
Engaging Communities,
Meeting Expectations:
Highways & Transport
and Neighbourhood
Boards.

Produced on behalf
of Derby Community
Safety Partnership

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Section One: Summary of key points and proposals

Introduction

Derby Community Safety Partnership, in concert with the City Council's Highways and Transport Division, has commissioned a brief review of the relationship between the Division and Neighbourhood Boards. A consensus has developed in the city which suggests that despite significant attempts to improve engagement between the Division and Neighbourhood Boards, and the relationship between the Division and Elected Members, there is still distance to travel before some issues are resolved. The city's Planning and Transport Commission is seeking a body of evidence to inform their consideration in this respect also.

The Division has listened to criticism and has recently put significant effort into establishing a dual process for engagement with Neighbourhood Boards in order to identify priorities, develop plans and execute actions as a result of that engagement – a formal consultation process underpinned with on-going dialogue. However there is an understanding that within current arrangements, expectations are not being met by the Division. There also have been attempts previously to review structures and outcomes by the Division in order to bridge the gap between expectation and delivery. Several systemic glitches have been identified during such reviews including drag in maintenance timelines, resource constraints and a generalised lack of understanding by partners and stakeholders of how the Division operates. Consequently the engagement process has been modified in an attempt to ameliorate such glitches. It is generally accepted that the current engagement process is a significant improvement and the strides that have been made by the Division in this respect have, during the course of this review, been universally acknowledged.

It has also been abundantly clear during this brief review that there is a struggle between the demands for a more inclusive Division and the capacity and resources to deliver it, whilst still maintaining current levels of intervention in the city as a whole. This review essentially concludes that indeed the Division should work with Neighbourhood Boards differently but that consideration must be given as to how the Division delivers against the neighbourhood agenda. The review suggests that some consideration of capacity in the Division is undertaken, underpinned with analysis of what it is Neighbourhood Boards actually want from the Division. The change should be managed, the growth structured and the burden of responsibility shared.

Points and Proposals

1. It has been immediately clear that the Division is being pulled beyond what they can effectively resource. This is known and acknowledged across all parties. The challenge therefore is to be able to manage the very high expectations placed upon the Division whilst engaging with and delivering against key community concerns and priorities. Broadening engagement with Neighbourhood Boards provides a long-term solution that will help manage expectation, develop and manage relationships and enable community priorities to be shaped by the Division and delivered against. However there should be acknowledgement that broadening engagement may not be feasible within current resources. An analysis of need and capacity to fulfil that need is required.

2. Highways and transport are key community priorities. Stakeholders do have a mandate for the investment of time and effort to get the process right in the city.
3. There is concern that broadening levels of engagement with Neighbourhood Boards, beyond that of the formal consultation process, will raise expectations and demand further on already stretched resources and personnel. The current level and nature of engagement with Neighbourhood Boards is a form of demand management, but there is no evidence that it is effective in its' current form.
4. A review of the Division's capacity to deliver an enlarged engagement programme is required. There are various existing teams within the Division which have a community-focused role and it will be of merit to consider how a community engagement model may inform the structure and orientation of those teams. The role and contribution of other stakeholders should also be considered.

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

5. The scope of engagement with Neighbourhood Boards should be enlarged but this needs to be developed in a planned and managed way. Thus engagement should not be completely unfettered but incrementally grown. A compact/service level agreement between the Boards and the Division should be established in order that all parties are clear about what is feasible and the roles and responsibilities across all parties. Neighbourhood Managers have the key role in brokering the relationship between Boards and the Division and it is they who should lead the development of a compact.

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

6. It is clear that engaging Neighbourhood Boards will lead to increased demands on the Division initially. This is inevitable and should be factored for. It may be that some short term resources are assigned to ameliorate the demands the Division are likely to experience. Part of the initial engagement process may involve the development of neighbourhood action plans to help restrict demand to a negotiated level.
7. In many instances short term informational interventions, awareness raising initiatives or in some instances the engagement itself will provide Boards and communities with the reassurance that issues are being addressed. Neighbourhood Managers should be prepared to invest time in fulfilling some of the expressed short term needs also. The development of a compact and agreed action plans would enable a 'work smarter not harder' process to embed.

Proposal: 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.

Proposal: 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.

8. Beyond the formal annual consultation and work planning process, the relationship between the Boards and the Division is largely depersonalised and this has contributed to a breakdown in relationship.
9. Neighbourhood Boards have a tendency to take a solution focused approach in their engagement with the Highways and Transport Division. This is coupled with a tendency for 'mission creep', rendering it difficult for the Division to specify and then resolve local issues as they emerge. This phenomenon contributes significantly to an adversarial relationship between Boards and the Division. Earlier, problem-based engagement is required.

Proposal: 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.

10. The Division should shift the nature of engagement in order that its expertise becomes 'on tap' and not 'on top'. The Division could develop its role by advising Boards on the range of options available to resolve the local issues or problems they raise as opposed to engagement being limited to what is essentially a 'yes you can' or 'no you can't' response to a request. Such advice may include engineering based solutions where this is the best solution to address the problem, but is just as likely to include awareness, publicity or educational based approaches in the local community. The key however is that the Division, using the skills and experience of the professionals within it, *advises* the Neighbourhood Board. Such an approach will rely on Neighbourhood Boards adopting a problem and not a solution-based approach and all parties recognising that the responsibility for achieving resolution does not necessarily lie with the Division exclusively. There are emerging examples that such a relationship is starting to happen but only on a very localised and ad hoc basis.
11. There is currently significant reticence to concede responsibility for decision-making to the Neighbourhood Boards. The Highways and Transport Division will need to reconcile the fact that devolving power will sometimes culminate in decisions being taken that they do not necessarily endorse. It is also the case that it is possible that neighbourhood working will require resourcing.
12. The nature of the Division's engagement with Neighbourhood Boards tends to be technocratic. Formal communication with Neighbourhood Boards needs revision as although it is very comprehensive it is currently too technical and is predominantly paper-based.

Proposal: 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.

13. Significant levels of frustration exist across all stakeholders, including within the Division, about what the formal annual consultative process has been able to achieve.
14. The formal annual consultation process does not serve the purpose for which it was developed.

15. There are several key problems with the consultation process that effectively renders it unfit for purpose:

- scope of the consultation with Neighbourhood Boards;
- timing of the consultation;
- exclusion of the Neighbourhood Boards from the decision making process;
- the attrition in the system caused by the consultation process; and
- the feedback provided to Neighbourhood Boards as a result of the consultation process.

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

16. The role of the Neighbourhood Managers is significant, especially in relation to relationship and expectation management.

Proposal: 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.

Section Two: Background and context

1. Introduction

Derby Community Safety Partnership, in concert with the City Council's Highways and Transport Division, has commissioned a brief review of the relationship between the Division and Neighbourhood Boards. A consensus has developed in the city which suggests that despite significant attempts to improve engagement between the Division and Neighbourhood Boards, and the relationship between the Division and Elected Members, there is still distance to travel before some issues are resolved. The city's Planning and Transport Commission is seeking a body of evidence to inform their consideration in this respect also.

The Division has the very significant strategic issues of transport, traffic congestion and road safety to address and given the unresolved issues in the relationship between parties there is concern that although investments in relationship building have been made, the Division is still perceived as not delivering against community priorities. It is felt that the Division's ability to marry key strategic issues with local community priorities will be difficult to address whilst relationships are generally considered unhealthy or underdeveloped.

The Division has listened to criticism and has recently put significant effort into establishing a dual process for engagement with Neighbourhood Boards in order to identify priorities, develop plans and execute actions as a result of that engagement – a formal consultation underpinned with on-going dialogue. However there is an understanding that within current arrangements, expectations are not being met by the Division. There also have been attempts previously to review structures and outcomes by the Division in order to bridge the gap between expectation and delivery. Several systemic glitches have been identified during such reviews including drag in maintenance timelines, resource constraints and a generalised lack of understanding by partners and stakeholders of how the Division operates. Consequently the engagement process has been modified in an attempt to ameliorate such glitches. It is generally accepted that the current engagement process is a significant improvement and the strides that have been made by the Division in this respect have, during the course of this review, been universally acknowledged.

As Derby Community Safety Partnership is the responsible body for managing the Neighbourhood Board structure in the city it has a significant interest in working with the Division to enable relationship building to develop. Moreover so far as the Partnership's Neighbourhood Management Team are concerned, after crime or community safety roads, traffic management and road safety issues tend to be the greatest priority articulated by communities. Further, road and pedestrian safety issues fall within the broader remit of the Community Safety Partnership. Specifically then the CSP, the Commission and Highways and Transport Division require that they reach an understanding of:

- expectations of the Highways and Transport Division's service delivery across all parties and stakeholders;
- why the current arrangements are perceived not to be working;
- what kind of influence or control over the Division do stakeholders expect or desire; and
- how relationships with key stakeholders may best be managed in the future.

The assignment is based on two key elements. A review of the documentation made available has been undertaken including the current Local Transport Plan and documents relating to engagement with Neighbourhood Boards. A review of minutes and papers emanating from Neighbourhood Boards, where they have been made available, and a search on Derby City Council's electronic information management (CIMS) website has been conducted. Current national government policy focussing on community engagement, as it applies to the Highways and Transport Division, and a short review of national and international literature appropriate to the issues of the Highways and Transport Division and community engagement have also been conducted.

Secondly a series of interviews were held with key stakeholders, as identified by the commissioners. All interviews were held on a face-to-face basis, with the exception of one telephone-based discussion. All interviews took place during February and March 2009. The interviews were semi-structured and considered what has worked well, what expectations are and an identification of potential blockages, problems or issues that exist.

2. The Strategic Context

Public services are experiencing strong long term pressures for devolving decision making to a very local level: the Lyons Review, 'Strong and Prosperous Communities', the Local Government Association's 'People & Places' agenda and the recent Empowerment White Paper all contain the themes of encouraging active citizens and supporting local democracy; improving local public services; and strengthening local leadership and accountability.

Common within these key policy areas are local variations in services, local performance accountability and reporting and neighbourhood engagement and communication, enabling '*devolution from the town hall to communities. Neighbourhood empowerment - giving local people a real opportunity to improve their services and facilities*' (Ruth Kelly, 2006). A key drive then is to bring the consumer into decision making through listening to customers and communities, performance accountability to communities and engaging in consultation in scheme programming and planning. Research demonstrates the importance of community involvement. Local people know their local environments well; and they are the people who stand to gain most from improvements gained from the local transport agenda.

Derby's Joint Local Transport Plan (LTP2) for the period 2006-2011 explicitly aims "to develop and maintain an integrated transport network which promotes safety and sustainability and contributes a better quality of life", to be achieved through delivering a combination of measures that restrain demand for car travel and improve conditions for pedestrians, public transport users and cyclists whilst enhancing road safety. Key overall objectives (of the 10 in all) which have very specific impact on this commission include those of:

- reducing road accident casualties, particularly for vulnerable road users and disadvantaged communities;
- maintaining and improve transport and community safety and security, including reducing perceived danger; and
- improving environmental conditions for communities in Derby through reducing the adverse effects of transport and enhancing the sense of place through greater social interaction and natural surveillance.

Additionally a key element of the long term transport strategy is that of 'local safety and accessibility improvements: enhancing neighbourhood centres via high quality routes and improved safety features'.

Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership, formed in April 2007, produces an annual plan which articulates the structure and priorities of the partnership as well as provides measures against agreed targets. Derby City's Highways and Transport Division are key participants in the partnership and are represented by a senior manager on the Partnership Board. Additionally, the city passports a significant tranche of funding from the Department for Transport to the Partnership and in turn the partnership fund two Child Casualty Reduction posts within the Division.

3. The Highways and Transport Division in context

Consultation and engagement with local neighbourhoods is an important element of the Local Transport Plan. A primary manifestation of that commitment is that the Division allocates significant revenue to investigating and implementing Neighbourhood Board priorities and to engaging in emerging issues as they arise. Formal consultation with each Neighbourhood Board takes place over a three month period during the autumn of each year. During this annual cycle Neighbourhood Boards are asked to provide up to three key transport or highways priorities each, for consideration and possible inclusion in the Division's work programme the following year. Priorities are subsequently assessed against the city's transport objectives and are included in the proposed programme, should the assessment process concur. The proposed programme is then submitted to the city council's Cabinet for approval. Neighbourhood Boards subsequently receive notification of those schemes which officers recommend to Cabinet be included for investigation or implementation in the following year. The Division also consult with a swathe of other interested parties and stakeholders representing transport interests in the city including the Planning and Transport Commission, Disabled Peoples Diversity Forum, LTP Steering Group, Strategic Bus Partnership and the Strategic Cycle Forum.

It is widely acknowledged within the Division that that there is a gap between what can be practically delivered and the levels of service demanded across a range of stakeholders and consumers. Financial pressure very significantly impacts on what is delivered and often planned schemes such as crossings or travel planning are negatively subject to that impact. It is also the case that focus on the city's 'Killed or Seriously Injured' statistics takes precedent so far as road safety considerations are concerned.

Essentially then there are four key pressures on the Division beyond those of money:

- regional and national standards/performance indicators;
- political pressures;
- individual demands for service (articulated via the customer enquiry database, for instance); and
- Neighbourhood Board priorities.

The Division is very clear that of the pressures outside of the performance indicators agreed with government, the demands articulated via the Neighbourhood Boards do have an elevated level of input into the annual work-plan, as compared to issues emerging through other means. However it is the case that the Neighbourhood Board perspective in the decision making process is necessarily incorporated in the light of other interests which may or may not reflect those of the Neighbourhood Boards. So for instance, bus company 'pinch points', the broader economic development of the city and

the need for school travel plans lead to a work programme that is an aggregation of, amongst other things:

- articulated needs;
- performance indicators;
- budget balancing;
- maintenance requirements;
- investments in major bid work; and
- the city's Highway Asset Management Plan.

It is apparent that highways and transport are key community priorities. Thus stakeholders have a mandate for the investment in time and effort to get the process right in the city. As indicated previously Neighbourhood Managers directly engaged in this review have suggested that after crime and neighbourhood safety issues communities identify roads, traffic management and road safety as their second key priority. Further, the Community Safety Partnership includes consideration of speeding traffic as part of their community perception survey. When surveyed 39% of respondents across the city as a whole identified speeding as a fairly or very serious problem in their neighbourhoods (2008). Those neighbourhoods where above average numbers of people perceived speeding to a fairly or very serious problem are identified in table 1. The Neighbourhood Profiles produced during the summer of 2008 by the Partnership's Research and Policy Team also suggest that parking is commonly raised as a local issue but remains unreported to the responsible authorities

Table 1. **Neighbourhoods with perceptions of speeding as a problem above city average (2008).**

Neighbourhood	% of respondents perceiving speeding to be a fairly or serious problem (city average 39%, CSP 2008)
Abbey	58%
Alvaston	56%
Arboretum	51%
Chellaston	48%
Derwent	56%
Mackworth	52%
Normaton	49%
Sinfin	45%

It has been immediately clear that the Division is being pulled beyond what they can effectively resource. This is known and acknowledged across all parties. The challenge therefore is to be able to manage the very high expectations placed upon the Division whilst engaging with and delivering against key community concerns and priorities. Broadening engagement with Neighbourhood Boards provides a long-term solution that will help manage expectation, develop and manage relationships and enable community priorities to be shaped by the Division and delivered against. However there should be acknowledgement that broadening engagement may not be feasible within current resources. An analysis of need and capacity to fulfil that need is required, as is explored later.

This review has demonstrated that there is a mandate for the Division to consider very specifically this issue. There is a collective will to see relationships develop and improve. The centrality of the Division to the neighbourhood agenda and the remit it is responsible for is universally recognised. When asked, local communities commonly identify Highways and Transport issues as key concerns. We know the impact of roads and traffic on a raft of social indicators including perceptions of neighbourhood safety, health

and social cohesion. We know the impact that roads and traffic have on health and the safety of children and the triggers that it holds for children's play and various other social determinants. We also know that communities and parents in particular, place a high value on physical and social interventions to improve child pedestrian safety. There is something of a paradox in the City in relation to the highways and transport agenda. Arguably it is the sense of ownership of the issues across all parties that has led to the deterioration of relationships. Aligning the energies and commitment of those stakeholders will in itself help to address the very problems that are currently separating them.

Section Three: Emerging themes from the review.

1. Capacity

Officers within the Division are concerned that broadening levels of engagement with Neighbourhood Boards, beyond that of the formal consultation process, will raise expectations and increase demand further on already stretched resources and personnel. Indeed a key emanating theme is that of the Division already being pulled beyond what can effectively be resourced and the very high expectations that already cannot be satisfied. It is assumed that increasing engagement with all 17 Neighbourhood Boards will in itself place spiralling pressure on staff and resources in the long term. Essentially then, although it has not been articulated in this way, the current level and nature of engagement with Neighbourhood Boards is a form of demand management. What it is not doing however is managing relationships, nor is it systematically developing partnership approaches to addressing community concerns and priorities with the Neighbourhood Boards.

There has been less emphasis placed on the Highways Maintenance function by stakeholders external to the Division and, it appears that this section of the Division is also more readily able to incorporate neighbourhood working into its current operations. There are a number of legitimate concerns within the Highways and Transport Division that will need to be addressed to facilitate progression.

2. A compact

Should the scope of engagement with Neighbourhood Boards be enlarged then this needs to be developed in a planned and managed way, so preventing increased dialogue and engagement rendering the Division less able to attend to key community priorities and creating a perspective that the Division is inert. Thus engagement should not be completely unfettered but incrementally grown. Moreover some form of 'rules of engagement' or compact between the Boards and the Division should be established in order that all parties are clear about what is feasible and what is improbable. Moreover such a process would enable a consideration of the roles and responsibilities across all parties. In the final analysis the Division is merely a partner (albeit a key one) in the broader range of stakeholders who have an interest in pedestrian safety, traffic management et al. Clearly Neighbourhood Managers have the key role in brokering the relationship between Boards and the Division and it is they who could lead the development of a compact.

3. Reviewing capacity

There are various teams within the Division who have a community-focused role and it will be of merit to consider how a community engagement model may inform the structure and orientation of those teams. It may transpire that it is the set of relationships that need refocusing rather than the nature of the work itself. Clearly however the Division will have an inevitable struggle around the issue of dosage. It is apparent that all 17 Neighbourhood Boards are competing for attention in the current environment. It is the Division's view that certain neighbourhoods require a greater degree of attention than others because of the nature of the neighbourhood and the needs therein. This dilemma requires some reconciliation between the Division and the Neighbourhood Boards as a whole and should inform any review of capacity within the Division.

4. An investment to save

Improving engagement with Neighbourhood Boards will in the long term serve a number of purposes. The experience of the Police in relation to neighbourhood safety should be considered. They too are subject to an unquenchable demand for service. Their service can at any point be fundamentally impacted on by serious or unforeseen incidents. They too deal with perception as much as with quantifiable realities. The Police are reliant on a raft of partners to enable them to deal with the causes and manifestations of crime and criminality. The approach taken here has been that of engagement with local communities and participation in partnerships at the strategic and at the very operational, local level. Consequently the Police have been successful in managing demand, establishing dialogue and relationships, educating at the local level around constraints thus managing expectation, and establishing partnership approaches to dealing with perennial and complex issues in order that the onus for action is not necessarily placed upon that one single agency. Whilst of course the Highways and Transport Division differ fundamentally in terms of structure, authority and exist in a different political environment, the lessons from the experience of the police may be usefully harnessed.

It is clear that engaging Neighbourhood Boards will lead to increased demands on the Division initially. This is inevitable and should be factored for. It may be that some short term resources are assigned to ameliorate the demands the Division is likely to be subject to. The experience of the Division thus far is that when engagement with a Neighbourhood Board is undertaken then officers become over-burdened with 'to do' lists as a result and it should be acknowledged that the Boards will want perennial issues resolved one way or another and some resolutions may well not align precisely with best technical practice. There should be some degree of amelioration through the development of a compact but excessive demand will exist in the short term. Neighbourhood Boards too will need to learn that they are no longer competing for the attention of the Division. However, the experience of partnership working is that over time demands settle as relationships become routine. Part of the initial engagement process may involve the development of neighbourhood action plans to help restrict demand to a negotiated level.

It is the case however that in many instances actions which are relatively one dimensional or symbolic will be all that is required in the short term – informational interventions, awareness raising or in some instances the engagement itself will act as a safety valve, providing Boards and communities with reassurance that the issues are being factored. Neighbourhood Managers may well need to acknowledge that they and their teams will need to invest time in fulfilling some of the short term needs also to achieve the desired outcomes. It should be feasible to conduct a simple needs analysis to enable the Division to anticipate the demands that are likely to be placed upon it during this initial period.

The Road Safety Partnership

A further conduit which could provide for longer term benefit but requires some investment initially is that of the Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership. The city is represented at senior level on the Partnership but it is apparent that there is significant scope to develop the relationship and achieve influence within the context of the Partnership's Priority Action Groups. It is apparent that the city has something of an undeveloped relationship at this level, despite nominally having responsibility for leading one of the priority groups. Given the level of investment the city makes in the Partnership by pass-porting DfT funding, it would make sense to achieve greater

influence over the partnership's work. There is scope for developing a more operational relationship, which should be pursued, especially around the community perception and education agenda where a specific offer of support has been made. This presents an ideal opportunity for the CSP and the Division to operationally cement their relationship in the city in that the CSP, via the Neighbourhood Managers, could lead on consolidating links with the Road Safety Partnership. This could contribute significantly to the empowerment agenda through supporting Neighbourhood Boards and local communities in taking responsibility for pedestrian safety issues.

5. Communication

There is recognition across the piece that the relationship between the Highways and Transport Division and the neighbourhood working function in the city deteriorated as a result of the expansion from 5 Area Panels to the now 17 Neighbourhood Boards. It does not appear to be the case that initially the Division realigned the way it worked at this level to incorporate the expansion, in all likelihood because the demands of the five panels already outweighed what the Division was able to cope with.

The view is that the introduction of Neighbourhood Boards has served to increase the amount of work directed towards the Division. Essentially the implications of this expansion were not managed until a tipping point was reached and consequently the process of annual consultation with Boards was established in order to manage the engagement across all of the Neighbourhood Boards.

However, it is the case that a significant qualitative shift in the nature of the relationship between the Division and neighbourhood working became enshrined at this juncture. Previously the relationship had been consolidated through personnel who provided a clear linkage/contact point between the Division and neighbourhood working. Although the reach of the personnel was limited it nevertheless provided a point of contact which ceased at the introduction of the annual consultation process and an electronic customer enquiry management system. Essentially, outside of the formal annual consultation and work planning process, there is a perception that the relationship between the Boards and the Division has become somewhat depersonalised. This appears to be leading, from the Neighbourhood Board perspective, to a significant breakdown in communication whereby there is a perceived lack of information emanating from the Division on an ongoing basis which keeps the Boards informed about what the Division is doing within local neighbourhoods and what it has planned. There is no established communication loop and it is felt that dialogue is held on an ad-hoc basis and with little opportunity to develop relationships.

There are examples where communication is improved but it appears that this is not systematic and is dependent on individual relationships between Neighbourhood Managers and Division personnel.

In Neighbourhood X there had been a long-standing problem with inappropriate car parking in one particular street. This was an issue taken up by the Neighbourhood Board who lobbied the Division for a remedy. Separately, local business and individual residents also complained via other avenues and the Division ultimately implemented a resolution. However the Neighbourhood Board was not informed by the Division that the work was being planned or implemented.

6. Mission creep

The fracture in on-going communication also has implications for the Division – as well as impacting on relationships it also inevitably impacts on efficiencies. The Division experiences mission creep in engagement with Neighbourhood Boards –agreed tasks or issues shift and change over time and the agreed focus of interaction between the two parties is not consistent, creating drag in resolving them. Improving dialogue with Neighbourhood Boards and making it more consistent will help to keep focus on articulated issues and prevent mission creep from consistently diverting attention. However it is a phenomenon that Neighbourhood Managers need more actively to control.

7. From solutions to problems?

There are significant blockages impacting on how Neighbourhood Boards and the Division currently engage which require resolution. Part of the solution will no doubt develop organically if engagement with Boards is to grow. However it is important that Neighbourhood Boards entrench a problem-solving approach to highways and transport issues, which they do not necessarily do at present. Shifting focus will require management through the Neighbourhood Managers. Again drawing on their community safety experience, this is an approach the teams are used to adopting.

Currently it appears that often the Boards require resolution to articulated issues which on exploration are relatively ill-defined and unattributed. The problem therefore is unclear to the Division. This impacts on the ability of the Division to address issues economically or to the satisfaction of the Neighbourhood Boards and moreover, may contribute to the mission creep described previously.

More importantly it is also the case that Neighbourhood Boards tend to be solution or remedy-focussed in their interaction with the Division. A trawl of Neighbourhood Board minutes on the city's CMIS system demonstrates this is the case. Often the Division is approached not with the problems being experienced at neighbourhood level but with demands that a solution, derived by the Neighbourhood Board, is implemented. From the Division's perspective it may be that the solution is not feasible or possible for a range of different reasons. However, the nature of the discourse with the Board then becomes not about addressing the manifest problem but about the Division resisting the Board's desired remedy. Consequently the Division becomes perceived as negative and belligerent. This relationship should be turned on its head. The Division's re-focusing on engagement with the Boards and the Neighbourhood Team's adoption of a problem solving approach to highways and transport issues will help alleviate this situation.

In Neighbourhood Y information was sought from the Division concerning a specific form of road marking. An offer of the line marking was subsequently made to residents in an area experiencing parking problems without further consultation with the Division. The initiative was adjudged to have compromised the Division and was subsequently withdrawn. There has been no resolution to the issue of problem parking.

8. Expertise 'on tap' not 'on top'

It should also be acknowledged that currently the nature of the Division's engagement with Neighbourhood Boards tends to be technocratic. Formal communication with Neighbourhood Boards needs revision as it is too technical and the Division should

implement a different approach. Further, the general perspective of the Division is significantly anchored in engineering-based solutions and whilst there are emerging examples where this is not the case, they do tend to be the exception and not the rule. For instance, if an issue of speeding is raised the Division will conduct a technical assessment and provide a technical response. If the assessment suggests that the average speed of vehicles does not warrant intervention then an intervention is not implemented. Technically this is correct but what it does not deal with is the perception of speeding on a community and the impacts this perception has on a range of associated social factors such as travel to school, pedestrian safety concerns, child's play and such like.

In Neighbourhood Z the Board was concerned about speeding traffic on one particular road and requested a Vehicle Activated Sign. The Division did not consider the VAS to be necessary and responded negatively to the Neighbourhood Board's approach. The Board was motivated by a desire to address community perceptions and the Division's response was to consider whether the Board's proposal was technically correct. Both parties approached the issue from a different perspective and dialogue became fixated on a proposed solution and not on the problem itself.

Again we should learn from the example of the police in relation to neighbourhood safety. The whole concept of the reassurance policing approach recognises that perception and reality do not always marry but it is important that the perception of a community is addressed. If a community perceive they are unsafe then that has the same impact as actually being under threat. The Division should work with partners to address perceptions where technically there are no problems. That is not to say that the Division should be responsible for implementing initiatives to address perceptions but rather, that it should be in a position to advise partners what they could be doing. The Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership has articulated significant interest in working in the city around developing a toolkit to address neighbourhood perceptions of safety and this is something which should be purposefully pursued. There is a strong argument that the Community Safety Partnership should lead on this, working closely with appropriate colleagues within the Division.

The Division should shift the nature of engagement in order that its expertise becomes 'on tap' and not 'on top'. The Division could develop its role by advising Boards on the range of options available to resolve the local issues or problems they raise as opposed to engagement being limited to what is essentially a 'yes you can' or 'no you can't' response to a request. Such advice may include engineering based solutions where this is the best solution to address the problem, but is just as likely to include awareness, publicity or educational based approaches in the local community. The key however is that the Division, using the skills and experience of the professionals within it, *advises* the Neighbourhood Board. Such an approach will rely on Neighbourhood Boards adopting a problem and not a solution-based approach and all parties recognising that the responsibility for achieving resolution does not necessarily lie with the Division exclusively. There are emerging examples that such a relationship is starting to happen but only on a very localised and ad hoc basis.

In Neighbourhood Y the Division has provided the Board with a range of data to help the Board identify road safety hotspots and has provided a range of costed options that the Board may implement. The Board has subsequently consulted Neighbourhood Forums with regard to the preferred options for local action.

9. Risk aversion

There appears to be a significant level of risk aversion within the Division – not in relation to life or limb issues, but in relation to conceding responsibility for decision making. The Division is mindful that many of the wants or aspirations of the Neighbourhood Boards do not align with technical or professional best practice. There is currently a significant reticence to concede responsibility for decision-making to the Neighbourhood Boards and this has led to the rather technocratic approach to engagement. The Highways and Transport Division will need to reconcile the fact that devolving power, which is being demanded of them, will sometimes culminate in decisions that they do not necessarily endorse. However by developing the Division's engagement with Neighbourhood Boards and by being in a position to inform neighbourhood level discussions at an earlier juncture, and by Neighbourhood Managers facilitating a problem-solving approach to highways and transport issues, then a degree of amelioration should be achieved.

10. The consultation process

That there is recognition the Division has made a significant attempt to improve dialogue through engaging Neighbourhood Boards with consultation on an annual basis is clear. Personnel have attended all Neighbourhood Boards on an annual basis. Comprehensive papers have been produced outlining the consultation process and providing a technical assessment of each neighbourhood. Despite this however significant levels of frustration exist across all stakeholders, including within the Division, about what the consultative process has been able to achieve. Consequently the opportunity to explore these issues has been welcomed across all stakeholders and there has been universal acknowledgement that change is required. All stakeholders engaged in this review have indicated that they are prepared to work to achieve consensus as to how the relationship between the Division and Neighbourhood Boards may be developed, consolidated and improved for mutual benefit. It is important to note that as highways and transport is a shared priority the remedy must also be shared. Partners have indicated openness to such considerations.

The formal annual consultation process does require significant change however as currently it does not serve the purpose for which it was developed. Moreover more emphasis on working with the Neighbourhood Boards across the whole of the annual planning process would serve to alleviate many of the frustrations, complaints and concerns being articulated. At the current time the Neighbourhood Boards are engaged in the process from a partial and relatively uninformed perspective. Nor is the input of the Neighbourhood Boards strategic or 'joined up' with the inputs of others. Boards are essentially drawing up a wish list of three things they would like to see in their neighbourhood. Engaging Neighbourhood Boards in dialogue at an earlier juncture and enabling them to take on board data from the Enquiry Database and intelligence from the raft of other stakeholders that the Division needs to incorporate, will help develop and manage relationships with them, as well as better enable the Boards to consider

their key priorities. Boards should be considered as partners in the decision making process and as clients for the purposes of consultation.

There are several key problems with the consultation process that effectively renders it unfit for purpose:

- scope;
- timing;
- dislocation from the process;
- attrition in the system; and
- feedback.

Scope. The scope of the consultation process has been criticised. The current relationship between the Boards and the consultation is that, in effect, the Boards are invited to compile a 'wish list' of up to three issues that they would like to see implemented in the neighbourhoods in which they have an interest. Those issues identified by Boards are advisory only so far as the Highways and Transport Division are concerned. They are absolute priorities from the Board perspective. Thus a mis-match exists already. Moreover, it is not apparent that the deliberations of the Boards are set in any kind of context which incorporates the broader view of other consultees. Nor are the deliberations of the Boards led by intelligence.

During the last consultation process in Autumn 2008, the Division attempted to articulate the framework and constraints against which the consultation took place and in which the Division works. This was conducted by senior managers within the Division and was wholly well received by Neighbourhood Boards. It was largely felt that this was an important relationship building exercise and helped significantly to build trust between the Boards and the Division. It also helped to contextualise the consultation process. What it did not do however was to utilise the Neighbourhood Boards as a central forum for the development of key local decision making. What it did not do was to establish a partnership arrangement between Board and Division. What it did do was to cement a client-based relationship between Division and Board.

Further, Neighbourhood Boards were not in a position to incorporate the raft of opinions and priorities articulated by other constituencies engaged in the consultation process. For instance, the views of the Disabled People's Diversity Forum, or of the Strategic Cycle Forum are not taken into account by the Boards during their deliberations. Nor indeed were the Boards in a position to consider data and other information sets deriving from the Enquiry Management System to help inform and enable them to finely tune priorities according to the information available. This is because the Neighbourhood Boards are seen as one of a range interests as to being regarded as a central component of the local decision making machinery and a manifestation of a partnership approach to identifying and addressing local issues and concerns.

Whilst it may be perfectly appropriate for the Boards to articulate the services and facilities local communities aspire to it is important that it is acknowledged that this is not the limit to their mandate. Consequently the Boards do need to be in a position to make recommendations to the Division from an informed perspective and thus need to be furnished with the perspectives of other interests and to be enabled through the provision of intelligence as it impacts on those neighbourhoods for which they have responsibility.

Timing. A view has been expressed that earlier engagement of the Boards in the consultation process would enable them to provide a more widely considered set of recommendations more keenly reflecting the views, opinions or aspirations of the wider constituency. Given that the whole process is concentrated around October and November some Boards currently feel that they are 'button-holed' for an opinion and given the timescales of the consultation are unable to adequately consult with forums and the wider community. The consultation process thus appears somewhat process arbitrary. There is a good argument that the Neighbourhood Boards should now anticipate the Highways and Transport Division's consultation process within their own business planning and engage with their own networks at an earlier juncture. However it is likely that the Boards will only want to engage in local dialogue once they have had initial discussions with the Division concerning key issues and scope of the consultation.

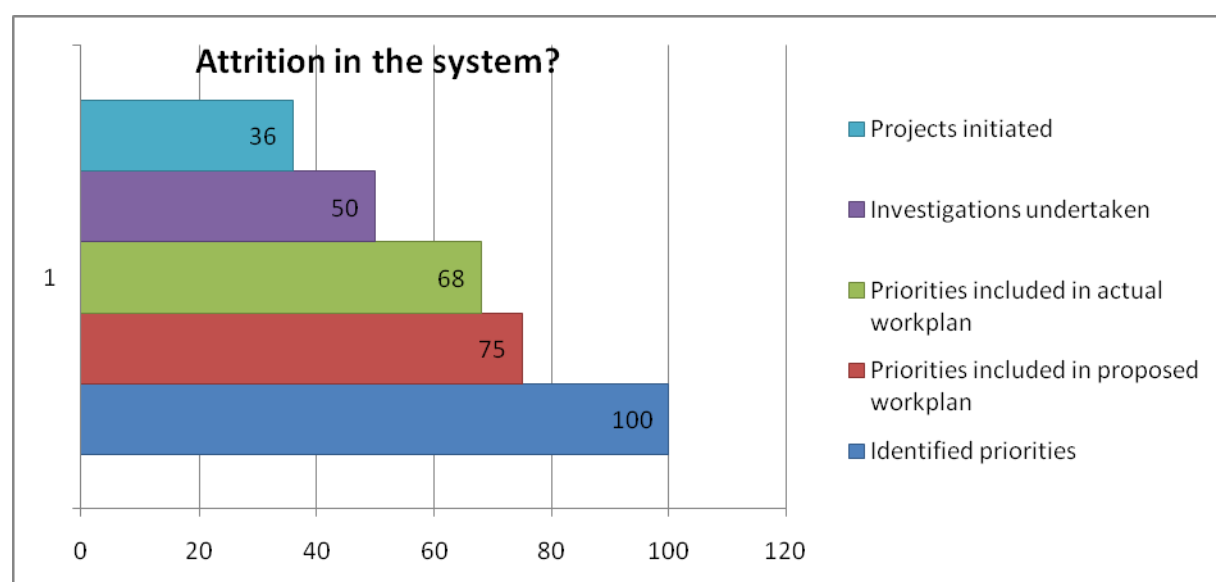
Dislocation from the process. It is apparent that Neighbourhood Boards are not inherently involved in the development and delivery of the consultation process, a fact underscored by the client-based relationship between the Division and the Boards. Boards are engaged with as one of a multitude of interests in the consultation process. Their views are taken away, placed within a consideration of a broader range of perspectives and then a series of decisions are made without further contribution from the Boards. The role of the Boards in this respect is passive and essentially they have no influence or role in jointly discussing or agreeing priorities. This fundamentally limits the development between the Division and the Boards and contributes to an adversarial relationship. The Boards are not really responsible for deciding local priorities, theirs is essentially a lobbying role. The real decision making lies within the Division. If the Division are serious about sharing the responsibility for identifying, developing and implementing programmes at the neighbourhood level then the prioritisation process absolutely needs to be a shared process. Moreover, in the longer term, through developing stronger relationships at the local level and by conceding responsibilities for decisions to Boards in a managed way, then the Division will be in a stronger position to manage demand.

A key parallel here is that of the Police and their approach to safer communities. The demands on the Police are potentially limitless and what they have done corporately is to have engaged at the local level, developing accountabilities and load-sharing whilst also providing a basis for the learning of the constraints within which they work. Consequently they are, to a large extent, successfully managing demand at the local level, whilst providing on-going education/awareness raising of them as an organisation and creating an environment where other agencies contribute to achieving shared priorities.

Attrition in the system. There currently is significant attrition in the system. The Division manage an annual consultation process that identifies a raft of priorities which are then executed over a two year period. If each Neighbourhood Board identifies three priorities each per annual consultation, then over 100 are determined during that period. A proportion of those priorities become sifted out by the Highways and Transport Division whilst the remainder become drafted into the proposed work plan, which goes before Cabinet. It is possible at this point that some of those priorities that have been identified at Neighbourhood Board level are not adopted by Cabinet. The majority probably are and they then get incorporated into a programme whereby they undergo a technical assessment prior to being recommended for action. The investigation happens

during that year. Those that having undergone investigation and are found to be of merit are then programmed into the next year's programme for action. During this time another cycle of priorities is sought during the consultation process. Consequently the priorities identified at Neighbourhood Level are constantly stacking up. If we accept that most become incorporated into the work plan, it is still the case that further priorities are being sought by the Division whilst they are still in the process of investigating the outcomes of the previous years' consultation. The Division will never be able to satisfy the consultation process and will consistently be seen to be not delivering against community priorities. The consultation process will effectively become an empty vessel and Neighbourhood Boards will regard the process as having little value. Incrementally there will be disengagement from the formal consultation process. Figure 1 below is illustrative only but nevertheless provides a representation of how the consultation process gives rise to systemic attrition which in turn impacts on the Division's ability to deliver against community priorities.

Figure 1. Attrition in the system?



11. The role of the Neighbourhood Managers

There is a significant job of work for Neighbourhood Managers in this process, primarily around regarding expectation and relationship management. As identified previously it may well be the case that some form of compact between the Neighbourhood Managers and the Division is required that will essentially protect the Division from becoming over-burdened. The development of this compact which should articulate amongst other things specifically what level of service Neighbourhood Boards may anticipate, and what kind of support the Division should expect from the Neighbourhood Managers. A compact would most appropriately be developed by the Neighbourhood Management function within the Community Safety Partnership. The compact would ensure that there is movement away from the current status quo and allow the Division to develop its relationships with the Boards in a timely and managed way. It is clear that the nature of the relationship between the Division and the Neighbourhood Boards needs to change and the Neighbourhood Managers are best placed and have the greatest expertise to ensure that the results are conducive.

Section Four: Review participants and references.

It is with thanks to the following people who gave up their time and shared their expertise for the purposes of this review:

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