

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
REPORT FOR RESOLUTION

COMMITTEE: Resources and Governance
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 16th October 2008

SUBJECT: Neighbourhood Funding Strategy

REPORT OF: Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present to the Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee a summary of the Neighbourhood Funding strategy, the priorities received and an outline of the next stages of the process.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Committee's comments on the operation of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy to date be fed into the evaluation of the pilot year.
2. That the Committee be invited to consider proposals to be brought forward later this year for the further development of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy in future years, to cover the full range of Council Services and partner agencies.

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

The objective of the scheme is more efficient and effective use of resources by enabling Ward Councillors to bring forward locally relevant ideas for improvement. There are no direct costs to the implementation of the scheme, as this will be achieved through using existing management arrangements, principally Ward Co-ordination and the budget and business planning process.

CONTACT OFFICERS

Geoff Little, Assistant Chief Executive (Performance) 0161 234 3317
g.little@manchester.gov.uk

Maria Boylan, Team Leader, Area Co-ordination Team 0161 234 3998
m.boylan@manchester.gov.uk

Ingrid Daly, Business Support Manager, Neighbourhood Services 0161 277 1897
i.daly@manchester.gov.uk

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Working papers, Room 221, Town Hall.

WARDS AFFECTED

All.

IMPLICATIONS FOR:

<u>Anti-Poverty</u>	<u>Equal Opportunities</u>	<u>Environment</u>	<u>Employment</u>
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Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
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1.0 Background

1.1 At its meeting on 28th May 2008 the Executive agreed a report of the Chief Executive and the City Treasurer which outlined proposals for a scheme which would complement CAS:H grants by enabling spend from within existing mainstream budgets to reflect local neighbourhood level priorities through Ward Co-ordination arrangements. It was agreed that the scheme would be known as the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy. The report was also presented to Community and Neighbourhood and Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committees and their views were taken into account.

1.2 It was agreed that the scheme would be piloted during 2008/09 and that a full evaluation would be reported back to Executive before the end of 2008/09.

2.0 Objectives and Scope of Scheme

2.1 The objectives of the scheme are: -

- (a) to support the ward representative role of Councillors to influence the whole of budgets through Ward Co-ordination; and
- (b) to enable neighbourhood priorities to be reflected in mainstream budgets and business plans.

2.2 The scheme applies to all Council services and partnership activity relevant to neighbourhood priorities. However, the evaluation of the scheme during the pilot year will focus on environmental services, street scene services and leisure services as these functions are likely to have the most immediate impact on neighbourhood priorities.

3.0 Proposals Received

3.1 A total of 208 proposals were received. A full list of proposals is available for Members upon request to contact officers but in summary the categories that most frequently occurred were: -

- 3.1.1 **Environment and operations** –including improvements to woodlands, neighbourhood management, street trees, grass cutting, fly tipping street cleansing and requests for additional Street Environmental Managers.
- 3.1.2 **Leisure** – Improvements to parks and maintenance of parks, provision of leisure activities mainly for young people but not exclusively)
- 3.1.3 **Highways** – Improvements to highways and footpaths (resurfacing/repairs/maintenance: festive lighting in district centres; traffic management/calming schemes.
- 3.1.4 **Children’s Services** – youth services; diversionary activities; provision of better youth facilities with specific reference to the provision and maintenance of buildings
- 3.1.5 **Crime and Disorder** Additional provision and monitoring of CCTV; diversionary activities to tackle anti-social behaviour.

4.0 Consideration of Proposals

- 4.1 Once Members for each ward had agreed which proposals they wished to submit, Heads of Service received the priorities via the Ward Co-ordinator. Heads of Service were asked to consider each proposal and for each one consider: -
 - (a) Which proposals local service managers using existing resources under their control can implement in this coming year?
 - (b) Which proposals need to be considered by the Head of Service with the appropriate Strategic Director to ensure that opportunities to move resources across service areas are fully explored, during this year?
 - (c) Where it is not possible to respond positively during the current year and therefore proposals will be considered as part of the production of the three-year business planning process.
- 4.2 The first two phases are complete and Heads of Service have responded to 126 proposals. The remaining 72 will be considered within the business planning process. As part of this process if Heads of Service want to implement a proposal but are unable to find resources within their financial planning they will refer the matter to their Strategic Director to see if resources can be found from other services within the Directorate.
- 4.3 Draft business plans are required by the end of October. At that point Heads of Service will be asked to provide responses to Members via Ward Co-ordinators for all remaining priorities.

- 4.4 Throughout the process a Neighbourhood Funding Strategy Steering Group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance), has met weekly to ensure the smooth running of the process, that timetables are adhered to, difficulties and ambiguity addresses and that all stakeholders are appraised of the next stages. This has included the preparation and distribution of a number of briefing notes and a series of information sessions for Members, SMT, Heads of Service and Ward Co-ordinators.

5.0 Evaluation of Strategy

- 5.1 It was agreed at the outset of the strategy that as this is a pilot year, the strategy would be evaluation before determining how to proceed in future years. The purpose of the evaluation would be initially to determine the perceptions of Members on how neighbourhood priorities have been responded to in previous years and to investigate the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy in identifying and responding to priorities, how this has impacted on services with particular emphasis on Environmental Services, Street Scene Services and Leisure Services. We also wished to appraise the views of Members and other stakeholder on the usefulness and success of the scheme and to receive views as to how the scheme could be improved upon in future years.

External consultants, MVA have been here commissioned to carry out this research. The first phase of this work was to canvass Members opinion on how neighbourhood priorities have been responded to in previous years. This involved sending out a short questionnaire to all Members. 64 surveys were completed, giving an overall response rate of 67%

The second phase of the work will take place after business plans have been drafted and will involve again, a survey of all Members, but the survey will be extended to include Heads of Service, Strategic Directors and Wards Co-ordinators. A series of structured interviews will also take place, to include a sample number of all stakeholders, with a final report being available by the end of December.

- 5.2 Initial indications seem to suggest that some services by their very nature have been more able to find from their resources this year greater flexibility than others, this is particularly so were requests are from Revenue budget streams as opposed to the Capital budget.
- 5.3 There have been a number of priorities that have been requested which would have in the past been issues, which would have been dealt with through the local Environmental budgets of Manchester Housing. This responsibility is now with the Local Housing Companies or in North Manchester, Northward Housing, ALMO. Working through the Strategic Housing Forum we will establish a protocol for dealing with these priorities and initial discussions are already underway.

6.0 Future Development of the Strategy

- 6.1 Once the evaluation has been completed, officers will consider the feedback on how successful the strategy has been in delivering its objectives ie to enable neighbourhood priorities to be reflected in main stream budgets and business plans and to support the representative role of Members in influencing the whole budget through Ward Co-ordination. At this stage the Committee might find it useful to consider the outcome of the evaluation and to advise on the future development of the scheme.
- 6.2 The evaluation will consider whether the processes that have been put in place are adequate to support the delivery of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy and what has been the impact on capacity of Heads of Service and Ward Co-ordinators?
- 6.3 Some priorities have been very straightforward in establishing Members requests while others have been more complex and crosscutting making the decision making more disjointed and difficult to define and perhaps not as satisfactory for Members. In future years we should develop clear guidelines for Ward Co-ordinators so that they can assist in compiling xxx and unambiguous responses.
- 6.4 Through the Manchester Partnership we will need to have an ongoing dialogue with partner agencies to establish mechanisms for delivering the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy Partnerships across the full spectrum of services.

7.0 Conclusion

While it is too early to say how successful the implementation of the strategy has been early indications suggest that this is a positive step forward in being able to reflect neighbourhood priorities into mainstream budget processes. However, following the completion of our own analysis and the external evaluation of the scheme to assess the extent to which the expected benefits are realised, officers will bring forwards a further report to ensure that the lessons of the pilot year are understood and applied to the development of the scheme in future years for Members consideration.