

CABINET – 5 FEBRUARY 2003

LOCALITY BASED WORKING

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Cabinet on the principles behind locality-based working and recommends a pilot scheme to introduce this way of working to a defined area of the District.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The principles of locality based working, or neighbourhood management as it is often commonly called, have been established by the Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and were contained in a recent report from the Policy Action Team. The core principles are:-

- Someone with overall responsibility at the neighbourhood level.
- Community involvement and leadership.
- The tools to get things done.
- A systematic, planned approach to tackling local problems.
- Effective delivery mechanisms.

Any locality based working approach comprising the Council's functions would need to bear these core principles in mind.

- 2.2 There are also very clear linkages in the creation of locality based working to the operation of the Local Strategic partnership (LSP) and the development of the Community Strategy. The LSP is currently considering its approach to community planning which is broadly about assessing the needs of communities and joining up resources to meet those needs.

- 2.3 A further reason for looking at a new approach to the management of local authority services is the forthcoming inspections as a result of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime. One of the cross cutting inspections that will take place is that of "clean, green and safe public space". The quality, cleanliness and safety of the local environment is a key issue for Districts and the Audit Commission have stated that they will be focusing on four areas. These are:-

- Management of the physical environment.

- Keeping the locality clean.
- Working with partners to improve community safety.
- Promoting an active life.

It will be important that any proposals for locality based working take these into account.

- 2.4 The aim of locality-based working is to raise the standards of delivery of front line services to communities and ensure a joined up approach to dealing with issues that may involve several departments (or indeed several agencies). It is important that services are provided to those who need them and to the standards that residents want (subject only to financial constraints). Often the approach is used in deprived areas with the aim of bridging the gap between deprived areas and those classed as average. Some areas of the District are known to score poorly with indices of deprivation and the technique of Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA) has been used in a number of areas to identify need and possible solutions. Locality based working could be a vehicle to help ensure results are achieved in the most effective way.
- 2.5 The proposals detailed below suggest a phased approach to locality based working with only those services under the control of New Forest District Council being the subject of the pilot. However, discussions are currently taking place with representatives of Hampshire County Council to include highways matters due to their significance to the overall street scene. It is suggested that until the pilot is completed and its success or otherwise established that no further expansion into other areas of work or responsibilities takes place.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 A multi-disciplinary group has been examining the principle of locality based working has investigated how these principles could be effectively applied to the services provided by New Forest District Council. The group comprised officers from various departments within the Council and it is suggested that a new approach to service delivery could enhance services provided by NFDC to its residents. Officers consider that this approach should now be tested as a pilot project.
- 3.2 The Group considered a number of areas that could form the basis of a pilot. It was considered that to effectively test the principles of locality based working it would be useful to select areas that comprised both public and private housing and with a mix of environments. It was also considered that it would be beneficial to select an area where some elements of the principles of partnership working had already been established.
- 3.3 For the past 12 months a pilot approach to managing Council owned estates and their immediate environment has been carried out within the Housing Service. This approach has the Housing Officer as the lead officer regularly and formally meeting on estates with other housing staff, tenant representatives, the Police, local Members and occasionally other officers from different parts of the Council. The Estates and the immediate environment have been physically “walked” by

these people with a view to identifying issues of concern and dealing with them in an effective and coordinated way. The pilot has been successful with tenant's representatives agreeing that there has been an improvement in standards. Officers can confirm that although any improvements may be small, the perceived improvement and the ability to jointly identify and work on issues has proved to be of enormous benefit. One of the benefits is that tenants gain a greater understanding of services and the constraints placed upon them and therefore support and assist Officers attempts in resolving them. Previously tenants might just have complained about issues and relied totally on the Council to solve them. This often would lead to frustration when nothing appeared to be done.

- 3.4 It is suggested that this approach be the basis for any new locality based working pilot. Furthermore since the New Milton area (in terms of Council housing) has been successful it is also suggested that the area for the pilot be based upon this but including an element of private housing and open areas. Appendix 1 is a map showing the proposed extent of the area.
- 3.5 It is also suggested that in terms of the work and services to be incorporated in the pilot that initially this be restricted to those services directly under the control of New Forest District Council. This will enable lines of effective communication to be established and tested and the roles of participants to be clearly defined. It is suggested that the LSP is informed off this initiative so that it can consider a more comprehensive approach to this type of work.
- 3.6 For the purposes of the pilot it is suggested that the following areas of service be identified for inclusion:-
- Housing Management
 - Grounds maintenance
 - Refuse Collection
 - Street cleansing
 - Abandoned cars
 - Highways maintenance and street lighting
 - Flooding and drainage issues
 - Dog bins
 - Graffiti
 - Repairs and maintenance to Council owned property
- 3.7 In order to assess the success or otherwise of the pilot it is essential that a number of key performance indicators be established and monitored throughout the period of the pilot. The overall monitoring of the pilot is also essential and it is suggested that the project team be tasked with looking at this issue and to produce these indicators and perform the overall monitoring role. A further report to Cabinet could be made 6 to 12 months after the pilot has been established to advise of the results of this monitoring.
- 3.8 It must not be forgotten that these proposals are aimed at improving the local area for the residents. No work has been done to establish whether New Forest residents feel a change to service delivery is required or whether existing service arrangements are failing to provide the required standards. However, if the experience in the Housing service is relevant then clearly it is likely that residents will have a similar view to that of tenants (see 3.3).

4. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 These proposals will require additional resources. The lead officer role, (i.e. that of the overall coordinator), would mean that the individual carrying out the role would be performing duties over and above their normal duties. There is a need to assess the impact of that upon their normal duties and, if necessary resource any shortfall.
- 4.2 In view of the role currently carried out by the Housing Officer with the estate “walkabouts” it is suggested that this person could, in the initial stages (i.e. for the period of the pilot), fulfil the expanded role suggested in this report. In that case it would be necessary to reallocate a number of functions that the Housing Officer would therefore be unable to perform adequately. This could be achieved by the use of agency staff for an appropriate number of hours per week for the period of the pilot. It is anticipated that this would not be for more than a maximum of 15 hours per week.
- 4.3 The new ways of working could lead to increased resident expectations in terms of service delivery and if these are to be met there could need to be consideration of additional resources elsewhere. It is envisaged that should this situation come about a separate report would be made to Cabinet as appropriate. One possible option for a longer term approach to this new way of working might be the employment of Community Wardens to take the role of the lead co-ordinator of all services provided to local communities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If the Housing Officer performs the role of co-ordinator then for the period of the pilot (6 months) the estimated additional costs of providing a locality-based approach would be approximately £7,000. This cost would cover the cost of employing an agency housing professional for the period of the pilot and would need to be funded from the General Fund.
- 5.2 The estimated costs of £7,000 can be funded from within existing budgetary provision.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The pilot as proposed may not, by itself, lead to any improvements in crime and disorder matters. However, should the pilot be extended to include the Police then, as has occurred on Housing Estates, there may be direct benefits that would assist in reducing anti-social behaviour and other crime and disorder related issues.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The more efficient ways of working that a locality based approach can provide will lead to more effective management of estates and open spaces and this in turn

should lead to improvements in the overall environment.

8. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

8.1 Locality based working would, by its very nature, involve the work and responsibilities of a number of Portfolio Holders. In the proposed pilot area of New Milton issues covered would include those under the responsibilities of the Portfolio Holders for Housing, Environment, Leisure (open space), and Crime and Disorder. Comments on this report from each Portfolio Holder are listed below.

8.2 **Housing Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder is supportive of the proposals contained within this report.

8.3 **Environment Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder is supportive of the proposals contained within this report.

8.4 **Leisure Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder is supportive of the proposals contained within this report.

8.5 **Crime and Disorder Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder is supportive of the proposals contained within this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That a locality based approach for the areas of work described in this report is established in New Milton for a period of 6 months.

9.2 That a further report is provided to Cabinet on completion of the pilot indicating the outcomes achieved and on proposals for expanding the role if it is considered appropriate at that time.

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