

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report To: Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date 18th June 2009

Subject: Neighbourhood Funding Strategy

Report of: Carole Pattison, Interim Assistant Chief Executive (Performance)
Maria Boylan, Strategy Leader, Corporate Performance Group

Summary

To appraise Members of the work and recommendations of the Sub Group of Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Recommendations

To endorse the proposed improvements to the process and timescales for the implementation of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy 2009/10 contained in this report.

Wards Affected:

All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Meeting Local Needs – Neighbourhood Funding Strategy 2009 – MVA Consultancy.

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The delivery of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy (NFS) was piloted in 2008. It was agreed that the pilot would be independently evaluated and lessons learned used to inform delivery in subsequent years. A full evaluation was undertaken by MVA Consultants. Following the receipt of the report, Members of this Committee agreed to set a Members Sub Group the purpose of which would be to:

- Review the evaluation report and to make recommendations for the rollout of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy 2009-10

The Sub Group met on two occasions in May and the comments made by the Sub Group have informed the proposals for implementing the NFS this year contained in this report.

1.2 As reported at the last Committee the two objectives of the NFS were:-

- To support the ward representatives role of Councillors to influence the whole of budgets through Ward Co-ordination; and
- To enable neighbourhood priorities to be reflected in mainstream budgets and business plans.

Of the 64 Members who responded to the survey 84% reported that, to some extent these objectives have been achieved with 57% saying that this was achieved to a large or moderate extent.

1.3 In summary the evaluation concluded that:-

- There is considerable support for the underpinning principles of the NFS and that it has been a positive development at a strategic and operational level. The pilot itself is viewed as a useful learning experience.
- Members, Heads of Service and Ward Co-ordination particularly liked the fact that the NFS has opened up internal communication channels between, and within, services. This has in turn allowed Members to go some way to influence mainstream budgets and inform policy development with neighbourhood priorities.
- The majority of stakeholders were impressed at the speed at which some requests were already being implemented or featuring within business plans. There was some dissatisfaction about the response to certain requests; this was mainly in relation to schemes asking for more frequent services, or change of focus to current services.
- Ward Co-ordinators and Members demonstrated an awareness of the limitations regarding the amount of funding that was available for requests. There is a desire amongst some Members for greater autonomy was still required at the Ward level. Members felt that

greater dialogue between Heads of Service and Members was needed when requests were being formulated.

- Heads of Service and Ward Co-ordinators also felt that there was too much administration involved in the process and that this actually risked the Strategy becoming a paper-based exercise.
- Some Ward Co-ordinators and Members were disappointed that their requests had been limited to specific services and look forward to more services, and partner organisations, being involved in the future so that requests can be more wide ranging and relevant to local need.
- Although most Members had received feedback, they were generally dissatisfied with the quality of the feedback. This was in relation to the speed at which it was received and the detail that it provided. Members generally did not feel that they had enough time to put their requests together.

1.4 These findings were reported to the sub-group and presented for information report to the last meeting of the Committee. A full copy of the final evaluation report will be made available to all Members, along with an executive summary of the key findings.

2.0 Implementation of NFS 2009-10

2.1 Having considered the evaluation undertaken by MVA, and the comments made by the Sub Group of the Committee, the following changes are proposed for the implementation of NFS in 2009/10:-

- Publication of clearer guidance and suggestions on how to submit proposals, which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART). This will include some worked examples. A 'NFS advice surgery' will also be provided by the Corporate Performance Group to Members and Officers to assist in the development of proposals.
- Last year the number of proposals submitted by each ward ranged from one to fourteen. This year it is suggested by the Sub Group that the number of proposals from each ward is limited to five. This should promote a focus on the submission for proposals that will have the most impact in wards.
- Although not restricted to particular services last year, Members felt that there should be greater clarity that NFS priorities can be directed to any Council service. In future years it is requested that we explore the possibility of expanding the scheme to other public services.

- A clear timescale will be produced so that Members, Heads of Service and Ward Co-ordinators can be clear when proposals will be submitted and when Members may expect replies to their proposals. A table showing the suggested timetable is attached as Appendix 1
- It is further recommend that responses should be unambiguous and clear and were proposals are not supported the reasons not supporting the proposals are given.
- To reduce administrative burden and to facilitate greater transparency in the process, a shared database will be developed accessible (with permissions) by Elected members, Ward Co-ordinators and Heads of Service. The database will allow all stakeholders to view the status of proposals and share information more effectively. The database will also enable the Corporate Performance Group to exercise a stronger quality assurance role. The development of this database is well underway and will be completed before the launch of the scheme.
- A formal monitoring process will be implemented tracking the development of all NFS proposals by the Corporate Performance Group. This will include, by exception, corporate quarterly monitoring reports to this Committee.
- The NFS will feature more prominently in Ward Co-ordination meetings and be a standard agenda item on all future Ward Co-ordination Service Group meeting. This should ensure that proposals have been identified as priorities within the rolling three-year ward plans. Each quarter, Ward Co-ordinators will also be given feedback on how ward priorities are progressing utilising the monitoring information referred above. The NFS will also feature more prominently in each refresh of the ward plan. Completed priorities will be shown as achievements or uncompleted projects will be included as future actions for implementation.

3.0 Budget and Business Planning Process Objectives

- 3.1 The NFS is an integral part of the Council's business planning framework. The business planning process will reflect the proposals put forward through the NFS, ensuring that they are more neighbourhood focused.
- 3.2 Many of the issues that have arisen from the NFS evaluation are reflected in the policy objectives delivering the business plans which place greater emphasis on localised service delivery. Through business planning, all Heads of Service will need to demonstrate the extent to which the investment in their services meets these policy and financial

objectives. Accordingly, NFS proposals will also need to be considered within this framework.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 To endorse the recommendations of the Sub Group in taking forward the NFS forward in 2009-100 be approved.



