

<b>REPORT TO</b>	<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>
Cabinet	7 September 2011

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<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>ITEM</b>
<b>“My Neighbourhood” Community Involvement Review</b>	Leader	Denise Johnson	5

## **1. SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 1.1 This report presents the Cabinet with proposals from the cross party Member Working Group on Community Involvement. The report seeks Cabinet’s views on the proposals and asks for recommendations to be made for consideration by the Council on 21 September 2011. The outcome of the review is a proposed new approach which aims to strengthen the Council’s commitment to community involvement, promotes more community buy-in and focuses on actions and outcomes. It presents a real opportunity to get community ownership of the Local Development Framework, integrate this better with our corporate plan and remove some of the duplication of processes that currently exists
- 1.2 The report takes account of consultation with the public, Elected Members and partners. The consultation process was set out in the 15 June 2011 Cabinet report.
- 1.3 The Scrutiny Committee considered the initial findings of the Member Working Group on the 16 August 2011. The proposals in this report have regard to the observations made by the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.4 An excellent, inclusive and effective Community Involvement process with all sectors of the community underpins the delivery of all the Council’s corporate priorities.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Cabinet note the report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet consider the proposals contained within the report and, in addition to any other comments, recommend that Council:-
  - a) Approve the Principles of Community Involvement, including the proposals to strengthen communication with our communities and the introduction of a Community Improvement Framework as set out in the report to Cabinet.
  - b) Establish six My Neighbourhood Areas.
  - c) Approve the proposed Governance arrangements and funding proposals for My Neighbourhood Areas as set out in the report to Cabinet.
  - d) Approve the necessary changes to the Constitution to implement the above with immediate effect and authorise the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Governance Committee, to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution, to reflect the outcomes from the recommendations above.

### 3. DETAILS AND REASONING

#### **Reasons for the Review**

- 3.1 There are significant changes to national policy on a wide variety of issues which are impacting on all local councils. Two of these policies cover the role of communities in local decision making processes and changes to funding regimes. These two policy changes alone bring greater public expectation on councils and in a climate of limited and diminishing resources. We remain committed to providing excellent, high quality services and it is therefore essential that at this time we review how services are shaped and delivered to meet local needs and expectations. This includes how we involve and engage all communities in the delivery of those services that make improvements to the lives of local people.
- 3.2 This review has been a comprehensive one and designed to identify an enhanced approach to community involvement, i.e. one that is outcome focussed, Member led, strengthens democracy and is transparent and inclusive. The review took account of feedback received from consultation carried out as a specific part of this project and also from previous consultation exercises.
- 3.3 The review aimed to build on some of the clear strengths of our existing arrangements. It also recognised the impact that the national regime for strategic planning, implemented locally through the Local Development Framework process, could bring significant changes across the Borough. With this in mind the review recognised the importance of involving informed local communities in the decision making processes. Therefore the proposals contained within this report make this link and provide a way of bringing forward tangible improvements to local communities.

#### **How the Review was conducted**

##### Public Views

- 3.4 Key to the success of any change is listening and responding to the views of the public. As well as specific consultation undertaken as part of this review, we already hold a lot of information from all communities across the Borough. Past Residents' Surveys have shown generally high public satisfaction rates with the services we provide. However there is no room for complacency and with the need for efficiencies and greater public expectation we need to respond by doing things differently. The public expect more involvement at a local level. They welcome more information about what is happening in their neighbourhood as well as the opportunity to help bring about improvements locally and, importantly, they want feedback on the actions taken.

##### Members Views

- 3.5 Members have been consulted as part the review. The role of Members as Community Leaders is one already being promoted by the Council. The 2010 Scrutiny Committee review "Leading From the Frontline" set out a number of recommendations to strengthen further the local Councillor role and included a role description for Councillors. Appendix A outlines how this review supports that role and the proposals in this report include the role description for Members being incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

#### **The Review Proposals**

##### Principles of Community Involvement

- 3.6 The aim of the Community Involvement Review is to engage with the public in a focused way to help deliver local priorities which should, in turn, be reflected in the Council's priorities.

The following principles have been used to guide the process:-

- build upon our existing strengths & successes
- strengthen arrangements which need strengthening
- be more outcomes focussed
- make a tangible difference to local communities
- member-led engagement
- greater democracy
- clearer & stronger communication & engagement

### Communicating with our Communities

- 3.7 Listening to people, it is clear that they want to receive information in a variety of ways. Communications is a main component and a necessary precursor to engaging our communities. After all if people do not understand our priorities or what we do, they will not or cannot participate. Communications will be key to:

- Keeping in touch & building relationships
- Collecting information / views
- Recruiting to projects
- Sharing information

The review proposals aim to strengthen our existing arrangements and suggest more ways of communicating with the public. Appendix B shows some of the methods we currently use to communicate with the public. It also contains suggestions on new methods. It is recognised that, to a degree, this is still work in progress rather than a communication plan but a more detailed programme will be drawn up. The recommendation for Scrutiny Committee to consider a Communications review within their work programme is welcomed and will assist with further developments in this area.

### Community Involvement Framework

- 3.8 The Review considered the way in which the new proposals could be taken forward. A proposed Community Involvement Framework is attached in Appendix C. The proposal is to introduce Community Improvement Plans across the Borough. These Plans will be drawn up by elected members working alongside the public and partners to identify neighbourhood priorities. Central to developing these plans is community involvement. The public must be part of the development of these plans which need to acknowledge and exist within the overall context of the Council's Corporate Planning process. This presents a real opportunity to get community ownership of the Local Development Framework, integrate this better with our corporate plan and remove some of the duplication of processes that currently exists.

### Community Improvement Plans – in more detail

- 3.9 Subject to the proposals in this report being adopted, as stated above, Community Improvement Plans will be drafted by Members with the public and partners. These Community Improvement Plans will take into account existing plans such as Parish and Town Plans, other partners' plans and the Borough Council's Your Area Action plans. The aim will be to have a plan for the community which will contain actions assigned to it that is owned and monitored by the community. The plan will include actions, some short term and some longer term, with funding identified for small scale community improvements.

The plan will be reviewed every 12 months and the community will receive feedback on progress.

### Community Meetings

- 3.10 A strong message coming from the public and Member consultation was the support for community meetings but not in the current Area Committee format. Therefore it is proposed that the current Area Committee format, which has served us well over the last eleven years, is changed to reflect public opinion and the changed environment both ourselves and partners now operate within. On an area footprint to be determined by the Council, the Members for each area would collectively draft a Community Improvement Plan identifying local priorities and this would then be the focus of area discussions. The role of Members as community leaders would be strengthened with Members working with key groups, partners and individuals within their areas to assist in drawing up the plan and then engaging them in its delivery. It is proposed to reduce the number and frequency of the public meetings and shift the emphasis away from the meetings themselves to action in the communities that deliver tangible outcomes. It is proposed that Council consider establishing six neighbourhood areas. Success will be measured by completion of outcomes identified as priorities within each of the Community Improvement Plans. Members will have officer support for this and changes are currently being introduced into the officer structure that will improve the effectiveness of the proposals in this report. It is recognised that different communities across the Borough will have different needs. Therefore, within the overall Framework, it is envisaged that the process for engagement has a degree of flexibility to meet local needs.
- 3.11. It is proposed that each of the six designated areas be referred to as “My Neighbourhood”. Therefore meetings would be called “My Neighbourhood” meetings to reflect the new approach. It is proposed these meetings are held up to 4 times a year, are very much outcome focussed and will have officer support. At least one of the meetings will include partners. Discussions are continuing with partners to explore joint working and remove duplication, particularly on how arrangements with parish and town councils could possibly be shared

### Implementation of the proposals

#### Governance Arrangements

- 3.12 For the proposals to be implemented there would need to be changes to the Council’s Governance arrangements. These include appointments of chairs, the approval process for Community Improvement Plans, member remuneration, decision making arrangements and meeting schedules, as well as specifying the roles of “My Neighbourhood” Chairs and Vice Chairs and Neighbourhood Councillors. The proposals for change are contained in Appendix D and Cabinet are asked to consider these proposals.
- 3.13 Subject to approval, the new approach would be officially launched in November 2011. Meetings will be timetabled for the coming year and Community Improvement Plans will be drafted early 2012/13.

#### Funding

- 3.14 Subject to the proposals being approved it is recommended that the future funding for the Community Improvement Plans be considered as part of the 2012/2013 budget process. This will be reviewed annually. Linking with the Corporate budget process will help ensure that the Corporate Plan and the Community Improvement Plans priorities are aligned and resources allocated effectively. The proposed decision making process for the allocation of funds is detailed in the proposed governance arrangements in Appendix D.

3.15 In addition it is recommended that the balances remaining from previous years' Area Committee budgets (approximately £12,000) together with the money previously allocated by the South Ribble Partnership (approximately £11,000 revenue and £6,000 capital) previously allocated to Area Committees be allocated to the new "My Neighbourhood" arrangements in the current year to allow progress to be made in advance of the wider budget discussions for 2012/13.

**WIDER IMPLICATIONS**

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these. The risk assessment which has been carried out forms part of the background papers to the report.

<b>FINANCIAL</b>	Sections 3.14 – 3.15 set out the immediate financial implications arising from this report. Financial implications for future years will be addressed as part of the annual corporate planning and budget process.
<b>LEGAL</b>	<p>At a national level there are many proposed changes to legislation being considered by Parliament. This Council needs to respond to the challenges ahead in a creative and efficient manner – the proposals set out in this report are designed to achieve this.</p> <p>Appendix D to the report sets out in detail the proposed governance arrangements for the new community involvement proposals. Of particular note are the suggested decision making procedures. The Council's Constitution will need to be amended to reflect any changes in governance arrangements that are agreed.</p> <p>One of the principal reasons for the proposed changes is to improve the role of the community in how the Council goes about its business. In this context an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out. It is not considered that there are any adverse consequences – from the perspective of equalities legislation – with proceeding in the suggested manner.</p>
<b>RISK</b>	<p>The full risk assessment forms part of the background papers to this report. The main points for consideration are summarised here:-</p> <p>With significant national policy changes and the drive for efficiencies it is right that the Council reviews its Community Involvement processes. The risk of not changing the processes could mean the Council is not in a position to respond to local needs and meet national requirements.</p> <p>The proposals are a new way of working. The drafting of Community Improvement Plans will require input from the public and from partners. There will be a need to manage expectations through this process and careful management of limited resources will be essential.</p>

<p><b>OTHER (see below)</b></p> <p><b>Corporate Plans/ Priorities</b></p> <p><b>Sustainability/ Efficiency Savings/ Value for Money</b></p>	<p>The proposals support the Corporate planning process and strengthen links to the Local Development Framework.</p> <p>As part of this year's budget, the Council agreed to a £350,000 efficiency savings target for Community Involvement. These proposals will help ensure that the efficiencies are met. Also where possible efficiencies will be made through effective use/ sharing of resources with partners and aligning priorities.</p> <p>The proposals aim to strengthen people's involvement in the Council's decision making process. The Community Improvement Plans will take account of different community and sector needs and will be prioritised with funding for small scale activities.</p>
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<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Crime and Disorder</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i>
<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>	<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Health Inequalities</i>
<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>	<i>Staffing, Training and Development</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Risk Assessment

Community Involvement Review – Cabinet – 15 June 2011

Review of Community Involvement – Scrutiny Committee – 16 August 2011

## **Appendix A – Review and support for the Scrutiny Review “Leading From the Front line” recommendations**

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>SUPPORTED BY THE REVIEW</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER</b>
1. A role description of the types of things a ward councillor should do in their ward is agreed and actively followed by Councillors	Yes	Include in the Council’s Constitution  Action already taken prior to the review  Covered in Members Induction Programme.	Member
2. The role is monitored through a new Member mentoring programme in addition to the existing mechanisms through Standards Committee, political parties and scrutiny from residents.	To be addressed outside of this Review	Needs to be considered in any future member mentoring scheme.	Member
3. A communications campaign is developed to do more to promote the role of councillors, challenge myths and celebrate local democracy so that residents get more involved in their area and engage with councillors, through the following means: ➤ Forward – the council’s newspaper to all residents, plus contact details of councillors included on an annual basis ➤ Website – <a href="http://www.southribble.gov.uk">www.southribble.gov.uk</a> ➤ Local media/newsletters ➤ Email newsletters are produced tailored to local areas ➤ Area Committees in proposals My Neighbourhood meetings.	Yes	To be included in the Communications Plan  Scrutiny Committee now proposing a specific review on this topic.	Member with officer support
4. Councillors carry out an audit of communications channels in their area, local organisations, community representatives and issues affecting their area as an A to Z guide in order to engage residents more effectively, which could be shared with officers and partners.	Yes in Part	To be included in the Communication Plan. Also the South Ribble Partnership is working on Area Profiles.	Members with Officer/ partner support.
5. Councillors have the opportunities to have their own webpages, be able to blog and use new media such as Twitter and Facebook etc. following the proposed Connected Councillors development programme with secondary schools in South Ribble.	Yes	To be considered when developing the Communication Plan	Member with officer support.

RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORTED BY THE REVIEW	ACTION	LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER
6. When new residents move into their homes a welcome email with information on the council and how to contact their councillor is sent out via email by Gateway.	Will be addressed outside of this review	Information on a resident's local councillor and contact details to be provided in council tax billing.	Officer
7. A more proactive programme and information pack is put together to encourage people to stand for election and to know what the role involves and councillors play a proactive role in this.	Included at member induction in May /June 2011	To be considered for all future elections.	Officer
8. The Member induction process at all-out elections and by-elections is improved and includes information on the role of a councillor at a neighbourhood level, local ward information, how a councillor get things done, engages with the democratic process and complaints procedure.	Included at member induction in May /June 2011	Is also considered as part of ongoing member development.	Officer
9. Councillors and officers work together to improve the information flow to and from residents and other groups, including schools, churches and businesses etc.	Yes	To be included in the Communication Plan	Members with officer support.
10. Councillors to use Councillors Online to find out about news and activities by ward so that it is as local as possible.	Ongoing	Cllr CONNECT is populated on a frequent basis from information received including articles from Members.	Members with officer support.
11. Councillors promote and make the most of area committees, encouraging residents to attend, deal with local issues and provide feedback to residents.	Yes	See the proposed Community Involvement Framework and Governance Arrangements	Members
12. Councillors welcome more opportunities for the active involvement of Councillors in developing and implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy.	Yes	See Community Involvement Framework	Members with officer support.



RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORTED BY THE REVIEW	ACTION	LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER
13. The procedure for delegating decisions and the scheme of delegation to officers is made more accessible to Councillors and residents so that it is easily understood and can be followed e.g. why decisions can't be taken by Council, Cabinet or a committee.	Yes	To be included in the Communications Plan  To be a future item for the member development programme	Officer
14. The new ' <b>Your Area</b> ' action plans are implemented with partners from the County Council, police and NHS Central Lancashire by area committees to ensure we respond to resident priorities and annual reviews produced by councillors.	Yes	See Community Involvement Framework and Community Improvement Plans.	Members with Officer support.
15. Officer support to ward councillors is enhanced to provide named council liaison officers who would signpost councillors to the most appropriate officer, partner or route to get things done for their community.	Yes	The proposed area arrangements will be supported by officers  Action already taken prior to the review Officer mentors at Member Induction, role of neighbourhood managers	Officer
16. Training and development is provided for Councillors and officers on working in partnership, working with communities and engaging with residents and different groups of people.	Ongoing	Member Induction.  Already covered in member development and 1 to 1 development meetings	Officer
17. Templates and other guidance is put together to help Councillors publicise local activities, surgeries and communicate with residents.	Yes	Progressed subject to approval.	Officer
18. Ongoing training and development is carried out with Councillors and officers to enable them to carry out their role e.g. use of email, website and other information technology packages.	Ongoing	Member Induction and ongoing development.	Officer

## **Appendix B – Communication existing and proposed**

### **Existing ways of communicating**

#### **Keeping in touch & building relationships (direct & indirect)**

- Forward newspaper (residents)
- Business newsletters (About Town / gosouthribble)
- Business networking groups (Central Lancashire Business Group, Leyland)
- Through community groups
- E-shots to contact databases (businesses, event visitors and residents)

#### **Collecting information / views**

- Consultation events
- Printed questionnaires
- Gateway Surgeries
- Through local meetings , Parish Councils etc

#### **Recruiting to projects**

- Face to face contact
- Consultation events
- Friends groups

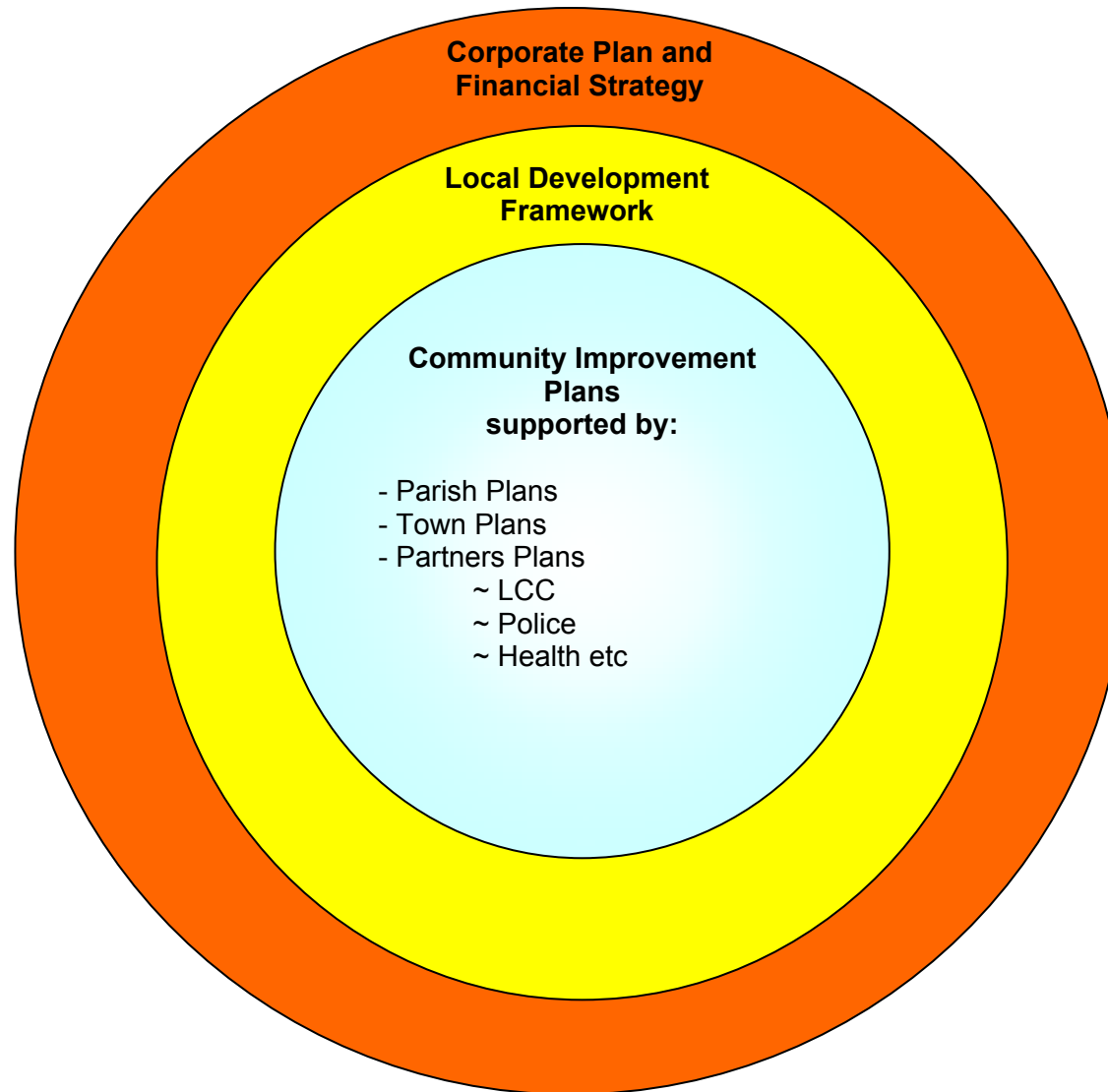
#### **Sharing information**

- Local media through PR and advertising
- Websites – SRBC, visitsouthribble/leyland, gosouthribble
- Links to partner websites
- Subscribing information to other websites e.g. Business Link
- Through events (local festivals, business events etc)
- Area meetings, Parish Councils etc.

### **Exploring New Ways of communicating**

- Facebook pages & walls
- Google maps
- YouTube
- Twitter – @Visitleyland + set up other resident & business based feeds
- Blogs – own and partner websites (e.g. Festival blog on visitlancashire)
- Local interest groups (Ramblers, sports clubs, WI etc)
- Developing the use of IT – developed by topic (Festival) & area/community
- Linked In (direct contact with business people)
- Through newsletters / intranet of local businesses
- Through partner organisations)
- Webchat – e.g. online councillor ‘surgeries’
- Websites
- Local “ambassadors” within the resident/business communities

## Appendix C – Proposed Community Involvement Framework



## **Appendix D – Governance Arrangements for Community Involvement**

### **Issues:**

1. Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs for “My Neighbourhood” meetings.
2. Approval of Community Improvement Plans.
3. Decision making and approval of expenditure to deliver Community Improvements.
4. Logistical arrangements.
5. Remuneration arrangements.
6. Title and job description.

### **Proposal:**

#### Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs:

- To be ratified by Council, following two nominations (1 for Chair and 1 for Vice Chair) from the political group with the majority of seats from amongst the Ward Members representing each “My Neighbourhood” Area. The appointment to be initially for 12 months and then reviewed.
- In the event of an equality of seats within the neighbourhood area, then one nomination from each political party from amongst the Ward Members representing each “My Neighbourhood” Area. The appointment of the position of Chair and Vice Chair to be ratified by Council and reviewed after 12 months.
- A mechanism will be included in the Constitution that will facilitate a change of position outside of the above process to cater for unforeseen circumstances. This would be reported to Council as above.

#### Approval of Community Improvement Plans

- Community Improvement Plans must be developed by each neighbourhood area.
- The plans to be approved by each Neighbourhood must be aligned with the Council’s priorities and they will be further considered as part of the Council’s corporate planning process.

#### Decision Making:

- That decision making be delegated to the Chair of the “My Neighbourhood” Area in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Healthy Communities and in accordance with the Council’s decision making processes.
- All decisions must be made in accordance with the agreed Community Improvement Plan and budgets allocated.
- All decisions must be properly recorded and will be published on the Council’s website.
- Expenditure should be of a “one off” nature and should not generate further on-going revenue expense to the Council.

## Meetings:

- Up to 4 public facing meetings per annum are to be held which are to be open meetings to discuss community issues.
- Reduced administration and logistics are a key consideration i.e. locations, timing, publicity on topics etc to be decided by the chairs in consultation with other local neighbourhood members.
- Chairs will be required to propose the annual timetable of meetings by December each year to facilitate full integration and consultation on the Council's annual timetable of meetings.

## Remuneration

- Appropriate allowance to be determined by the Remuneration Panel or alternatively the same allowance could be paid as contained in the existing scheme for Area Committee Chairs.

## Title and Job Description

- The community meetings to be called My Neighbourhood meetings.

## **(Extracts from the Constitution Part 5 Protocol 10 and amended in light of proposals.)**

The Council's My Neighbourhood meetings play an important role in involving local communities in the decision-making of the Council. Their key role is as follows:

- a) working with the local community and partners identifying the priorities of the area they serve.
- b) ensuring the Community Improvement Plan represents all sections of the community they serve.
- c) ensuring actions in the plan are agreed and reported back to the Community on an annual basis.
- d) ensuring that the views of local communities are taken on board in the way the Council and its partners conducts business.
- e) acting as a means for the Council and its partners to consult local communities on key issues.
- f) enabling Council decisions to be taken at a local level and in a way which allows public participation.
- g) explaining decisions made by the Council and reasons for them to local communities.
- h) enhancing links with local communities and local groups in a way which builds capacity in local communities to take action for themselves.

However, it is also important that members sitting on My Neighbourhood meetings recognise that, first and foremost:

- a) they must act with the interests of the whole Council in mind rather than the interests of any specific area; and
- b) their actions and conduct during My Neighbourhood meetings affect the reputation of the Council with local communities.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Responsibilities of My Neighbourhood Chairs**

- a) Responsibility to work with other elected members, public and partners to draft a Community Improvement Plan.
- b) Responsibility to report the Plan to Cabinet
- c) Responsibility to provide leadership of and direction to their My Neighbourhood meetings.
- d) Championing their local area and My Neighbourhood meetings.
- e) Ensuring effective management of meetings.
- f) Developing links with the local community.
- g) Ensuring communication between all members in the area.
- h) Encouraging contribution from members in the area.
- i) Ensuring that respect is shown at all times to councillors, officers/and members of the public.
- j) Work with other My Neighbourhood chairs to share learning and experience.

### **Role Description for Councillors – (Extracted from Leading from the Frontline – A Scrutiny Review into the Community Leadership and Ward role of Councillors).**

- a) To lead and champion the interests of the local community and effectively represent the interests of your ward and its residents.
- b) To meet, communicate and liaise regularly with local people, involving and consulting them on local issues in order to develop strong positive relationships.
- c) To support and promote good citizenship locally and develop our communities to take part in local groups and community action.
- d) To undertake case work for residents in resolving local concerns.
- e) To communicate with residents and answer enquiries about decisions affecting them and opportunities in the community.
- f) To represent the Council to the community and the community to the Council and support fellow councillors.
- g) To develop and maintain a good knowledge of the ward and Council and develop strong relationships with residents, partners and officers.