



Mansfield 2008

Implementation framework for rolling forward

Neighbourhood Renewal

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10.0 Implementation Framework

10.1 Effective Area Assemblies/Area Partnerships

10.1.1 Processes

At the request of MDC a revised Community Strategy produced by MASP is committed to the White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*.

The Local Government Bill currently going through Parliament will also influence the development of robust and effective community engagement policies which are likely to strengthen the role of communities in decision making; the Partnership embraces the emerging Government aspirations and will incorporate the provisions of the Bill, when it is enacted, in delivery of the Strategy.

The White Paper has informed recent revision of constitutional arrangements for Area Assemblies.

However, in order to translate words into actions MDC will need to provide leadership in order to deliver aspirations in the White Paper. It may, of course, prefer to leave this until the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill* is enacted or, as suggested by the LGA/IDeA and DCLG, start the process of considering how it will respond.

There are sound reasons for an immediate start, not least the prospects for existing arrangements such as NMTs if external funding ceases in March 2008, including funding interim or longer-term arrangements through the LAA. Moreover, having committed itself to changes in the role and functions of Area Assemblies, it should now consider how these will be implemented. This will include securing involvement and commitment of key stakeholders.

10.1.2 Priorities

In *Closer to the People* the LGA provides a useful approach for local authorities and is the basis for the following 'checklist'. Matters that are more appropriately considered under other headings in this section of the report are excluded.

1. Knowing and understanding distinct communities:

Whilst not neglecting communities of 'interest' (e.g. faith and BME communities) MDC and partner agencies should co-operate in identifying distinct geographical communities of 'place' in each AA area. It should embrace 'top down', statistical information at a very local level (e.g. from *The Condition of Mansfield*) with 'bottom up' information (e.g. residents' own perceptions of what constitutes their neighbourhoods alongside other 'expressions' of neighbourhood, such as Neighbourhood Watch, Tenants'/Residents' Associations, NMTs etc).

This approach would fit with MDC's focus on improving quality of life in 'neighbourhoods', resolve difficulties encountered by Select Commission 1 in how to define neighbourhoods by, in effect, reflecting outcomes from MDC focus groups.

A more proactive approach for identifying 'neighbourhoods' will be relevant even if the 24 neighbourhood policing areas become arenas for more formal activity, including degrees of sophistication with regard to locality (neighbourhood) action planning, which will breathe life into the role of Area Assemblies in developing Area Plans.

For most residents the locality (neighbourhood) would be the main focus of their attention but mechanisms for linking with Area Assemblies need to be considered. Whilst many councillors (from MDC and NCC) have expressed their support for and,

indeed, already regularly attend numerous local residents' meetings, provision should be made for nomination/election from neighbourhoods to AAs.

The process of neighbourhood differentiation should be conducted through MASP but will require each of the partner agencies to promote, broker and negotiate revised arrangements consistent with local/area action planning with relevant residents' organisations/groups. For example, the police in relation to neighbourhood watch, MDC Housing Department in relation to the network of seventeen tenants' groups, MDC's Regeneration team in relation to NMTs, MDC in relation to Worsop Parish Council and, of course, Area Assemblies in relation to groups that have already 'registered' with them.

2. A strategic approach:

2.1 Area Assemblies

In many respects *existing* constitutional arrangements had always envisaged a more strategic role for AAs but, and in many respects similar to NMTs, they have largely been semi-detached from the 'business' of MDC and other partner agencies. Revised constitutional arrangements, including an Action Planning role for AA's, are intended to strengthen their relevance to decision-making within MDC.

The White Paper highlights a need for training and support for frontline councillors both generally and specifically with regard to progressing, for example, Community Calls for Action. The Local Government Association and Improvement and Development Agency have and are developing approaches for councillor training as well as other agencies. For example, MDC along with other councils in the East Midlands Local Government Association might usefully consider 'commissioning' bespoke training with Leicester University and/or other organisations. However, an opportunity for joint institutional/community capacity building should not be missed.

These proposals, along with measures outlined above to establish effective links at the neighbourhood level, would significantly enhance the credibility of AAs in an 'influencing' role. MDC's Executive Mayor has stated that he is prepared to *consider* devolving budgetary/executive decision-making powers to AAs subject to relevant legal requirements. Should this take place, it would impact on the extent to which residents are involved in AAs. This has been resolved elsewhere by developing a 'twin track' approach by, for example, establishing a 'community forum' separate from an 'executive' role. Adopting this approach at the outset would prove useful.

Implicit in earlier observations about engaging with other partner agencies is a need for their agreement and commitment, rather than an assumption that they will 'sign up' to a new role for AAs. The recent 2007 CPA acknowledges MDC's new protocol for 'partnership working' which has been the subject of a presentation to MASP. There is a need to extend this to AAs and, possibly, to subsidiary levels (e.g. neighbourhood arrangements).

Achieving clarity about the role and responsibilities of stakeholders in relation to AAs needs to be matched with equal clarity at 'higher levels' the 'golden thread' linking neighbourhood/area action planning with higher level strategies, particularly the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

2.2 Relationship between AAs and higher level strategies

Revised constitutional arrangements for AAs emphasise their new role, via locality planning, in relation to the 'policy framework' which, inter alia, includes the Community Strategy and LAA.

Statutory responsibility for developing the Community Strategy vests in MDC, for the LAA (as the delivery vehicle for Community Strategies) with Nottinghamshire CC. Both councils therefore need to clarify their relationships and, significantly, relationships 'on the ground' between their councillors and with relevant officers from both councils. This should include, so far as practicable, a local 'code of conduct' regulating relationships between councillors.

Government has made clear that more effective co-operation between district and county councils is non-negotiable. Precisely how this will develop in the local context is unclear at this point in time. However, in the wake of the White Paper, Nottinghamshire CC and district councils have signed up to an agreement pledging future co-operation. This agreement considers that 'neighbourhood' arrangements are principally matters to be determined by each district council. In Ashfield the district and County Council's are jointly developing these arrangements. Clearly there is a need and potential for a similar approach in Mansfield. This should include (for so long as they are predominantly advisory/consultative bodies) potential for rotating AA chairs between MDC and Nottinghamshire CC councillors and, possibly, activating an earlier proposal to open this up to partner agencies.

The net effect of these proposals would reinforce the role of AAs (and locality planning) as a resource for all agencies. Sitting AAs under MASP would be consistent with this approach. Both MDC and Nottinghamshire CC should make arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the role of AAs through their overview and scrutiny arrangements. In addition, there is merit in strengthening the relationships between AA chairs, MDC Cabinet and the Executive Mayor, including MDC Cabinet members chairing relevant theme groups in MASP.

2.3 Potential 'pilot' arrangements

In several respects lessons have been learned from the LNSR which have benefited the approach taken in the local SSCF(NE) programme, including clustering three neighbourhoods, appointment of a dedicated co-ordinator located with other team members *and* other agency personnel in premises on 'the patch'. It is adopting a more robust approach than has been the case with the LNRS programme, including greater expectations from partner agencies. MASP has established dedicated arrangements, the Neighbourhood Management Group, to oversee this programme.

The LNRS evaluation recommended a 'trial period' in one of the NMT areas 'where more concerted efforts are made by all partners to devolve some decision making and influence over main programme spend', we believe that is considerable merit in the SSCF(NE) programme becoming a pilot.

This should not necessarily delay any of the activities described above (which are particularly relevant to Area Assemblies). However, it could provide an immediate and comparatively minimal risk-based approach for trialling a model that might later be capable of being rolled out into other neighbourhoods – particularly underperforming neighbourhoods.

10.2 Developing Area and Neighbourhood Plans

10.2.1 Processes

To develop and implement Area and Neighbourhood Plans that are effective in meeting the needs of the community they have to be relevant, realistic, demonstrate inclusivity and connectivity, and be co-ordinated and systematic. This means basing action planning processes on evidence not hearsay. In essence this is about the quality of local knowledge management and how effectively decision making by all stakeholders including the communities uses the knowledge available.

This begins, as part of knowledge sharing, with providing better information to communities regarding the nature and quality of local services delivered. Mansfield District Council may well take on a wider responsibility for all public services through a revamped inspection regime so the Council should consider how best to secure citizen participation in the design and delivery of public services, and perhaps the use of local charters to establish service standards and priorities.

The whole process should be one not just predicated on setting targets but of providing a rationale for those targets and charting their progress and impact. In short it becomes a living document or documentary from which real learning can take place and from where that learning can be passed on or transferred through appropriate mechanisms such as through web-based knowledge banks.

Area and Neighbourhood Plan key principles are set out below:

1. Knowledge Management
2. Developing Content
3. Planning and implementation
4. Monitoring, evaluation and performance measurement
5. Co-ordination
6. Communication, consultation and participation

10.2.2 Priorities

1. Knowledge Management

Through the accumulation and use of quality data, information, and expertise sense needs to make of what we know and have experience of being true and also of our perceptions. This 'knowledge' does not reside in one location but to be effective knowledge needs to be co-ordinated and managed centrally with links, either virtual or real, to all stakeholders. An obvious link would be through website and e-mail, but more traditional forms of telephone and newsletters should not be abandoned. It needs to be adequately resourced and seek continual improvements in the way areas are understood so that services can be both targeted and differentiated as appropriate. Research will be important in areas where there are knowledge gaps so developing and implementing a programme of research will be advantageous. This may already be taking place with some service providers so its co-ordination becomes important. Quality knowledge will lead to better decision-making.

2. Developing Content

Content of Action Plans needs to be fit for purpose, provide consistencies for comparison, and offer a comprehensive picture of travel and intent. Work should commence with developing area profiles and identifying the key priorities that emerge from evidence. It is critically important to ensure that any improvement targets are linked explicitly to both the LAA and Community Strategy. All actions that flow from

this planning process should show clearly how they engage mainstream and voluntary organisations and they need to be reflected in the respective service plans.

3. Planning and implementation

Planning actions should be directed by key issues and not simply every issue so there needs to be some judgements made which are transparent. Actions are also influenced by an interpretation of local and strategic issues emerging from the LAA and Community Strategy. This enables relevant priorities to be set. Problems identified may have one or more options for a resolution so solutions need to be developed jointly from a multi-agency perspective. The adopted actions should identify responsibilities, expectations, and timescales for both transparency and accountability. Actions should have identified some form of risk assessment which takes into consideration legal, financial, and other operating environments. This is the component which shows that the plan is a living document where changes are accommodated within the plan period.

4. Monitoring, evaluation, and performance management

Progress of all actions must be regularly and systematically measured and their impact evaluated where possible. This is not simply a question of correcting weakness but also of continual learning. Some form of traffic-light or similar simple indication can be provided in reports to an appropriate monitoring group to allow some focus on where actions are failing. Changes to weak or failing actions can be built into an improvement plan which needs to be owned and also monitored. The plan period ideally should be three years with annual reviews and quarterly monitoring reports. Appropriate stakeholder administrative arrangements need to be in place to ensure transparency and accountability, and where and when decision-making can be made. The important point to reflect here is the emphasis on making sure evidence collection continues and from it learning also continues and improved actions flow.

5. Co-ordination

Co-ordination is an essential support process rather than a component of action plans. In simple terms it can be how all neighbourhood plans 'fit' into an area plan and how learning at the local level is transferred. In more complex ways this can be about co-ordinating stakeholders to deliver a set of actions and trouble-shooting when problems need to be resolved, or bringing 'external' agents in where appropriate, or arranging study visits.

6. Communication, consultation, and engagement

Crucial in the process of action plans is the need to maintain communication since this is the one area that failure to deliver can result in disenfranchising. Making good use of web sites (including a review of the website to ensure improvements are made) and the resources they can hold is of increasing value although more traditional methods of keeping stakeholders in touch are important. Good communication provides the foundations for sound consultation which is critical in gaining views of stakeholders especially those hardest to reach. Consultation however should not be mistaken as engagement. Engaging with stakeholders establishes real two-way processes and can add significant value but does require higher levels of commitment and Resourcing.

10.3 Designing and Delivering Neighbourhood Services

10.3.1 Processes

In developing and implementing effective policies and strategies for the development of public services that respond more effectively to neighbourhood priorities and the strategic priorities of the LAA as they relate to neighbourhoods, a systematic approach is required which recognises that there are a number of related priorities and processes that will need to be taken forward. The design and delivery of this approach is largely dependant on the extent of service re-orientation towards neighbourhood priorities that is required or felt to be appropriate. The principles of the approach to developing services that respond to neighbourhood priorities can be summarised as follows:

1. Strategic Review
2. Policy formulation and performance measures
3. Strategic planning and implementation
4. Monitoring, evaluation and performance measurement
5. Co-ordination
6. Communication, consultation and participation
7. Research

These processes will need to be transparent, participative and inclusive. They will also need to be carried out flexibly in ways which encourage innovation and creativity at the level of individual units within departments and neighbourhoods.

The nature and purpose of these processes are outlined briefly below.

10.3.2 Priorities

1. Strategic Review

The development of policies and plans for effective neighbourhood service delivery will need to be based on a comprehensive review and audit of the structures, functions, composition and financing of current patterns of service provision in order to determine how services currently relate to neighbourhood priorities.

2. Policy Formulation and Performance Measures

In the light of such reviews, the priority goals for the development of neighbourhood services will need to be broken down into broad and realistic policy objectives and targets, as well as the time-frames for their achievement. Performance measures will need to be designed and used to obtain an accurate assessment of the progress that is being made towards the achievement of these objectives and targets, and to highlight those areas where corrective action is required.

3. Strategic Planning and Implementation

Broad policy objectives and targets will need to be implemented at both the departmental and neighbourhood levels through:

- The setting of appropriate, specific and measurable objectives;
- The design and implementation of detailed strategies and action plans for their achievement;
- The mobilisation of the necessary resources and their effective utilisation;
- The identification of problems and constraints, and strategies for overcoming them;
- The introduction of effective systems for internal monitoring and review.

An effective joint planning process will need to be implemented between 'service managers' and 'neighbourhood managers/co-ordinators' for improved service delivery.

4. Monitoring and Performance Measurement

The establishment of appropriate internal and external mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation will be central to the process of service transformation. The development of effective internal mechanisms within departments, such as performance auditing and appraisal, will need to be an integral part of the process. To ensure accountability and the success of the broad process of service transformation, these internal mechanisms should also be accompanied by independent external monitoring and evaluation of departmental contributions to neighbourhood services.

5. Co-ordination

Co-ordination of the work of the departments at the departmental and neighbourhood levels will be vital, especially if the transformation process is to contribute towards the kind of integrated service delivery needed to tackle many of the problems within neighbourhoods.

6. Communication, Consultation and Participation

To achieve service re-orientation goals, the transformation process must secure the active involvement, support and commitment of staff. Given the Councils commitment to improving service delivery through successful partnerships with other agencies it is also clearly essential that the transformation process is based upon broader agency involvement and support. In striving to achieve the necessary levels of support and commitment for the transformation process, inside and outside the Authority, the District Council will need to develop its role in providing leadership to the Local Strategic Partnership and focus attention on:

- **The development of an effective and co-ordinated communications strategy.** This will aim to present a clear, consistent and succinct picture of the vision and goals of the new neighbourhood management arrangements. It will further provide accurate and positive updates on the progress of the transformation process.
- **The establishment of effective mechanisms for consultation and involvement.** These mechanisms should be designed in particular to provide opportunities for public service staff, as well as wider stakeholders, to play a meaningful part in shaping, implementing and monitoring the on-going development of neighbourhood services.

7. Research

The process of transformation in each of the priority areas identified above should be supported by high-quality research of both a quantitative and qualitative nature. Areas for research would probably include:

- The impact of transformation policies and programmes.
- The effectiveness of the instruments and mechanisms established for the purposes of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.
- Comparative studies of comprehensive service re-design in other areas.

Research activities will need to be well planned and co-ordinated to ensure that they are relevant and applicable. They should also involve a wide range of partners and practitioners.

10.4 Engaging Communities

10.4.1 Processes

Resident involvement and effective mechanisms for engagement between service providers and residents are key principles of effective neighbourhood management as identified by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU). Community Engagement activity in support of wider neighbourhood management objectives needs to be planned, co-ordinated, resourced and widely supported by all partners at both strategic and operational levels in order to both maximise impact and ensure efficient use of partner resources and community capacity.

Processes that support community engagement both within communities and within the organisations that serve and/or engage with them are necessary. These processes will need to be clear and of a consistent quality whilst also providing opportunities for flexibility, innovation and creativity in response to local or organisational preferences.

The nature and purpose of these processes are outlined briefly below:

10.4.2 Priorities

For Neighbourhood Management to be genuinely effective, a co-ordinated and resourced approach to community engagement needs to be adopted in all areas and/or neighbourhoods, to include engagement with both communities of place (e.g. all residents of a given area) and communities of interest (e.g. young people) . Though some element of devolved funding has been shown to aid the development of wider Neighbourhood Management, this should not be the prime focus of communities when engaging with this process as this has stifled development of genuine community led activity and diverted focus away from the real prize of pooling of resources, mainstreaming and adopting new ways of working. Focus should therefore be on using community engagement to identify actions that can be delivered by communities themselves, actions that require collaboration with other agencies or groups and actions that are the responsibility of agencies or groups as a part of their functions on behalf of communities.

The key priorities within this approach are:

1. Strategy
2. Consistency / Standards
3. Co-ordination of resources a) Human b) Financial
4. Training and development
5. Support

1. Strategy

The starting point for the co-ordination of community engagement activity should be an agreed and comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy and supporting processes to ensure that clear aims and objectives for community engagement are set and worked towards through the effective application of human and financial resources. The Community Engagement Strategy should set out:

- the tools and mechanisms through which communities may be engaged in setting and delivering priorities (e.g. through Neighbourhood Action Plans, attendance or representation at Area Partnerships etc)
- the ways in which service providers and other organisations will engage with communities and the extent of this activity

- the resources that will be available to support this activity (e.g. Community Development advice and support, training and capacity building, budgets to support wider community involvement)
- SMART targets for this activity

Communities themselves, the wider VCS and service providers need to be included in both the design and delivery of this strategy and the ownership of the strategy should rest with these stakeholders. In addition a strategic lead for community support, capacity building and engagement will need to be taken by MASP, with all partners at the most senior levels understanding their contribution to this activity.

2. Consistency / Standards

A consistent model of community engagement needs to be supported to include engagement at the micro level around local neighbourhood and thematic priorities and at the macro level engagement of communities at other levels of decision making, for example within area partnerships, service user groups and panels and Mansfield Area Strategic Partnership (MASP).

A common set of standards for community engagement activity should be developed to ensure consistency and these will need to be commonly owned and be used by partners to direct support and training and development resources.

3. Co-ordination

National and local experience suggests that the extent to which capacity is developed and activity co-ordinated within partner organisations and within communities themselves is a critical success factor for Neighbourhood Management.

The first stage of co-ordinating resources in support of community engagement is through mapping partner(ship) and community resources currently involved in this activity. Once this data has been received this can be used to shape the design of processes to support this co-ordination activity. These will need to consider:

1. Creation of a virtual team of officer support (or a jointly funded team with cross agency responsibility?)
2. Skills audits to ensure common skills sets are maintained within the “team”, community representatives and staff involved in community engagement activity
3. Developing a core database of consultative / engagement activity to identify gaps, overlaps and duplication.
4. The coordinated allocation of support roles for Neighbourhoods
5. Co-ordination of the financial resources available from across the partnership to support community engagement activity.

4. Training and development

Development of core training and development plans is needed for officer support roles, elected members and community / resident representatives. This will include induction training, policy awareness and community engagement skills.

5. Support

Some form of Community Empowerment Network should be maintained through which voluntary and community groups and NAP groups can network, develop stronger links and support and gain representation on other MASP structures including the Board.