

Minute Extract

COUNCIL CABINET 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

Present: Councillor Williamson (Chair)

Councillors Banwait, Bolton, Graves, Hussain,
Nath, Roberts, Smalley and Williams

74/07 From Areas to Neighbourhoods

The Council Cabinet considered a report on From Areas to Neighbourhoods. Following the approval of Cabinet and full Council, in July 2007, to the principle of transforming Area Panels into Neighbourhood Boards and Forums, the report set out the proposed detailed arrangements. The report sought approval to necessary amendments to the Constitution and to a Good Practice Guide for the new Neighbourhood Boards and Forums. Full Council will also be asked to appoint the chairs of the proposed Neighbourhood Boards. The Community Commission raised issues about the neighbourhood working arrangements at its meeting on 23 July and it was hoped that the Good Practice Guide addressed those issues. The Commission held a further meeting on 29 August to examine the detailed proposals and a report from the Commission setting out their comments and suggested amendments to the Good Practice Guide was considered. It was noted that partners would be consulted through the Area and Neighbourhood Board.

Recommendations of the Community Commission to Council Cabinet	Recommendations of Council Cabinet to Full Council
1. The Commission supports the distribution of the Area Panel budget equally amongst all wards as this is the fairest method of dividing the Area Panel budget.	Agreed
2. The Commission has concerns about the level of funding currently being made available to Boards and feels this is insufficient to address all their local priorities. The Commission recognises that neighbourhood working is a new process which enables elected members to strengthen their leadership role and address a range of local issues. However, the level of resources available to each area can influence how quickly and effectively some of the local issues can be tackled. The Commission therefore anticipates more resources will be made available to Neighbourhood Forums in the future.	Agreed in principle
3. All Neighbourhood Boards should be required to develop criteria for their community budget which should reflect their local priorities. However, the Boards should be given	Not agreed

the freedom and flexibility to decide how the budget should be spent within their respective neighbourhoods. Members felt the existing criteria was too restrictive and that, for example, religious organisations should be eligible to bid for funding providing they do not spend the money on promoting religious activities.	
4. The Commission recommends details of the funding available to each ward in the current year be circulated to all Councillors as an addendum to the Cabinet report.	Agreed
5. The Commission feels the procedure for appointing resident members on to the Board is too onerous and bureaucratic and should be made simpler. It recognises the need to make the process open, transparent and accountable but feels requiring each nominee to be nominated by a minimum of ten residents from ten separate households is excessive. This is greater than for example the requirement to stand as a ward councillor. The guidance for candidates and agents published by the Electoral Commission requires nomination paper to be signed by 10 registered electors in the ward but does not specify the number of households.	The requirements for 10 separate households will not be applied but replaced with a requirement for the ten residents to come from more than one household.
6. The Good Practice Guidance is unclear about how resident members of the Board can be selected in the first year. It states that a selection of the nominated persons will be made by members of the Board. Since there is no Board to begin with for some wards, resident members cannot be selected. The Commission suggests that in the first year resident members be appointed by the Neighbourhood Forum.	Agreed
7. The Commission supports setting a minimum requirement of 50% of resident and community representatives to live in the neighbourhood as this will ensure local accountability.	Agreed
8. Section 9.3.1 lists partner organisations that can be Board members. The Commission suggests only the representatives of the partner organisations should be given a position on the Board and the word <i>officers</i> be deleted (9.3.1). And since the City Council is represented by the three councillors and it should also be removed from the list of partner organisations.	Not agreed
9. There is currently no set maximum number of people for each Board. The Commission believes that this could be made clearer and the numbers could be set at a maximum of 20. These could include 3 ward members, 7 agency representatives and up to 10 local/community representatives. The Board could be allowed from time to time to co-opt individuals with specific expertise to assist them with their work as and when required.	Agreed
10. Some members felt there was confusion on the number of forums that could be held per ward and asked for greater clarity. The Commission suggests that the Council Cabinet should take into account whether there is administrative	This is for each ward to decide - not agreed that the Council Cabinet should restrict wards to

capacity to support more than one forum per ward.	one forum
11. Members felt that in their experience there had been occasions when relevant officers had not attended Area Panel meetings and consequently issues could not be progressed as quickly as they could have done. The Commission recommends that relevant officers and/or Council Cabinet member should be required to attend Board meetings when requested and that this requirement is referenced in the Good Practice Guide.	Lead Council Officer will be Neighbourhood Manager but other officers will attend subject to each department being able to be flexible with regard to representation.
12. There was considerable debate on whether the Board meetings should be open to the public or held in private and there were strong arguments on both sides. The Commission suggests that this be left up to each Neighbourhood Board to decide.	Agreed
13. Tackling cross boundary issues such as parking and traffic congestion were raised by some members. The Commission believes these could be addressed by establishing sub groups between the neighbourhoods affected.	This is for each ward to decide
14. Members felt the scope of the forums should be broad and include all matters that affect residents and not be restricted to clean, safe and green issues nor Council centric.	Agreed
15. Neighbourhood Forums are expected to produce local priorities. It is unlikely that all of these could be funded through the Community budget. The Commission recommends a robust mechanism to be established that enables Neighbourhood priorities to be fed up to the City Council and partners to ensure that Neighbourhood Priorities are reflected in partner budgets.	Agreed
16. The Commission accept the recommendations for petitions.	Agreed
17. The minimum number of meetings for Forums/Boards needs to be made clear in the guidance-it is not clear in the guidance reviewed by the Commission.	It is suggested that there be at least four meetings per year, but each Board/Forum could decide to hold more.
18. Neighbourhood Managers were mentioned at the meeting, this information should be circulated as an addendum to this report along with the budget information.	Agreed

Decision

To recommend Council to:

1. approve the arrangements for Neighbourhood Boards and Neighbourhood Forums set out in the report.
2. approve the amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix 2.

3. approve the Good Practice Guide at Appendix 3 subject to the amendments described in the table above and to authorise the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Social Cohesion and Housing Strategy to approve any further minor amendments prior to formal publication.
4. agree that the Area Panel budget of £99,000 be divided equally between each ward (equivalent to £5,823 a ward) and allocated to the Neighbourhood Board to be used to help meet neighbourhood priorities.
5. appoint the following chairs of Neighbourhood Boards for the remainder of the current municipal year and agree that the other two ward councillors would act as vice chairs:

(Names of councillors to be submitted at the Council meeting)

Neighbourhood (Ward)	Chair
Abbey	
Allestree	
Alvaston	
Arboretum	
Blagreaves	
Boulton	
Chaddesden	
Chellaston	
Darley	
Derwent	
Littleover	
Mackworth	
Mickleover	
Normanton	
Oakwood	
Sinfin	
Spondon	

MINUTES END