

REPORT TO	DATE OF MEETING
Cabinet	10 February 2016

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SUBJECT	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	ITEM
My Neighbourhood Approach – 2015/16 Refresh	Regeneration & Leisure	Denise Johnson	7

SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The proposals set out in this report offer a series of improvements which support the evolution of My Neighbourhood into 2016 and beyond. This report supports and links to all of the Council's corporate priorities.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In February 2012 the Council introduced five Neighbourhood Forums across the Borough. Each forum has a My Neighbourhood Plan, containing ten projects to deliver local priorities identified in public consultation. My Neighbourhood Plans contain a mixture of projects - high and low cost, long and short term delivery, and a mix of capital works and community based non capital schemes.
- 1.2 Since then, a range of projects have been delivered in all of the My Neighbourhood areas. The plans remain 'live' and have been updated as projects are completed. Reserve projects, i.e. ideas for inclusion on My Neighbourhood plans are continually sought via members and residents.
- 1.3 As the success of the My Neighbourhood approach has grown, community expectations increase accordingly. Given the demands of City Deal and its associated improvement schemes, it is timely to evaluate current ways of working.
- 1.4 At the end of the 2014/15 municipal year, Community Involvement Officers were moved around, in time for incoming Chairs following the election. Forum Chairs, Vice Chairs and Officers for 2015/16 are:

Area	Chair	Vice Chair	Officer
Central	Cllr Graham Walton	Cllr Jacqui Mort	Tony Stirland
Eastern	Cllr Mike Nelson	Cllr Mike Nathan	Imogen Brettell
Leyland	Cllr Jane Bell	Cllr Fred Heyworth	Alison Hardman
Penwortham	Cllr Keith Martin	Cllr David Howarth	Sue Simpson
Western Parishes	Cllr Colin Coulton	Cllr David Suthers	Rebecca Heap

2. CURRENT POSITION & PROPOSALS

My Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.1 My Neighbourhood Plans have been revisited and worked through. It remains important that each plan carries a balance of projects, with one or more large scale / long term schemes, and a measured number of operational projects which can progress concurrently. Presently, each forum has a 'reserve' list of projects, awaiting inclusion on the plan. These vary between

areas and would benefit from clarity around which projects have been adopted for action and which are ideas for consideration.

- 2.2 There is a need to make projects contained within plans clearer and more concise. Plans have been refreshed to ensure that projects are not generic or open-ended. Furthermore, it is proposed that projects are 'signed off' upon completion. This would require the Forum Chair and Portfolio Holder to agree that all aspects of the project have been finalised.
- 2.3 Proposed My Neighbourhood Plans for 2016/17 are attached to this report. Focus has been given to consistency across areas and clarity of message, which will allow officers and members to manage workload and expectations.

Member Engagement

- 2.4 The member sponsorship role aligned to projects within My Neighbourhood Plans is key to empowering members as community leaders, and to offering leadership and direction to officers and community groups. The most successful projects carried out to date demonstrate that active participation by sponsor members helps to maintain momentum and deliver outcomes. There is scope to strengthen that role and increase ownership, with the concept of a Responsible Member for each project – without a Responsible Member, a project cannot feature in the plan. At the same time, it is recognised that there are new members who may be less confident and benefit from the offer of training in working with communities.
- 2.5 It is recognised that training will be needed in order to equip members with the skills to effectively engage with communities and manage projects. It is proposed to approach Human Resources and recommend training relevant to community engagement for inclusion on the Member Development Plan.

Internal Communication

- 2.6 Chairs & Vice Chairs meetings have been operating for several years, providing an opportunity for all of the forums to come together and discuss successes and potential improvements. There is scope to further strengthen the function of this meeting, to encourage members to take ownership of its frequency and content. Furthermore, inclusion of the portfolio holder in this meeting will allow the opportunity for resolutions to be made / actions to be agreed without delay.
- 2.7 Each of the projects contained in My Neighbourhood Plans has a more detailed project monitoring document which sits beneath it. Although they have been in existence for some time, better use could be made of them in terms of keeping members up to date with progress on projects. These monitoring documents should be the first point of reference on any project, so that Responsible Members are always accurately informed.
- 2.8 It is proposed that officers work with Responsible Members to refresh project monitoring documents in line with the plans attached at appendix A. When completed, they will be available to view online and provide a snapshot of where any given project is up to in terms of timescale and milestones.
- 2.9 In addition to the delegated decision process, which approves an upper financial limit for each project, project monitoring documents will show ongoing progress – offering greater transparency around operational spend through the life of each project.

External Communication

2.10 Neighbourhood forums maintain close working relationships with partners, which support wider communication. The social media pilot scheme has been successful, with thousands of people reached on a weekly basis via forum facebook pages:

- Central - www.facebook.com/mycentralforum
- Eastern - www.facebook.com/easternforum
- Leyland - www.facebook.com/leylandforum
- Penwortham - www.facebook.com/penworthamforum
- Western Parishes - www.facebook.com/westernparishesforum

2.11 In addition to the above, various event pages are used to share information, photographs and timetables. All are set up as community pages, which means that residents can view information without having to set up a facebook account.

2.12 Feedback on facebook posts is immediate; we are able to see all comments and ‘likes’ as well as exactly how many people have viewed each post. Consequently, the Public Relations and Community Involvement teams have a good insight into the kind of information which residents want to see; there is scope to enhance the Council’s reputation through sharing of good news stories and images of the Council at work.

2.13 It is proposed to further develop the Council’s approach to social media, in line with the corporate move to digital working. Smart phones will enable images to be uploaded remotely, real time updates to be posted, and queries to be answered more quickly. While it is recognised that social media is not the only method of communication to use, there is no doubt that messages are able to reach people who would not attend meetings, e.g. those who are out at work and young people.

2.14 Another pilot scheme has been trialled in Western Parishes – a community newsletter, distributed to all households. Feedback on this has been positive, with a second newsletter in the pipeline. To date, content has focused on progress with projects, promotion of the next forum meeting and contact details for local councillors.

2.15 Newsletters have been discussed at each of the forum planning meetings, giving members the opportunity to discuss and agree an approach for their respective area.

2.16 The next round of Neighbourhood Forums scheduled for 2015/16 is set out below. Dates for 2016/17 are subject to approval within the Timetable of Meetings report.

Penwortham	Thurs 3 March - Penwortham Community Centre
Eastern	Tues 15 March - Bamber Bridge Methodist Church
Central	Thurs 17 March – Farington St Paul’s Church Hall
Leyland	Thurs 24 March - Civic Centre
Western Parishes	Thurs 31 March - Walmer Bridge Village Hall

2.17 Each of the forums is unique, and each chair adopts a different style in their hosting of the meeting. Feedback continues to be generally positive, with new faces at each meeting and a high level of interest in the displays and consultations on offer. Given the informal style of the forum meetings, it is especially important to use the introduction time at the beginning of the meeting to maximum effect. Best practice around forums will be shared and discussed at Chair & Vice Chair meetings.

- 2.18 It is proposed to support each of the forum chairs with a timed schedule for introductions by Responsible Members, with lead officers available to provide a verbal report as required.
- 2.19 Recent forums have seen invitations to residents based on items of specific interest, e.g. consultation on a scheme or photographs from a successful event. In turn, this has encouraged new discussions and projects being adopted by forums which are resident led.
- 2.20 To encourage local participation, it is proposed to carry out further targeted promotion of forums via facebook posts, leaflet drops and posters, in addition to standard publicity.

Events Programme

- 2.21 Over the last 3 years, forums have supported a wide range of community events, offering management, equipment, staffing, knowledge and experience. As reflected in the highlights document which is reported annually to Scrutiny Committee, tens of thousands of people have attended and participated in festivals, 'live' events, markets and more. Such events are fundamental to the Council's involvement with the community at grassroots level.
- 2.22 The challenge associated with this success, however, is that demand for Council support with community events is increasing week on week. In order to make best use of our resources, a more targeted approach is required so that capacity can be managed.
- 2.23 It is proposed to create an annual programme of events for which forums take a lead role, and not adopt responsibility for any further events. Alongside this, the community involvement team will work on a basic event management pack, to provide community groups with appropriate templates and checklists for event planning.

Third Party Funding

- 2.24 As outlined in paragraphs 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9, project monitoring documents will be used to show progress against objectives and spend against budget for each of the projects contained in Neighbourhood Plans. To further strengthen financial transparency, it is proposed to create a formal funding contribution agreement, for use when monies are transferred from the Council directly to a third party. Broadly, this would include a project description, conditions for the use of funds provided, circumstances when funding may be reclaimed, and a requirement for the recipient to keep appropriate records and ensure these are available for Council inspection.
- 2.25 It is proposed to trial an agreement with the above details for twelve months, for any financial contributions made to third parties.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 My Neighbourhood, as the Council's approach to community involvement, was never designed to stand still. Refinements are made on a continual basis; every opportunity to lever in funds, add value and improve outcomes for communities is embraced.
- 3.2 The proposals set out in this report offer a series of improvements which support the evolution of My Neighbourhood into 2016 and beyond.

4. 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.

FINANCIAL	<p>The Council's medium-term financial strategy and budget plan includes a total annual 'core fund' budget of £25,000 for the five My Neighbourhood Forums.</p> <p>Where projects contained in My Neighbourhood Plans are appropriate, Section 106 funding from developments can be used as part of the capital programme. Any S106 allocations recommended by the five My Neighbourhood Forums for inclusion in the capital programme are subject to checks by financial and legal services.</p> <p>The total capital project costs may be higher than the Council's allocations as they may include additional third party contributions. The capital projects included in the Plans will be subject to the Council's procedures for approval. The revenue implications will need to be identified for these capital projects and the funding of any future revenue costs identified before they can be approved.</p>
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LEGAL	<p>As the projects addressing the priorities evolve, if it is proposed to use section 106 monies to fund a particular scheme then the Legal services team will need to check whether the terms of the relevant section 106 agreement would permit such use.</p> <p>The vast majority of the section 106 monies we have should only be used for providing – or improving/enhancing – open space facilities within reasonable proximity to the planning site in question.</p>
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RISK	<p>The full risk assessment forms part of the background papers to this report. The main points for consideration are summarised here:-</p> <p>Each of the Plans priorities will carry with them different risks.</p> <p>In general terms, this is a different way of working. It builds on the principles contained in the Localism Act 2011. The Council has limited resources and success of the plans will be how the community, led by the Councillors, will be galvanised into taking action themselves.</p>
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THE IMPACT ON EQUALITY	<p>Projects contained within the Neighbourhood Plans are designed to be inclusive, accessible and bring communities together.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for each of the plans; there are no potential negative impacts on any of the protected groups.</p>
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OTHER (see below)	
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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

Neighbourhood Plans
Risk Assessment
Equality Impact Assessment