

## **Engaging Communities, Meeting Expectations: Highways & Transport and Neighbourhood Boards – Notes of the Meeting of the Sub-Group Appointed by Minute 10/09**

Present: Councillor Poulter, Chair, Councillors Repton and Harwood

Officers: Christine Durrant, Paul Riley and Rob Davison

Note: To assist readers the background to the meeting is at Appendix A.

### **DISCUSSION**

D1. The Chair introduced the issue, referring to the consultant's report containing 8 proposals which had been submitted to the 15 June meeting of the Planning and Transportation Commission. Rob Davison briefly outlined steps taken since the June Commission meeting. He had first met the Neighbourhood Managers, who had been willing *in principle* to take on the more pivotal role the report recommended, and later had met with the Assistant Director.

D2. Christine Durrant commented that she believed further progress could be made without the need for any further consultancy. The service had recently been re-organised, becoming more outward focussed to support Neighbourhood Working. She wanted to embed those changes and make them more explicit. She saw the opportunity:

- to involve Boards so they were aware of up and coming issues and
- also for Boards to indicate the priorities to assess and work up, with Boards then able to explain why some had been chosen as priorities and others not.

D3. The Chair referred to a sub-group created in Spondon to focus on H&T issues and free up time at the main board. Ms Durrant also cited examples of how H&T were closely working with sub-boards to tackle local problems in Peartree and Arboretum and with Chaddesden over football parking. Mr Riley said the amount of time spent by boards on H&T issues varied greatly and gave examples ranging from 15 minutes to 1.5+ hours. It was noted that a university sub-group had so many issues it had itself to prioritise its own workload. Mr Riley felt the engagement of his team with Neighbourhood Managers was working much better this year and the process was still evolving. The report's proposals would mean the Neighbourhood Managers would be a lot more involved.

D4. Cllr Repton felt that there needed to be clarity about processes, parameters and constraints so that all involved could understand when and how to influence decisions. Ms Durrant wished to see greater involvement by Neighbourhoods in developing the priorities and work programme.

D5. There was Member discussion about how engaged residents themselves would be. Cllr Harwood noted that many people attended for one item of

personal interest. Cllr Repton hoped that some of those residents would then develop a wider interest; he added there would always be a mixture. Cllr Harwood that prioritising was important the more people involved the more that should allow understanding of the issues.

D6. It was noted that the sub-group approach could be either general H&T issues in the ward or specific to locations; the common benefits of either approach were focussed attention on issues and freeing up Board time.

D7. Mr Riley commented that until Board members have fuller knowledge there needs to be an element of trust. His staff were providing professional advice about potential consequences of proposals and held no hidden agenda. He linked learning to understand with mutual trust.

D8. The Chair obtained confirmation that those present agreed further independent consultant advice was not necessary and, instead, the meeting should proceed to make recommendations in respect of the proposals that would build on the progress already made.

D9. During development of the recommendations further points were made. Ms Durrant said that on the former working model a standard response to requests could be 'we don't have the resources'. That had overlapped with the introduction of Neighbourhood Working. Now it is an integral part of the job to work with Neighbourhood Managers.

D10. Cllr Repton said he envisaged the Neighbourhood Managers acting as a conduit, well briefed enough to most questions but able to get clarification quickly from H&T. He noted this would not alter the resources – people, timescales or the budget as set by Council. Ms Durrant said in the past the process had not been clear. She wanted to see the Neighbourhood Managers more pivotal so that H&T capacity could be focussed on supporting them. A member asked whether the demand on those managers would be too high. Mr Riley answered it would start out high but become easier with experience.

D11. Having a named contact in the section was regarded as important. It was explained that while there are a number of technicians, there are two key individuals who have an east/west geographical split. Cllr Repton said that the Neighbourhood Managers should have responses within a reasonable but time. That would enable them to function as a funnel between the neighbourhood structures and H&T.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Please note: a) the proposals are not shown in the original order and b) after approval by Commission the recommendations would then be subject to subsequent i) approval by the Council Cabinet and ii) negotiation with the Community Safety Partnership as host body for the Neighbourhood Manager team

The Planning and Transportation Commission are asked to consider and confirm the following recommendations.

**Proposal A:** The Community Safety Partnership's Neighbourhood Team lead the development of a compact/service level agreement between the Highways & Transport Division and Neighbourhood Boards.

**Recommendation 1:** that a) instead of a compact/service level agreement, the current '*Highways and Transport Work Programme Consultation and Approvals process*' be updated in consultation with the Neighbourhood Managers and launched as a renamed joint document b) the purpose be to set out agreed processes in very clear terms c) account be taken of the process for the £10,000 additional funds made available in the 2009/10 revenue budget d) the joint renamed document be operated for a trial period to be followed by reflection on how well it has worked for various stakeholders e) the period around the launch of the new document be used for joint training between Traffic Management & Road Safety, TMRS, officers and the Neighbourhood Managers, with subsequent training as necessary f) the enhanced involvement of Neighbourhood Managers be supported both pre and post training by continuing prompt access to a named TMRS officer.

**Proposal B:** Neighbourhood Managers explicitly adopt a problem-solving approach to highways and transport issues, using the community safety model already employed. This be written into the compact.

**Recommendation 2:** that the proposal in the first sentence be endorsed but achieved through the measures set out recommendation 1 and below.

**Proposal C:** as a matter of course the Highways and Transport Division advise Neighbourhood Boards on the range of 'soft' interventions they may take in addition to an engineering response or where an engineering response is not appropriate. Feedback to the Boards be provided in non-technical language.

**Recommendation 3:** a) that the proposal be endorsed and achieved through the measures set out recommendation 1 and b) plain English be used by H&T officers and in public documentation to avoid Neighbourhood Managers needing to 'translate' responses at Boards and Forums and this be specifically addressed in the training envisaged in recommendation 1 e).

**Proposal D:** the consultation process be redesigned to place Neighbourhood Boards more centrally in the decision-making process.

**Recommendation 4:** that the sentiments be endorsed but that the goal be achieved by a combination of i) changes already effected in the Division ii) evolving relationships with the Neighbourhood Boards and Managers and iii) the implementations of these recommendations.

**Proposal E:** the roles and responsibilities of the Neighbourhood Managers be explicitly articulated in any compact/service level agreement developed between the Highways and Transport Division and Neighbourhood Boards.

**Recommendation 5:** that the reasoning for the proposal that 'the role of the Neighbourhood Manager is significant, especially in relation to relationship management' be endorsed and it be achieved through the measures set out recommendation 1 and below.

**Proposal F:** support from the Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership, an emerging example of partnership working, be sought for the development of a community-oriented toolkit focusing on the provision of training and information around road and pedestrian safety issues – a key need articulated by the Neighbourhood Managers and which will provide a tangible example of delivery.

**Recommendation 6:** that it be noted that the Traffic Management & Road Safety section is itself the delivery mechanism for outputs from the Partnership.

**Proposal G:** A review of the existing community-focused provision within the Division be conducted in order to assess capacity to deliver a community engagement model.

**Recommendation 7:** that proposal G not be pursued, given that i) the Traffic Management & Road Safety has re-organised in order to provide effective engagement with the Neighbourhoods ii) the section has to deliver the best service obtainable within the staffing resources funded in the Budget

**Proposal H:** a short needs assessment be conducted to enable the Division to anticipate likely demand as a result of enlarging engagement with Neighbourhood Boards and Neighbourhood Managers be involved in developing neighbourhood action plans which are not primarily focussed on engineering solutions.

**Recommendation 8:** that a) the proposal for a short needs assessment not be pursued, given that i) the Traffic Management & Road Safety has re-organised in order to provide effective engagement with the Neighbourhoods ii) the section has to deliver the best service obtainable within the staffing resources funded in the Budget and b) however the concept of Neighbourhood Action Plans be supported for the purpose of achieving a shared local vision for how the locality will develop over 5 to 10 years.

**Supplementary proposal:** arising from the discussions at this meeting:

**Recommendation 9:** that Boards be encouraged to consider the merits of sub groups to progress H&T issues, localised or short term issues and/or develop priorities for the future utilising the forthcoming ward profiles.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **BACKGROUND FOR READERS**

#### **Planning and Transportation Commission - Meeting 22 September 2008**

The Commission considered their work programme for the forthcoming municipal year. It was reported that most of the Commission had attended an away day on 18 September, also attended by a large number of resident representatives on the Neighbourhood Boards. At the conclusion Members had met to see if there was a consensus about whether a topic review should be conducted on:

- Neighbourhood Working and Highways and transportation issues or
- Public satisfaction with the planning and building control function

It was agreed to focus on the interface between Neighbourhood Working and highways and transportation issues. The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community had concurred with this suggestion.

It was then resolved: to review the interface between Neighbourhood Working and Highways and Transportation

#### **Commission Meeting - 19 January 2009**

62/08 Work Programme – Interface between Neighbourhood Working and Highways and Transportation

The Commission received a report [see link below] of a meeting of the Sub-Group of Members appointed by Minute 28/08. An external review was to take place and the Sub Group agreed should be considered as integral to the Commission's work. The co-ordination officer explained this had the effect of altering the timescale of the review which will now continue into the next municipal year. It was then resolved: to receive the report of the Sub Group.

<http://cmis.derby.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=12645>

#### **Commission Meeting - 15 June 2009**

The outcome report entitled 'Engaging Communities, Meeting Expectations: Highways & Transport and Neighbourhood Boards' [see link below] was considered. Central to that was to much enhance the role of the Neighbourhood Managers. A compact/service level agreement would set out the processes and responsibilities.

The Commission agreed the following course of action.

i) To take forward the 8 proposals in 'Engaging Communities, Meeting Expectations: Highways & Transport and Neighbourhood Boards'; ii). To be undertaken by the Chair, Vice Chair and an LD nominee working with the H&T Division, Neighbourhood Team and CSP to produce a draft Protocol making Neighbourhood Boards more central in decision making and enhancing the role of Neighbourhood Managers iii) As a prelude, the co-ordination officer hold an initial meeting with whole Neighbourhood Manager Team.

<http://cmis.derby.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=13736>