2 or 3 dates and venues well in advance as advertised on our 'Your neighbourhood' web pages: [Your Neighbourhood](#)
- Varying venues and times according to neighbourhood make up and time of year.
- Attendance in general and on specific issues from community groups, Neighbourhood Watch, our Youth Service, Plymouth Community Homes, Health Agencies etc.
- Using the partnership agreed 'Have Your Say' branding, with a 'tool-kit' available to NLO's.
- Putting 'Have Your Say' posters in key locations such as community Notice boards, Library, Schools, Shops/take-away/pub/café, Community Centre, Churches and Faith Buildings at the right time to maximise interest.
- Passing "flyers" about future meetings to those who previously attended and distributing house-to-house in streets near the meeting venue.
- Including Ward councillors' names on all publicity
- Advertising in local newsletters or on-line links (e.g. primary school, residents groups) to promote meetings.
- Using the Police's text messaging service to alert those signed up about meeting details.

- Ensuring our Communications Team notify relevant contacts such as the Evening Herald (local area reporters) and Facebook and Twitter pages.
- Including the promotion of information about meetings within far reaching media such as the Council Tax booklet; bus TV monitors and the city centre Big Screen.

### **3.4 Seeking and responding to the views of people who don't normally attend meetings**

3.4.1 Not everyone wants to or is able to attend a meeting - we need to offer more opportunity for people to 'have their say' outside meetings. With limited time resource available to NLOs and Police colleagues, the best way to extend engagement is likely to be to take advantage of existing opportunities, such as the ways set out below. Issues and priorities sourced from outside meetings can be reported back at the Neighbourhood Meeting. This will help to determine the new priorities and actions agreed for taking forward.

3.4.2 The following actions are already happening to ensure those who prefer or cannot attend meetings have their views considered -

- Promoting our 'Your Neighbourhood' web pages and including a link to the on-line 'have your say' survey where people can lodge their neighbourhood priorities.  
[Your Neighbourhood](#)
- Gathering intelligence from Councillors about common issues arising at their surgeries, in correspondence and day to day interaction with their constituents.
- Ensuring 'Operation Vocal' events are a joint initiative with Police colleagues.
- Seeking advice on common issues from community infrastructure organisations (residents and community groups) and CASAP.
- Taking account of protected characteristics of age, disability, faith, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, race and sexual orientation, as we need to ensure we identify particular needs, design initiatives to meet the needs and mitigate adverse impacts on certain groups.
- Attending or arranging a display at local events such as a fun days, with a 'Have Your Say' return questionnaire box in place, and evaluating the feedback we are given.
- Asking local schools, children's centres, surgeries, shops and pubs to display the 'Have Your Say' cards and return questionnaire boxes.
- Asking District Nurses (through Plymouth Community Health) to leave 'Have Your Say' cards with their clients to ensure the possibly housebound are not forgotten.
- Involving the Youth Service, City College, University and schools to ensure we include the views of young people.
- Obtaining feedback from our Planning staff on issues arising at planning consultations.

3.4.3 In conclusion, we are expanding non-meeting engagement methods and will continue to work with our partners to promote meeting dates to maximum effect, and increase efforts to capture people's views either within or outside meetings.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 The above report is a review of the role of community infrastructure organisations and of communication methods that are proving effective in neighbourhood working. Neighbourhood Liaison Officers should continue to involve community infrastructure organisations in neighbourhood working, and continue to develop communications with the public to improve engagement in meetings and outside them.