Title: Neighbourhood Governance

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1. Summary and Policy Context

The Sustainable Community Strategy aims to create a place where communities are strong, inclusive and involved and have opportunities to influence decision making. A place where individuals are able to take advantage of opportunities to improve their quality of life.

The Council are committed to a more open and democratic city offering residents greater power to make decisions about services for their neighbourhoods and influence the way budgets are shaped and money is spent.

The Council want to develop the approach with other statutory organisations to maximise and clarify the way that residents can engage with the emerging neighbourhood policing plans and changes in health.

There is a commitment to developing neighbourhood governance across the city, and a desire to work to Community and Voluntary sector, Health, Police, business and other statutory services as key partners in the development of any new process or structures.

The plans for neighbourhood governance support the national policy context of the Localism Act. The Act sets out a series of proposals that are intended to achieve a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people.

2. Recommendations

That LSP partners support and work in partnership to develop proposals for Neighbourhood Councils.

That LSP partners work with the council to support the delivery of the planned pilot programme.

3. Neighbourhood Governance

Options around new forms of neighbourhood governance that recognise current arrangements and seek to find a "Brighton & Hove' approach to central Government's "Localism Act" are currently under discussion.

The Council are committed to developing two Neighbourhood Council pilot projects that will be developed from May 2012 and a city wide consultation was carried out between October 2011 and Jan 2012.

Central to these discussions are commitments to a more open and transparent approach to residents and other key stakeholders in terms of the power to make decisions about services for their neighbourhoods and potentially influence the way budgets are shaped on key issues.

There have been a number of initiatives over the years in the parts of the city, funded by, for example, New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. They have all had slightly different approaches. The Council run projects have used Neighbourhood Management as a model and the programmes commissioned through voluntary sector partners have used Community Development methodology. This approach has enabled communities to influence decisions but has not often included any financial control.

Current challenges and developments

The city currently has a proliferation of neighbourhood and community structures such as Tenants and resident Associations, Friends of Parks, Neighbourhood Forums, Local Action Teams, Health Action groups, conservation groups.

Most of these groups and structures work with the public service providers but are independent groups in their own right. Many of these groups have been part of the consultation process and are keen to see the development of current structures rather than duplication and additional layers or bureaucracy.

The development towards neighbourhood governance will work to encompass the approach other statutory organisations are undertaking, in order to maximise and clarify the way that residents can engage with the emerging development across the council, policing and health.

We will need to explore how to work with a joint approach to involvement including how to bring in line boundaries and definitions that differ between service providers, (Police, the Clinical Commission

Group and Council all map and provide neighbourhood services differently this also extends to different delivery units within the Council).

Helping communities to help themselves has been a key feature of the Council's work programme for many years. The recent Strengthening Communities Review found that community development had strong and positive impact on neighbourhoods in terms of engagement, empowerment, volunteering, well-being, cohesion and improved perceptions of place.

There is a clear relationship between community development and effective delivery of neighbourhood governance arrangements. The Community Development Commissioning for 2012-14 places a clear emphasis on supporting deprived neighbourhoods and communities of interest who are often likely to be most marginalised or excluded.

The Community Development Commission will underpin and support a significant number of wider council and city pieces of work including the new approaches to neighbourhood governance and the need for local communities to play a role in various "intelligent commissioning" processes where "on the ground, real life" experience adds immeasurably to what work is planned and delivered. Helping people across the city help officers understand what matters most is essential to enable them to build 'intelligence' into the design of services.

The plans for neighbourhood governance are also set within the national policy context of the Localism Act. The Act sets out a series of required actions the Government believes will deliver a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people.

A key consideration will be how to develop a joint or complimenting role for neighbourhood governance and Neighbourhood Forums (with planning responsibilities).

Neighbourhood governance may need to vary from place to place, to reflect the demographic make up, diversity and varying circumstances of communities. In addition it is clear that we will need to create a variety of ways residents can input their thoughts, ideas and be part of informed discussion and decision making including the use of new technologies such as multi media.

Delegation

The extent of delegation or scope of the neighbourhood council will have a significant impact on a range of factors such as resources, outcomes; buy in from service providers, partners and residents.

The council corporate management team and the Neighbourhood Governance working group have begun to look at where we can work with residents and communities to co-produce, co-design or delegate the management of decisions and services, we keen to do this with our partners.

In some cases we need to acknowledge it may be more appropriate to co-design or co-produce services with residents, communities and service users, rather than delegate responsibility.

4.   Community Engagement and Consultation

City wide external consultation was carried out between October 2011 and Jan 2012 following the standards in the Community Engagement Framework.

Questions on boundaries, resources, methods of engagement, current structures and groups, how to address issues for marginalised and vulnerable people, legal & statutory duties, value for money and local concerns were all included as part of the consultation process.

The consultation used a range of methods including, events, meetings, workshops, consultation portal, questionnaires and social media. We were particularly keen to reach seldom heard from groups in order to ensure the development of neighbourhood governance adequately considers the needs of people from communities of interest or identity.

The result of the consultation are in the process of being analysed but we have had over 1300 responses to the questionnaire and completed over 20 focus groups with Communities of interest and identity groups and held two public events with in total over 300 people taking part.

Communities and neighbourhood organisations have been asked to put forward 'expressions of interest' in being one of the pilot areas. This has been responded to with great interest and we will be carrying out a further process to move to the pilot stage in May 2012.

The results of the consultation will be reported in March and the recommendations for the pilots Neighbourhood Governance will included in an April Cabinet paper.