An Evaluation of Neighbourhood Working in Derby –

Abridged Version

Interim report 1 May 2009
Draft 1-0
Please do not cite
Abridged version 9 July 2009

Research Team

Professor Steve Leach   0116 257 7818 /snl@dmu.ac.uk

Dr Catherine Durose   0116 257 7784 / 07969 012 189 / cdurose@dmu.ac.uk

Dr. Mark Roberts   mark.roberts907@ntlworld.com

Local Governance Research Unit
Leicester Business School
De Montfort University
Leicester
LE1 9BH

Contents   Page

Contents   Page

1. Introduction

This report is the first product of a research project commissioned by the Derby Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in April 2008, and undertaken by a research team from De Montfort University (DMU), Leicester comprising Professor Steve Leach, Dr Catherine Durose and Dr Mark Roberts.

There are three key dimensions to the research project as follows:

❖ The extent to which the City's neighbourhood working is congruent with the government's existing and forthcoming vision for neighbourhood working;
❖ The extent to which it reflects experience and good practice in other 'cutting-edge' authorities and how it could be further improved by doing so;
❖ The way in which the neighbourhood working relates to other key elements of Derby City Council's operations (strategy, executive/scrutiny relationship, partnership working, management structures and service delivery) and the scope for potential improvements in these relationships so that there is a coherent 'joined-up' approach.

1.1 Understanding neighbourhood working in Derby

The remaining task in this introduction is to set out what we understand the main aims of neighbourhood working to be, so that they can be used as a basis for evaluation.

The best succinct summary is to be found in the paper 'Direction of the Neighbourhood Agenda', submitted to the Derby CSP in July 2008, this states:

'Neighbourhood working has provided the framework to develop and deliver our work on:
❖ Community engagement
❖ Enhancing the role of the councillors as community leaders
❖ Delivering more responsive public services
❖ Localised service decision-making, delivery and accountability
❖ Improving relationships between services and communities
❖ Community cohesion
❖ Integrate engagement and communication frameworks'

The document continues:

'The neighbourhood agenda cannot be seen as a project, external to mainstream services delivery and strategy. The issues raised above are not single issues, but lie at the core of how we deliver public services, how we are accountable and enable our communities to shape and influence what public services do and their level of satisfaction and trust'.

These objectives reflect a mix of concerns for civic engagement, political and managerial accountability, and more effective partnership working. This mix is found in very many examples of neighbourhood working elsewhere and is a reflection of the open, all inclusive brief which central government has given local authorities in relation to neighbourhood working. But in Derby (as elsewhere) there may be a need to examine different ways in which they could be achieved, clarify the priority that

should be attached to them and identify the way in which they affect one another (whether in positive or negative terms).

1.2 Methodology

This research is intended to provide an evaluation of neighbourhood working in Derby. As such it was important to engage at all stages of the neighbourhood arrangements developed in the last three years.

The research design was developed based on series of briefings and documentation provided by the neighbourhood management co-ordinators in the Summer and Autumn of 2008.

1.2.1 Neighbourhood selection

Derby's neighbourhood arrangements divide the city into seventeen neighbourhoods. It was not within the scope of this research to study each neighbourhood detail and so neighbourhood management coordinators based in the city council selected seven neighbourhoods for detailed research. These neighbourhoods are Abbey, Arboretum, Darley, Derwent, Mackworth, Mickleover and Spondon. This selection was intended to provide a cross-section of neighbourhood across Derby.

1.2.2. Neighbourhood based research

Research across the seven neighbourhoods took place between November 2008 and April 2009.

First, all neighbourhood boards and forums were attended and observed. These meetings provide an excellent insight into how neighbourhood management worked across the case study neighbourhoods and the issues at hand.

Second, interviews were conducted with neighbourhood board members including residents and service providers and members of the neighbourhood teams including the neighbourhood manager. Conducting the research in this order, allowed issues identified in the boards and forums to be taken up in interviews with key stakeholders and also to get the perspective of those involved in everyday neighbourhood working across the seven selected areas.

Seven participants were identified for interview from each of the seven neighbourhoods. Where participants covered two or more neighbourhoods (eg police officers), their involvement was dealt with in one interview. Where participants were more comfortable being interviewed together, these requests were also accommodated by conducting group interviews.

1.2.3 City level research

Neighbourhood based working is reliant on support and facilitation from city level actors and city-wide partnerships. As such, the research also involved interviews with stakeholders including senior management team members from Derby City Council, Derby Community Safety Partnership, along with Executive Councillors, key strategic partners including the police, NHS Derby City and city-level representatives of ethnic minority groups.

These interviews allowed a strategic level perspective on the aims and objectives of neighbourhood working to be obtained and various issues identified at the neighbourhood level to be presented to those acting strategically.

Fifteen interviews were conducted at the city level.

2. A framework for analysis

2.1 Rationales for neighbourhood working

It is useful to consider what the advantages might be of downscaling from a local (or municipal) government level to the sub-local arena . While policy makers' attention to neighbourhoods is relatively new, the debate about devolution and the contribution of small units to good governance has a long history. Conventionally, small-scale governance is associated with participation and responsiveness, while large-scale governance is linked with efficiency and equity.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) identify four rationales for why neighbourhood may be seen as a useful site and scale:

- The **civic rationale** associates neighbourhood working with opportunities for direct citizen participation and community involvement.

Neighbourhoods, being physically more accessible to citizens and containing fewer citizens, are held to make direct participation more feasible. It is easier to distribute information about opportunities for participation and to communicate with citizens about options and outcomes. Citizens may also have incentives to engage because it is at the neighbourhood level that they consume many of the most important public services, and experience the issues most likely to mobilise them. Controversially, perhaps, neighbourhoods are also more likely to encapsulate homogenous communities and to be characterised by shared values, beliefs and goals. Under these circumstances, community cohesion is more likely to emerge as a result of voluntary compliance to informal norms, reducing the costs associated with official enforcement.

- The **social rationale** points to the possibility of a citizen-centred approach to governance.

At the neighbourhood level, it is possible to see governance from the standpoint of the citizen — rather than the politician or the professional - and to design services and decision-making accordingly. Neighbourhood working may offer the best prospect for "joining-up" local action to provide a more integrated approach to citizen well-being. The neighbourhood is an important arena for innovation in the design of public services (e.g. around "life episodes" rather than professional demarcations) and of collaborative decision-making (through multi-agency and community-led partnerships). Neighbourhood arrangements may also have special value in addressing "wicked" policy challenges (like urban regeneration), where there are particular benefits from a holistic and inclusive approach to governance.

-The **political rationale** for a neighbourhood approach focuses on improvements in the accessibility, responsiveness and accountability of decision-making.

Citizens are potentially able to access neighbourhood governance more easily. Having first-hand experience and knowledge of the issues at stake, citizens are more able to make informed inputs into policy-making. Leaders at the neighbourhood level are more likely to be responsive to citizen views, and to have direct experience of the matters at hand. Leaders are more likely to be known to citizens and they have more

---

opportunities to communicate with them and to monitor governance outcomes. Citizens may be better able to hold leaders and service-deliverers to account because their deliberations and actions are more visible, as are the consequences of their decision-making.

- The **economic rationale** stresses the potential of neighbourhood approaches to yield efficiency and effectiveness gains.

Neighbourhood units may be better able to identify and limit waste in organisational processes; they may are also be better placed to identify diverse citizen needs and provide appropriate services. Neighbourhood governance can exploit economies of scope — the benefits of "bundling" services (including creative synergies and shared backroom functions) — in a world in which traditional economies of scale may be reducing in significance (with the advent of e-government and a mixed economy of provision). Small units of governance are potentially more efficient than larger ones because of the increased transparency of the tax/service deal and the greater possibilities for exit (due to a larger number of jurisdictions). The claim here is that neighbourhood working is more susceptible to market-style forms of "bottom-up accountability".

The neighbourhood arrangements developed in Derby draw on all four of these rationales to varying extents.

3. 'Neighbourhood' in Derby

3.1 Neighbourhood working in Derby: the historical context

The current ward-focused neighbourhood system, introduced in the autumn of 2007, was not, of course, established in a policy vacuum; it did not start with a blank sheet of paper. Like many local authorities Derby City Council has a substantial heritage of working with local communities in a community development model which stretches back several decades. In the 1990s for example the City Council's Housing Department used a grant from central government to employ a worker to create Customer Panels in council housing areas. Although access to these was restricted to council tenants, at their height there were thirty three of these precursors of neighbourhood forums. The Council put resources into supporting this structure and the chair of the panel who was usually a tenant who received a training input on his or her duties. In line with community development practice in other local authorities the Council and the panels also organised "Bidding Days" for allocating monies for improvements to the housing and these produced several practical innovations in safety for tenants including door entry systems, bulk head lights and burglar alarms.

As the housing stock declined and the Derby Homes ALMO was established the Customer Panels became federated as the Derby Association of Customer Panels (DACP). They were reduced in number to fifteen as the number of District Housing Offices shrank, but they continued to work alongside Area Panels when these were introduced by the Council in early 2000s.

More recently, the experience of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) scheme in the Derwent ward from 1998 to 1999 onwards and the pilot neighbourhood forums/boards in five priority areas (including Normanton, Austin and Stockbrook) have been influential in the areas concerned. The neighbourhood forums have been compared by residents (unfavourably, in some areas) with the predecessor area panels, and the fall out from the winding-down of the Derwent NDC has clearly had an impact on residents' perceptions and expectations of the Neighbourhood Forum and Board which (in a sense) will replace it. Some of the diversity apparent in development of the current neighbourhood arrangements can be traced to the differential impact of these previous schemes.

The impact of recent history is by no means restricted to changes in organisational arrangements. Local events can shape attitudes to participation, either in positive terms – for example successful community action to respond to a particular local problem (prostitution in Arboretum) – or more negatively, as the discontinuation of a valued local carnival (Spondon, Sinfin) which was perceived as 'bringing the community together'. The impact of car-parking linked to the proximity of the University to the Darley Ward is a key influence on the climate of neighbourhood forum (NF) meetings in that ward. Each ward has its own particular history of positive and negative experiences, which have shaped attitudes to the current system.

The rise and fall of local community groups is a further significant element of recent history. An understanding of the way in which the neighbourhood arrangements have developed in Mackworth would be impossible without an awareness of the key role of the Mackworth Estate Community Association (MECA) in the estate's recent history, and the negotiations which were necessary to gain MECA's support for the new arrangements. Similar community associations exist in Spondon and Abbey.

There are large numbers of such organisations, many of them interest-group rather than neighbourhood based in Arboretum. In other areas, there are few or no comparable examples of significant community organisations. Again, it is possible to relate diversity in the process of development of the current system to differences of this nature.

Party politics too, can play a part. Neighbourhood forums and boards offer an opportunity for defeated local politicians (and indeed retired senior officers) to continue to play a part in the civic life of the area in which they live and used to represent. There are several examples of such influences. What is important is the way in which these individuals operate – are they out to 'score political points', or do they choose to operate as individual residents, playing down their party affiliations? The choice made can be a significant influence on the climate of debate at neighbourhood forum and board meetings.

It is these disparate historical combinations of institutional arrangements, key events (and how they have been handled), local community organisation and (in some cases) personal political histories which help to explain the diversity in the way the new neighbourhood system has been interpreted and has developed (although a further cause of diversity – the attitudes of key agents, in particular neighbourhood managers and local politicians – should not be underestimated).

Such diversity is not in itself a problem. What it does mean is that the **opportunities** for taking forward the neighbourhood agenda (and **impediments** to doing so) will vary from area to area. The objectives of the policy should of course be consistent and clearly understood (an issue which is discussed further below). But the appropriate ways of achieving them will necessarily be different.

4. Key actors in neighbourhood working: the impact of agency

The experience and success (however assessed) of neighbourhood working in Derby will be greatly influenced by the attitudes and behaviour of the key actors and the interplay between them, whether at the city-wide or ward level. Whatever the content of a policy, there is always 'scope for interpretation' in the way it is implemented, particularly in a relatively undeveloped policy area such as neighbourhood working, where there is a strong sense of it being an 'evolutionary learning process'.   The scope for interpretation is apparent in the way in which in some (but not all) areas locality-based staff with school-wider community linkage responsibilities have been enthusiastic supporters of neighbourhood working, and have in different ways helped to facilitate it.

A key distinction can be made between those with a strong sense of ownership of the project and those who are involved in it but in a more peripheral way. The former include 'Stronger Communities' section of the Derby Community Safety Partnership, the neighbourhood managers, the majority of ward members, the police and **some** local residents (or representatives of local community groups). The latter include the various directorates of the City Council, the leading politicians (in their 'city wide' role), to whom neighbourhood working may be important but as one priority amongst many others, which will in many cases be seen as more important. Also in this category there will be other partner organisations (Derby Homes, NHS Derby City), city-wide voluntary organisations (including those representing particular ethnic minorities) and a range of often more sceptical, local residents organisations.

This section will provide an interpretation of the varying perspectives of different stakeholders in neighbourhood working.

4.1 Councillors

At the city-wide (party group) level there appears at present to be a high degree of political consensus about the value in principle of the current neighbourhood arrangements. This is not surprising. Neighbourhood working was introduced in its 'Area Panels' manifestation by a Labour-controlled council in 2003 continued under a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition administration in 2006 and has the commitment of the current minority Liberal Democrat administration (indeed it is a key element of the political philosophy of the Liberal Democrat party). There are differences in the way in which the three parties would seek to develop neighbourhood working, but they are relatively minor in nature. In the present climate of no overall control and financial uncertainty, significant changes are unlikely.

At local level too, there is a high level of commitment to neighbourhood working, although this does vary from genuine proactive enthusiasm to a more reactive attitude. Chairs of neighbourhood boards (NBs) tend to have the highest levels of commitment.   There is a widespread recognition of the potential value of neighbourhood working to the community advocate role of the local councillor, and a general acceptance – not always realised in practice – of the importance of minimising the overt influence of party politics in the public arenas of the neighbourhood system. This second objective is more difficult to realise in the wards (ten in number) where there is disparity in the political affiliation of ward members, than in those (seven in number) where the ward councillors are all from the same

party. In the former situation there is sometimes the temptation for councillors who are members of opposition parties to support views expressed by residents which are critical of the performance of the group forming the administration. There is also the possibility of ex council members operating in the same way.

In one sense there is inevitability about the role of politics (in a broader sense) at the neighbourhood level. NBs allocate resources (albeit in a limited way) and take decisions which benefit some parts of the ward rather than others. In so far as politics is about the allocation of scarce resources, in which some different groups and individuals benefit and others lose out, then neighbourhood working is intrinsically political. In so far as different parties have different views about the criteria on which scarce resources should be allocated, there will also be a party political dimension. What is potentially problematical is not the expression of such differences, but the danger of the intrusion of what the Centre for Public Scrutiny have called 'petty party political point scoring' in the work of the neighbourhood forums (NFs) and NBs. Our impression is that so far, this aspect of party politics is rare although not wholly absent.

There is also an important developmental dimension for local councillors in neighbourhood working. They are having to manage relatively large meetings (of up to 50 in an NF – typically 10 to 15 in a NB), which in the case of some neighbourhood forums can be conflictual and 'difficult to manage'. The skills of operating in this kind of milieu are new to many of the councillors concerned, and whilst some have responded well to the challenges involved, others have (understandably) found it more difficult to do so.

4.2   City Council Officers

The fact that the leadership role for neighbourhood working is located in the community safety partnership (CSP) rather than the City Council is a relevant factor when it comes to understanding officers' attitudes and behaviour. First, it means that there is no 'neighbourhood champion' within the senior officer structure, as there was when the leadership role was located within the Policy Services Directorate. In so far as there is an officer champion, it is the chief executive, reflecting that the fact that neighbourhood working is a priority for all political leaders.

The attitude of the service-providing directors can best be characterised as instrumental. Neighbourhood working is not a priority for them – at worst it is an irritant, at best an opportunity to be exploited. One director felt that the priority given to a particular service within his sphere of responsibility at neighbourhood level (as evidenced by the agendas of the NFs) had been helpful in enabling him to resist pressure to cut his budget for that service. In another case there was a degree of resistance to suggesting that senior officers should attend NFs on a regular basis. In general, it cannot be said that there is much (if any) sense of ownership of or commitment to the neighbourhood project of the part of directors or service managers. On the other hand they accept its existence and claim that they are responsive (within reason) to its requirements.

The perspective at a more junior officer level can be very different. Some of the most active supporters of neighbourhood working in particular wards are school/community liaison officers, youth workers and housing managers (although the latter now operates through the arms-length 'Derby Homes' organisation). As we

argue below, such officers can be important allies of neighbourhood managers in developing momentum for neighbourhood working in a particular area.

4.3   Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

The CSP is (as one would anticipate) the key organisational champion of neighbourhood working. The CSP itself funds the organisational support for neighbourhood working (although the limited funding for local projects comes from Derby City Council itself). Within the CSP structure, the driving force is the 'Stronger Communities' team within which are grouped the nine or ten neighbourhood managers who are the central figures in running and developing neighbourhood working.

There is considerable enthusiasm and support for neighbourhood working amongst the senior officers of the CSP, which is mirrored by the commitment shown by the neighbourhood managers themselves, several of whom put in more time and energy than their term of employment would suggest. It is they who are the driving forces in transforming an idea into a working reality.

However enthusiastic and committed neighbourhood managers are - a necessary but not a sufficient condition for effective neighbourhood - they need 'allies' whom they can rely to help them carry out the 'outreach' networking which is needed to develop the kind of coalition of support necessary to ensure momentum and development. As we argue below, such allies can come from various different sources: vibrant local community organisations, committed and active local councillors, youth workers, community workers, schools/community liaison officers or individual local residents. In a sense it does not really matter who the allies are (although it is extremely helpful if they include one or more local councillors) at this developmental stage. The areas that are struggling to develop momentum are those where the neighbourhood manager has few (if any) such allies.

The location of neighbourhood working within the CSP is important for other reasons. First, it is a location in which the Police are likely to feel more committed and to have a stronger sense of ownership to the project (as is confirmed by our observations of their contribution to NF and NB meetings and interviews). Second, the perception of some important public and third sector organisations of the CSP is conducive to good working relationships. The CSP is perceived to be 'action-oriented' - a 'can do' organisation - much more so than the City Council. Whether these perceptions are justified is irrelevant; the important point is that they clearly influence behaviour.

4.4   Other public sector organisations

The key organisations here are the Police, NHS Derby City and Derby Homes. Depending on the area concerned, other public sector organisations for example, the. University of Derby in Darley – may play a significant role. Other public sector organisations, such as the Fire Service, although they occasionally have a part to play are more marginal to the success of the enterprise.

The commitment of the Derbyshire Police Force has already been noted. Community policing is of course a nationally-agreed priority for all police forces in England, so there is a predisposition on the part of the Police to use any opportunity for achieving this priority. Neighbourhood working is a prime example of an opportunity of this nature. It provides a ready-made mechanism for the Police to slot

into, which has the added advantage of being serviced by another organisation, (the CSP) which is itself one where the Police feel a joint ownership. Their involvement has however typically moved beyond the limits of 'policing issues' to a more general concern with the problems of the area. Their attitude and level of involvement has been widely appreciated by all the major players.

Until recently the involvement of NHS Derby City was relatively low-key, with several NBs not having a health improvement representative. This situation reflected in part the dearth of 'health' issues which were emerging at NF meetings, and in part concerns about the (time) costs of a wide involvement in NBs. However there has recently been a major change of attitude reflecting the appointment of a 'Director of Engagement' in the restructuring to form NHS Derby City, who (as with the Police) can see a real opportunity at neighbourhood level for developing a participative 'preventative' dimension to the NHS in Derby's work. She has already seen the benefits of such an approach in a pilot scheme of this nature in Sinfin (where she became a de facto ally of the neighbourhood manager there) and hopes to see this kind of experience replicated in the other neighbourhoods (whilst recognising that different approaches may be appropriate in different neighbourhoods). A member of NHS Derby City will be attached to each NB. One senses a major developmental opportunity here, as a result of a process which illustrates the importance of agency (i.e. individual actors with an agenda congruent with that of neighbourhood working) in developing neighbourhood working.

The involvement of Derby Homes is variable, reflecting the variation in the amount of Derby Homes' housing stock in different wards. There are some wards (for example, Mackworth) in which a local Derby Homes manager actually operates as the neighbourhood manager. In other cases there is a more low-profile (although typically supportive) involvement; and in others where there is little or no 'Derby Homes', stock none at all.

4.5 Community and Voluntary Sector

The community and voluntary sector as represented by the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) operates at two different levels in the neighbourhood arrangements. It is involved, through its chief executive, at CSP level (including an involvement in the CSP executive board). In addition many of its member organisations are represented on particular neighbourhood boards (e.g. 'Enthusiasm' in Mackworth).

The level of the CVS involvement has a trajectory similar to that of NHS Derby City. It has become much stronger recently for two (related) reasons. First of these is their enthusiasm of the relatively-recently appointed CVS Chief Executive for neighbourhood working of the type introduced in Derby (of which she has previous experience elsewhere). Secondly (and partly as a result) the CVS made a successful bid for a contract, awarded by the CSP to facilitate an 'inclusion' agenda at neighbourhood level. This contract will draw in the CVS to the detail of neighbourhood working in a way which was not apparent previously (and if successful will contribute to the achievement of the community cohesion objective). The CVS have moved from the position of a (relatively) minor player to a major one.

The involvement of voluntary and community organisations in individual NBs is patchy, (with little discernable pattern) and reflects local circumstances. The 'inclusion' contract may result in a clearer pattern of involvement, although CVS always emphasise the autonomy of their member organisations. In general, NBs

have been more successful in filling their quota of voluntary/community group places than they have in filling those allocated to residents representatives. In some cases – e.g. MECA in Mackworth – a particular community organisation is a major player. More typically the attendance of the representatives concerned is irregular, and the contribution to NB debates limited (understandably) to issues of concern to the particular group. The ward coverage of the organisations represented is perhaps inevitably uneven. In Darley, there is representation on the NB from interest groups and from small sub-areas within the ward such as Little Chester and Darley Abbey but none from the larger, more deprived West End areas.

4.6 Local Residents

Local residents are involved in neighbourhood working in Derby in two ways. First they can attend NF meetings and express their views about a whole range of issues ranging from specific personal complaints to comments on priorities for the neighbourhood as a whole. Secondly they can be appointed to sit as 'community representatives' on a NB, through a process which requires ten nominees, to support an application which is then considered by the NB. There are six places allocated to 'local resident' board members. In several areas the quota has not been filled. There is currently only one resident board member in Abbey and two in Derwent.

The attitudes and predispositions of the members of public who do attend NF meetings (which varies from ten to sixty on average amongst different wards) are an important influence on the climate of NF meetings and hence what can be achieved within them. The aggressive climate in Darley NF meetings is very different from the more consensual atmosphere in Spondon and Mickleover (see below for further details). The influence of individual residents within NBs varies. In general it is limited, with a handful of notable exceptions.

The whole issue of local representation at NF and NB meetings is one which needs further consideration. The 'representativeness' of those who attend (in relation to the wider population of a ward) is questionable, to say the least, in most instances. Neighbourhood working requires a much stronger sense of genuine 'representativeness' within its decision-making machinery, particularly over processes such as priority-setting and resource allocation.

4.7 Conclusions

There is a wide measure of support for neighbourhood working in Derby, amongst the key players involved, but important differences in the intensity of that support. The 'driving force' behind neighbourhood working is the 'Stronger Community' section within the Derby CSP, which operates with the commitment and active support of the CSP itself, and the key stakeholders within it – the Police, the CVS and, more recently the NHS Derby City. Within Derby City Council, there is support amongst all the political parties and at chief executive level, with the service providing directorates taking a more pragmatic, instrumental approach to neighbourhood working. However within these directorates at a more junior level, there are staff who play a more active supportive role within particular neighbourhoods. There is a degree of public involvement at ward level, often supportive, sometimes more critical and a rather haphazard pattern of involvement of voluntary and community groups at the local level. There is some evidence that interest groups representing particular ethnic minorities have a range of mechanisms for influencing the council, within which NBs and NFs may be playing a relatively minor role. The effectiveness of

neighbourhood working depends on the extent to which a coalition of active support - centred on the neighbourhood manager - can be established.

What is also clear is that the different agencies involved have different views (not always made explicit) of the priorities of neighbourhood working. Using the 'four rationales categorisation introduced earlier, it is apparent, for example, that whilst the political rationale is emphasised by (many of) the councillors concerned, the civic rationale is currently a priority for NHS Derby City.

5. Structures and processes of neighbourhood working in Derby

In the current operation of the neighbourhood system there are two key structural elements – the neighbourhood forums (NFs) and the neighbourhood boards (NBs). These two mechanisms are central to the effectiveness of the four key processes which are currently undertaken as a means of achieving the objectives of neighbourhood working (see Section 1, Introduction).

These processes are:
1. The identification of local priorities (ultimately leading to the development of a local vision/plan).
2. The delivery of services in a way which is sensitive to local needs.
3. The allocation of a (limited) budget on projects which are likely to benefit the area.
4. The development of a participative civic culture within the area.

In one sense the effective operation, at least to some extent, of the fourth of these processes is a necessary precondition for the justification of the outcomes of the first three processes. For example if local priorities, service variations and budgetary allocations were to be decided by a small unrepresentative clique within which key elements of the local population were un- (or under-) represented, the democratic viability of the system would be impossible to justify.

It is therefore important to evaluate the way NFs and NBs work, how 'representative' they are, and how successful they have been in carrying out achieving 'representative' local priorities, service variations and budgetary allocations.

5.1 Neighbourhood Forums

The aim of NF meetings is to provide a steer to the work of NBs in relation to the first two processes identified – the identification of local priorities and the locally appropriate delivery of services (however, NFs play little if any part in the third process – the allocation of resources to specific projects). As NF meetings (unlike NB meetings) are open to all residents, there is a view that this arena can be regarded as more representative than the NB itself. Thus the results of a local prioritisation exercise carried out within a NF (and there have been some recent examples of this using an electronic system of voting for priorities) would be seen to be more representative of the views of the overall ward population than a similar exercise carried out within the NB itself. Similarly a more informed view of the kinds of local issues which are of concern to local residents and hence required responsive action is seen to be more appropriately sought from a NF meeting (using the 'You Said We Did' format) than from NB members. These assumptions can be justified if there is a reasonably large turnout at NF meetings, and if those who attend can be seen as (in some way) 'representative' of the wider ward population.

NF meetings were observed in each of the seven case study areas during the November 2008 to February 2009 period. Attendance of residents - as opposed to representatives of 'partner' organisations and support staff- varied from 37 (Spondon) to 10 (Arboretum) and averaged 22. As these meetings took place in the middle of a particularly cold winter, this level of attendance is no small achievement[*] particularly

---

[*] We would expect average attendance to be higher in the spring/summer months

when compared with public turnout at other formal meetings of the city council. It is an achievement to be valued and built upon. We were told of examples of larger attendances (up to 70) at particular NF meetings elsewhere.

The problem in relation to representativeness is of course that there is no way of knowing how representative of the wider population a group of 40 individuals who choose to turn up actually are. The evidence from our observations is that it would be difficult to make a case for the current representativeness of forums. For example there was a significant under-representation of ethnic minority residents at the Abbey and Arboretum NF meetings. There were very few residents under the age of 30 at any of the NF meetings and in Darley, Mickleover and Spondon the age-profile was strongly skewed towards the 50 plus age group.

A further problem in relation to representativeness was the tendency for some of the NF meetings to be dominated by articulate residents (often though not always 'middle class') who wished to draw attention to shortcomings on the part of the council (or the Police) in dealing with a particular problem. The climate of the meetings observed in Darley was very much affected by this kind of assertive (bordering at times on the aggressive) intervention. There were some instances of such behaviour also in Derwent and Abbey.

There is of course value in providing an opportunity for any local resident to express a grievance or raise an issue in a local public arena and NFs do provide an opportunity of this nature which does not exist in authorities who have chosen not to introduce a neighbourhood system of working. Valuable information will be gleaned about service failures or problems (typically, in our experience, in relation to local highways and environmental issues). NFs have been used as a consultation vehicle for issues such as bus service provision, local priorities for highways expenditure and changes in EPH provision. But what is clear is that the patterns of complaint or responses to consultation which emerge cannot be taken as 'representative' of the area as a whole, in the present circumstances.

To date, it can be said that NFs have generated a reasonable degree of public engagement. They have provided a channel for the expression of local concerns (typically relating to community safety and local environmental issues) which have in most cases been responded to by the agencies concerned. They have to some extent been used as a vehicle for identifying local priorities, although to date more emphasis has been placed on dealing with nitty-gritty operational issues. However this process is very much at an embryonic stage – there is a long way to go before anything resembling a local vision/plan is likely to be achieved.

The attitude of local councillors to NFs has been variable. Whilst all purport to support them, the way that support is expressed has varied. In some cases there has been a clear sense of leadership demonstrated by the chair of NF or indeed the three ward councillors involved collectively. In other cases there has been a much more low-key approach to leadership (bordering on the invisible).

It is early days yet, and there is a widespread acknowledgement that neighbourhood arrangements in general and NFs in particular are on a steep learning curve, with little to rely on in the way of 'good practice' examples from elsewhere (our second report will seek to provide some help in this respect). The key issue, which needs to be addressed with some urgency, is how they can be made more representative of the wider ward population than they currently are.

5.2 Neighbourhood Boards

Neighbourhood Boards can best be seen as 'mini LSPs' for each ward. They are serviced by the neighbourhood manager and typically comprise, the three local councillors, representative from relevant council directorates (most typically the Youth Service and School/Community liaison) relevant partner organisations[*] (the Police, Derby Homes (where there is a significant social housing stock) and more patchily NHS Derby City, although their attendance will be more consistent in future) representatives from voluntary and community sector organisations in the area and local resident representatives. There are six places earmarked for each of these two last categories on each NB. In several neighbourhoods, neither category is filled, with a shortfall most likely in relation to the residents' representatives. Indeed there is arbitrariness at present in the sets of individuals – both from organised groups and free-standing – which act as a proxy for the local community on NBs.

It is the NBs which are expected to act as the driving force for neighbourhood working in each area. They are influential in agenda-setting for NFs, and in stimulating certain kinds of activity within them, for example priority-setting exercises, either service-specific (highways) or more generally. The board take the initiative in attempting to stimulate greater degrees of public interest and involvement in neighbourhood working, including encouragement to individual residents to apply for membership of the NB itself. The boards have responsibility for allocating the limited budget available to neighbourhoods, which typically involves the prior task of encouraging organisations to submit applications (funds are typically under-subscribed). Formally resource-allocation decisions are taken by the three councillors involved, but this tends to be a rubber-stamping exercise; there are no examples of any NB's recommendations for funding being overturned. Where development work is seen to be required to develop action plans relating to agreed priorities, this is set up by the NB who typically provide most of the sub-group membership (although non-NB members can be and are drawn in where appropriate).

NBs give different priorities to these different tasks, and neighbourhood managers have different views as to what the priorities should be. In some cases there is an emphasis on the availability of resources on a stimulus to public involvement; in others this process is seen as of limited importance, with the preferred emphasis being the local sensitization of services. In some cases the emphasis on nitty-gritty operational issues at NF meetings is seen as inevitable (and/or the best way of sustaining public interest); in others there is a desire to channel such issues in other directions, and to encourage a stronger emphasis at NF meetings on more strategic issues. The nature of the area plays a part here – deprived areas with multiple social economic and environmental problems may have a greater perceived need for 'strategy' than stable suburban middle class areas.

In reality whilst some NBs do operate as the requisite driving force others struggle to do so. In some areas the differences between the role of the NF and the NB is not at all clear. Agendas look similar and similar types of discussion take place, often around detailed issues. What should (in principle) be a business meeting can

---

[*] There is a flexibility with regard to which organisations are represented. University of Derby is represented on the Darley NB, a headteacher in Arboretum.

sometimes drift into a discussion arena, replicating discussions which have already taken place at the NF.

In principle, a mechanism like the NB is needed to provide leadership and direction (just as there is a need for a CSP executive board). In practice, the role of NBs needs a sharper and more consistent focus than is apparent at present. Just as there is an issue about the representativeness of NFs, so there is about the representativeness of NBs. If the NB is to operate as the executive arm of neighbourhood working in each area, its democratic credibility needs to be enhanced through a strategy which seeks to strengthen the representativeness of the NB and NF, and/or which develops imaginative ways of involving local people and increasing the scope of public involvement outside these two structures.

5.3   Making services more responsive to local needs

There are four ways in which the objective of making services more responsive to local needs could in principle be achieved.

First the input from the NFs, in the sessions where individuals are encouraged to bring forward 'problems' which need resolution could be used as indicators of service areas in which adjustments in service delivery need to be made. Thus if, as in Darley, there is a significant amount of concern expressed at NF meetings about on-street car parking problems, (or about anti-social behaviour in the village centre, as in Spondon) then if the NB concerned can devise a solution to the problems, one can argue that services have indeed been made more responsive to local needs.

There are however difficulties in sustaining this argument:.
- There are many services - education, health care and (with occasional exceptions) adult social care – where issues are very rarely raised at NF meetings; so if enhancing responsiveness is to be achieved in relation to these services, it would have to be by other means.
- As noted earlier, the views about service deficiencies which emerge from NF meetings cannot be taken as representative of the views of residents of the area as a whole. Younger people, ethnic minorities, and (in areas of mixed social class) residents of relatively deprived sub-areas are often under-represented at NF meetings. Evidence of their perceptions of service deficiencies would need to be sought in other ways. In their absence, there would be at the very least a distorted view of local priorities emerging from NF meetings.
- The evidence from the NF meetings observed suggests that many items raised are specific to individuals and may not carry with them any implications beyond that. Sometimes there is a pattern in the expression of personal concerns, (as in relation to street drinking in Abbey in 2007) however in many cases there is not. Indeed there is a view amongst neighbourhood managers in particular that it would be beneficial for the development of neighbourhood working if these kinds of one-off 'operational' concerns could be diverted away from NF meetings into other channels (hence the introduction of 'surgery half hours' prior to NF meetings in some areas).

Second, there is the process of consultation about particular services (or aspects thereof) which takes place from time-to-time at NF meetings, for example the pattern of availability and cost of Arriva Bus Services in Mackworth, or support for the vulnerable elderly in Spondon. This process can result in the adjustment to local

services (depending on the response of the service provider concerned to the results of the consultation) but has similar limitations to those noted earlier in relation to NFs – the inevitably partial and selective nature of the consultation opportunities provided, and the unrepresentative profile of those attending NF meetings.

Third, most promisingly there is the opportunity for NBs to establish working groups to look in a detailed evidence-based way at a problem of the service provision which has been identified (and which the NB is convinced represents a genuine problem). The current working group in Darley on traffic and car-parking is currently undertaking work which will hopefully result in service improvements (so long as the relevant organisations are prepared to implement the group's recommendations). Sub-groups offer the opportunity for stakeholders to work together in a way which has the potential to develop 'joined-up' solutions to local problems. However the use of such sub-groups, although widely-supported in principles, has been slow to develop. In some areas no such sub-groups have yet been established, whilst in others they are at a very early stage in their operation.

Finally there is the opportunity to seek evidence about public perceptions of services deficiencies from other, more representative sources. There is evidence in the valuable 'area profiles' that could be used in this way. Surveys of opinion could be (and occasionally are) undertaken to identify the extent and nature of public concern about a problem. The citizens' panel could be used as a further source (although the sub-panel sample size for a particular ward would be relatively small). The main shortcoming of such survey material, is that it is no substitute for a public dialogue about a particular problem, where solutions as well as problems can be discussed.

To summarise, although there is some evidence of progress, the ways in which service delivery can be made more sensitive to local needs require further thought, and the capacity to deliver on this objective requires strengthening.

5.4 Developing a vision for the neighbourhood

In the documentation supporting the neighbourhood arrangements, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of neighbourhoods identifying their own priorities, and then developing a response to these priorities in an action plan. This is a difficult task to facilitate at the best of times (consider the experience of seeking to involve the public in community strategies). It will be a major challenge for NBs.

There has been some discussion of priorities at NB and indeed NF meetings. Local policing priorities are discussed on a regular basis at both meetings, in a way which encourages input from the public (and other partners). NFs have the opportunity to identify three priorities for highways action. Many NBs have discussed area-wide priorities and sought to identify a short list (or in some cases a relatively long list!). In some neighbourhoods members of the NF have participated in a priorities-setting exercise. In others, NBs have set up sub groups to develop policies for previously identified strategic priorities.

All these measures have contributed in a preliminary way towards the development of some form of neighbourhood strategic vision. But it has been an uneven and embryonic process, which suffers from the crucial limitation involved in all NF and NB work; the un-representativeness of which contributing to the strategic vision. At city-wide level in the CSP, there is a certain inevitability in (and some justification for) the CSP taking a lead role in strategy development; it is unrealistic to expect the vast

majority of Derby residents to think in terms of 'strategic priorities for the city'. At local level however, it **should** be more feasible. Residents of Mickleover are more likely to have ideas as to what needs to be done to make Mickleover a better place to live than they would about the City of Derby as a whole. The challenge for the neighbourhood arrangements is to find ways of stimulating that potential contribution. There is a 'Planning for Real' exercise planed in Mickleover, which is of potential benefit. There is much to be learned from other authorities who have found ways of widening public involvement in developing local priorities (as will be discussed in our final report).

5.5 Allocating resources

In their first year of operation, NBs were allocated on equal share of £100,000 to spend on projects which could be seen as contributing to the well-being of the area (i.e. no more specific criteria for selection). For the second year (2008-09) an additional £10,000 was allocated to each NB, the expenditure of which had to relate to one or other of three key priorities), resulting in an overall budget of approximately £16,000 for each ward, some of it ring-fenced. For 2009-10, that level of allocation has been continued, with a further allocation of £10,000 per ward for minor highways projects.

The reality has been that in several neighbourhoods, some difficulty has been experienced in spending these allocations. There has been little in the way of competition for the allocated resources. Most NBs have been content if they have been able to spend the full allocation by the end of the financial year, even if the list of approved projects appears distinctly arbitrary.

The dominant view amongst neighbourhood managers and leading councillors is that allocating this limited budget is not the main purpose of NBs, (making local services more responsive to local needs would typically be viewed as much more important) but that the fund did have a useful role in stimulating interest and local involvement, amongst voluntary organisations in particular.

Evidence from other neighbourhood schemes confirms the value of small budgets of this nature for 'seed corn' projects as a stimulus to public interest. The challenge is typically (as in Derby) have to link this process with the more important aims and priorities of neighbourhood working, rather than it operating as an unconnected sideshow.

For the degree of integration to be strengthened, two conditions are necessary. First the criteria for selection should be much more sharply focused. Second there should be a greater degree of competition amongst bids, so that these criteria can be more seriously applied. The first condition implies the existence of a more explicit community strategy than currently exists in neighbourhoods; the second implies a greater level of interest and involvement amongst voluntary and community groups (and perhaps a greater readiness of partner organisations to develop small-scale value-added projects involving joint working).

5.6 Enhancing the scope and representativeness of public involvement

There is a widespread acknowledgement of the importance of this objective; and an equally wide acceptance of the limited nature of progress so far. As noted earlier, in several cases the quota of residents' representatives on the NB has not been filled.

In others the profile of those attending NFs is far from representative. In the wards where resident representation on the NB is low, efforts are being made by the 'prime movers' in the NB to fill the gap, by personal advocacy, arm-twisting etc. But even when a full quota is achieved, there remains a big question-mark over the extent to which the six residents involved can be seen as 'representative' of the wider community. The challenge of developing mechanisms for tapping the needs and priorities of neighbourhood populations beyond what is expressed at NF and NB meetings is arguably the biggest challenge in developing neighbourhood working further. Our second report will review how this challenge is being met in other authorities.

5.7 Conclusions

In an interview carried out with a group of neighbourhood managers in July 2008, it was clear that in many cases, simply to get NFs and NBs up and running was seen as the main challenge (it should be noted that the new form of the neighbourhood project had been agreed only as recently as summer 2007). Some of the other challenges discussed in this section would at that time have seemed relatively esoteric.

By April 2009, NFs and NBs had been established in all the wards, with differences in the extent to which they had established a coherent pattern of working. In response to the views expressed in this section about the limited nature of progress that had been made in relation to locally-sensitive service delivery, local strategic visions, robust resource allocation processes, and strengthened links with local residents, it would no doubt be argued (and with some justification) that the project was still at an early stage of implementation, and so progress was bound to have been limited. What is needed now perhaps is a concerted effort to meet the challenges that have been set out above.

The key structures and processes involved have so far been uneven in the way they have facilitated the four rationales. Little progress has yet been made in relation to the economic rationale. More progress has been made (although it is patchy) in relation to the civic and political rationales.

6. Strengthening Neighbourhood Working in Derby: an Agenda for Change

The four rationales we have employed in this study are a useful way of simplifying the complexity of the arguments which have been used to promote neighbourhood working in working and the wide range of strengths and weaknesses which came out of our interviews with participants. We have used that framework in the paragraphs above to separate out and present the tensions and issues emerging from the fieldwork in a structured and digestible fashion.

In practice of course, councillors, managers, residents and partners often use more than one rationale, "picking and mixing" across the ideas available and shaping that mix to address a contemporary problem in the specific context of the city. In addition even in principle the rationales themselves are not mutually exclusive in the sense of having no interconnections with one another. Common values, such as a concern for equity, are apparent across some of the rationales and in this subsection we briefly highlight two particular issues which work in this way.

Firstly our cross cutting analysis of all the interviews showed a cluster of concerns which stretched across elected members, neighbourhood teams, Council employees and residents which can be summarised in the question how committed are the CSP and the Council to continuing down the path of neighbourhood working. This was evident across three of the rationale in particular:

- The civic – how committed to community engagement?
- The political – how committed to local accountability of elected members and service managers?
- And the economic – how committed to resourcing neighbourhood working to do its job?

The second theme which cut across these rationales related to Derby's history of community development and its focus particularly on regenerating the poorer areas of the city. The question which arises here may be summarised as what contribution is neighbourhood working making to the relieving of poverty and inequality in the city? In short we can say that the way in which the rationales are being applied at this time suggests that there is a danger of this focus and area of expertise being lost in a one size fits all approach which is applied to every neighbourhood in the city.

Our analysis highlighted a range of concerns in relation to the civic, political and economic rationales which stretched across an equally wide range of stakeholders, not only residents and their representatives, but also many within the council, CSP and neighbourhood structure itself. For the most part however these criticisms were "balanced" in their presentation and therefore it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that an atmosphere of constructive criticism permeates across these groups and this in turn points to a strong motivation towards securing improvement. This optimistic interpretation is supported by the finding that the public service partners who are already engaged in neighbourhood working are in the main enthusiastically supportive of the project and therefore highly likely to assist in any plans to drive forward the progress which is already in evidence.

From the preceding analysis, it is apparent that although considerable progress has been made in relation to neighbourhood working in Derby, there are several issues which concern some or many of the partners (including residents) involved. In this final section, ten such areas of concern are identified and discussed. In many cases they reflect a choice to go in one direction or another, in others a choice of priorities, and in others a problem to which there is no apparent solution. The list can perhaps be seen as an agenda for change facing Neighbourhood Working in Derby. Our final report will seek to provide help in responding positively to this agenda, drawing on further work (including workshops) which will take place between now and July.

These issues are:

1. Clarity about priorities of neighbourhood working

As noted in Section 2, there are four distinctive rationales for (or objectives of) neighbourhood working which can be identified – civic, social, political and economic – which are closely linked to the concepts of empowerment, partnership, government and management respectively. In Section 5 it was argued that neighbourhood working in Derby had contributed to each of these four objectives, but not in a particularly coherent way. In particular, there is little sense of priorities amongst the four objectives. There would be value in those responsible for the scheme trying to explicitly address this issue. In the context of limited resources, it is unlikely that all four objectives can be achieved to a satisfactory degree. There is likely to benefit in focusing on one or two of these objectives as the main driving force(s) behind the scheme. If everything is a priority, nothing is.

2. Community development as a necessary pre-condition for effective neighbourhood working

There is a sense in which the hope of encouraging a much wider interest and involvement in neighbourhood governance (the political/government rationale) is unlikely to be achievable without considerable prior investment in community development (the citizen/empowerment rationale). In a few areas (for example, Arboretum) there is a community development worker; in others the role is played 'unofficially' by a youth worker or community activist. In the absence of this kind of input it will be difficult to overcome the degree of apathy which is perceived in several areas. There are different mechanisms for stimulating the growth of social capital which need to be explored, particularly in those areas where it is demonstrably lacking.

3. A short-term or long-term perspective?

This is choice of priority, or balance facing neighbourhood working in Derby. Much of the energy of NF meetings in particular, in many areas, goes into a discussion of specific operational issues (for example, graffiti, litter, parking). Sometimes these issues imply an area-wide problem, often not. All neighbourhoods recognise the case for developing priorities for action (i.e. some form of strategic vision) or specific policies to deal with high profile local issues. But there are differences in the priority given to short-term versus longer-term issues amongst the different areas. In some it is argued that there is value in an emphasis on the latter to sustain local interest and involvement. In others, there is a view that there must be a move away from short-termism to a more strategic approach. The appropriate balance may vary from area to area. But it does need to be addressed.

4. Should neighbourhood definitions reflect community identity or administrative convenience?

It was pointed out in Section 2 that participation is more likely if there is a neighbourhood structure reflecting areas with which people actually identify, and that typically, these are smaller (5-10,000 population) than are wards in Derby. The reality is that whilst some wards/neighbourhoods are likely to reflect felt identities (e.g. Mickleover, Spondon), others clearly do not (Darley, Derwent, Arboretum). This disparity has been recognised through the establishment of multiple NFs in certain wards (Normanton, Mackworth, Arboretum). This mismatch between current structures and perceived neighbourhood identities needs to be addressed, not necessarily by a reorganisation, but through an attempt to identify and stimulate input from neighbourhoods which reflect community identities.

5. The problem of un-representativeness

There was widespread reference to this problem. The typical attendance at NF meetings was frequently seen (with some justification) as unrepresentative – skewed in favour of older articulate often middle-class residents with only limited representation for the young and ethnic minorities. The composition of NBs was typically seen in the same way – who do the six resident members (if indeed the six places have actually been filled) represent? Why are some voluntary/community groups represented and not others? No-one is claiming that it is possible to achieve a perfect match between NB composition and the local population profile, nor that traditional forms of representative democracy should be given greater emphasis in the absence of a more representative form of participative democracy. However it is clear that in most areas, new channels and mechanisms need to be developed to ensure the involvement of a **more** representative profile of the population, including (as one respondent put it) more 'ordinary people'.

6. Responding to diversity

The current approach to neighbourhood working in Derby has sought to introduce the same structures and processes for each neighbourhood, and each neighbourhood receives the same allocation of resources. Yet neighbourhoods vary greatly in terms of their social composition, level of deprivation and profile of problems. Some, for example Mickleover, are relatively stable middle-class dominated suburbs with a relatively modest agenda of problem issues (typically dominated by traffic/highways issues). Others, for example, Arboretum are areas with transient population, high levels of deprivation, and a wide array of economic social and environmental problems (for example, the dangers of violent extremism, lack of social cohesion, street drinking). At the very least there is a case for (re)considering whether that 'one size fits all' approach is appropriate to such diverse circumstances. Other neighbourhood schemes give greater priority to the more deprived areas, including a disproportionate share of resources.

7. Developing a 'critical mass' of local support

One of the key assumptions behind the Derby neighbourhood scheme is that it will work more effectively if strong local leadership is demonstrated, most appropriately by one or more of the ward councillors involved. Some respondents however, felt it was more important to develop a form of leadership which was responsive to the

27

needs of the local community (a 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' perspective). An alternative approach to current assumptions about leadership (whilst not dismissing its contribution) would be to highlight the importance of the development of a **critical mass of support** in a neighbourhood – a network of individuals committed to developing 'momentum of neighbourhood working. The network would be likely to include the neighbourhood manager, one or more councillors, plus (depending on the circumstances) representatives of influential community groups, committed local residents, and locally-based council officers.

8. Drawing in a wider range of partners and services

There is a further important aspect to 'capacity building'. To prosper, the neighbourhood scheme requires a stronger 'buy-in' from a wider range of council departments and partners whose responsibilities impact upon the quality of life in neighbourhoods. For this to happen, the profile of neighbourhood working needs to be increased at the centre, particularly within Derby City Council. The fact that the lead responsibility is situated within the CSP has many advantages but has resulted in a skewing of the agendas of neighbourhood working towards the priorities and traditional concerns of those organisations most active in the CSP.

9. Strengthening learning capacity within and between neighbourhoods

There are mechanisms for learning in existence – the periodic meetings of neighbourhood managers for example – but there is scope for strengthening the learning capacity within neighbourhood working in Derby in various ways. Training and development events at which experience can be shared more systematically, amongst a wider group of participants would be one beneficial development. The challenges of operating at neighbourhood level – particularly of chairing different NF meetings – are not always fully recognised, particularly for newly-elected councillors. A training initiative would be helpful here. Finally there is scope for drawing in more fully experience from other neighbourhood schemes.

10. Recognising the fragility of neighbourhood working in Derby and the need to protect and sustain it

The aims of the neighbourhood working in Derby are to be commended. Considerable progress has been made, and expectations of further development are high. It is an exciting project. However it is also a fragile project – vulnerable to the political volatility of Derby, the impact of the recession on resource availability within the City and the unevenness of support for it amongst the organisations involved. For the City and the CSP to withdraw from the scheme – or even to dilute or marginalise it – would have profound negative consequences for the relationships which are being developed at local level between the various partners and local residents, and the expectations that these will develop further. Neighbourhood working is not yet fully embedded in the culture of the key organisations involved. Its difficulties are to a large extent a reflection of the problems which are always involved in introducing a new policy initiative into an established set of working relationships. A clear statement of continuing commitment – and in due course a development strategy for neighbourhood working in Derby – would be a beneficial boost to the scheme.

ABRIDGED INITIAL REPORT END