NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING 2016 AND BEYOND – A DISCUSSION PAPER

1. Background

This discussion paper has been developed to inform the thinking and processes required to take forward the next generation of neighbourhood working in Birmingham. The paper:

- Reflects on the history and learning that has been derived from approaches in the past
- Draws on the current policy agenda to clarify the purpose and objectives for neighbourhood working moving forward
- Sets out the proposed delivery framework for the new approach
- Highlights key areas for discussion and sets out the next steps.

2. Purpose

The objective of the proposed approach is to bring back under localised influence and control, the majority of the Council's controllable local services to achieve:

- Services being delivered in a different way, better suited to the local area and more efficient
- A network of officers that work for the locality first without having other service specific responsibilities and that work in a more joined-up, coordinated way with other local service providers
- Local councillors having more influence on the services that are being delivered in their localities.

The overall purpose of this approach is to 'make things happen.'

3. History and Learning from Elsewhere

Neighbourhood Management in Birmingham
Birmingham has a successful track record of delivering Neighbourhood Management and neighbourhood working approaches. The first Neighbourhood Management pilot funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was delivered 2007 – 2008. 2008 – 2009 saw the delivery of a Neighbourhood Management programme, funded from Neighbourhood Element Fund, delivered in 10 pilot neighbourhoods across the city, the learning from which informed a Priority Neighbourhood Programme delivered in 31 priority neighbourhoods across city 2009 - 2011.

Key learning and good practice emerged from these programmes which was captured in the Making Birmingham an Inclusive City White Paper 2013. This, along with other learning from practitioners, residents, elected members and key stakeholders can help inform a modern approach to neighbourhood management and coordination; one that fits with the City Council's devolution and Future Council agendas and the following strategic priorities:

- Local Leadership
- Every Place Matters
- A Better Deal for Neighbourhoods
- Supporting Local Councillors

In addition a number of Neighbourhood Management / Coordination models have been considered from other local authorities across the country to identify, along with what we already know, the essential elements required to deliver a localised fit-for-purpose neighbourhood working and coordination programme for Birmingham. These have informed the principles and characteristics of successful neighbourhood working set out below.

4. **Principles / Characteristics of effective Neighbourhood Working and Local Coordination**

The principals below have been identified from previous programmes of delivery and country-wide good practice for successful neighbourhood working and local coordination:
- Interest in and knowledge of the neighbourhood (place)
- Experience of local Leadership and Coordination
- Ability to put Residents first (empathetic)
- Excellent Negotiation skills
- Excellent Community organisational skills
- A 'can do' (action orientated) approach to action residents' priorities and make things happen
- An ability to 'think outside of the box' and employ innovative approaches
- Ability to Develop and Manage projects, Coordinate activity and work Collaboratively
- Experience of working with residents, elected members and local stakeholders
- Excellent Communications skills
- Ability to work on a tenure 'blind' basis
- Ability to Involve interested and important and necessary individuals Action Planning and Intervention
- Experience of priority neighbourhood Action Planning.

5. **Current BCC Policy Agenda**

Cabinet Committee – Local Leadership
Established in May 2016 and Chaired by the Leader of Birmingham City Council, as part of the new constitutional requirements, the Cabinet Committee Local Leadership is the key 'driver' in delivering devolved Community Governance and a Better Deal for Neighbourhoods recognising that Every Place Matters.

In support of the Cabinet Committee, four Assistant Leaders have been appointed and are charged with taking forward the aforementioned strategic priorities and will support, oversee and evaluate new ways of working for potential use across within the city. In relation the neighbourhood working agenda their Work Plan includes:

On a city wide basis: -
• Leadership and policy development.

On an area basis: -
• Promoting and supporting changes to the practice, culture and capabilities underpinning the role of "front line councillor"
• Shaping and supporting local partnership working and engagement with communities and local stakeholders
• Shaping neighbourhood governance and neighbourhood delivery plans working alongside District Committee Chairs
• Ensuring that arrangements are in place to move beyond the districts model whilst capturing the learning and the partnerships developed in previous years and supporting the role and contribution of all local councillors
• Ensuring that local issues and innovations are reflected in strategic decision making with regard to Local Leadership, Every Place Matters and A Better Deal for Neighbourhoods
• Joined-up and better coordinated service

The main priorities set out in the Outline Work Programme[i] for the Cabinet Committee Local Leadership which relate to a neighbourhood working agenda are:

<u>A Better Deal for Neighbourhoods</u>
• Ward Forums – developing these as an interface between residents and local community organisations and public services and elected representatives
• Support for neighbourhood forums and other community led bodies and their relationships with councillors
• The capacity of the voluntary and community sector and communities themselves in different parts of the city and how this can be improved
• Assessing the value of models such as neighbourhood management and neighbourhood tasking and how they can be supported
• Ensuring open data and new forms of digital engagement, for example performance data on services, ward based asset registers, promotion of volunteering opportunities and time banking
• Implementing new forms of neighbourhood delivery and partnership – for example social investment, community trusts, community based housing associations or other examples developed elsewhere through the national Our Place initiative
• Enhancing influence on services across the public sector through very local Community Planning or Neighbourhood Challenge processes (perhaps linking into those for wider areas) and well established methods such as working with the Police on Neighbourhood Tasking
• Exploring "Neighbourhood Agreements", "Charters" or "neighbourhood promise" – a compact between public service agencies and local communities on service standards and the responsibilities of services and the public
• Assessing neighbourhood or community councils (parish councils) - there is the potential for more parish councils to be set up at a similar scale to new wards. One idea is for the City Council to do local "devolution deals" with them to localise some services. This would create a new element of very local democracy with an additional resource arising from the Council Tax precept
• Improving the way we work at a local neighbourhood level through linking new approaches to service delivery ("operating models") with the role of councillors in working with local residents. This means finding ways to make services more responsive and ward/neighbourhood level engagement more powerful within the design of services.

Every Place Matters
- A new policy for local centres – the creation of a Big City Plan style framework document for the city's local centres and an implementation/action plan to take it forward
- Local Skills and Employment Plans – building on the work done in some districts over the last year and putting in place local plans for skills and employment across the city
- Area policies for other key policy areas such as housing development and clean and green neighbourhoods.

6. Why? Defining the Purpose and Objectives of a new approach to Neighbourhood Working

The review of past learning and current good practice can be set alongside the current policy approach to identify and define the key objectives for the policy approach moving forward.
In line with the City Council's Devolution and Local Empowerment agendas, neighbourhood working provides the mechanism by which the following 3 Objectives can be achieved:

a) Local Governance – bringing the process of local decision making closer to citizens enabling them to be more involved
b) Community Empowerment – nurturing and developing citizens to be more self-reliant/sufficient
c) Service Design and Operating Models – fundamentally changing the way local council services operate to closely meet the differing needs of citizens and localities across the City, ensuring that every ward receives a universal service based on need and priority.

The overall goals in an era of reduced resources must be to:
- Use existing resources more effectively, achieving more for less
- Reduce service demand
- Increase self-reliance
- Empower local people to develop local solutions

7. Delivery Framework

Ward Boundary Changes
The Boundary Commission has published its recommendations following its review of Birmingham's parliamentary and ward boundaries. The new Neighbourhood Working/Coordination approach needs to recognise the forthcoming reduction in the number of elected members, the new ward boundary changes and member to ward ratios. The assumptions at present are that there will be 34 Neighbourhood Action Co-ordinators in the future model, enough for one for every three members i.e. linking one and two member wards etc. In addition all boundaries of stakeholders need to be acknowledged and work aligned recognising that communities recognise areas that are familiar to them, not the geographical organisational boundaries.

Ward Forums
Ward Forums have been constituted in each Ward to encourage and facilitate dialogue between the Council and local people within their ward. These forums will undoubtedly play a key part in identifying local priorities and solutions going forward.

8. Resources

Staff Resource

In order for a new neighbourhood working/coordination model to work staff with the right skillsets must be identified and recruited. The following characteristics have been identified for a neighbourhood manager / coordinator to be successful:

- Leadership skills -   to head and direct intervention
- Motivational skills -   to generate a community empowering approach
- Passionate -   with a strong belief in the role and the importance of place
- Empathy -   to ensure a customer focus
- Intelligent -   to enable the use of problem solving approaches
- Facilitative -   to employ strong partnership working approaches
- Action focussed -   to ensure action on residents' priorities
- Entrepreneurial -   to spot opportunities, thinks innovatively in order to deliver on residents' priorities.

Initially 34 Neighbourhood Action Coordinators need to be identified and recruited citywide.

It is envisaged (job evaluation pending) that the post will be grade 4 and the role will be a Neighbourhood Action Coordination role utilising the learning from previous neighbourhood management programmes plus good practice elements from around the country.

In addition to this the new service will have to be supervised, managed and administered.

There is a need for key stakeholders to buy into a Neighbourhood Working Approach to enhance local resources for example social housing providers that have more place presence than BCC.

The job description and person specification for the newly created post has been drafted and will be submitted for job evaluation to establish the commensurate grade. When the grade of the post has been established, the necessary advertisement, recruitment and selection processes will need to be put into place to recruit a suitable pool of Neighbourhood Action Coordinators.

Clear reporting lines are necessary with Neighbourhood Action Coordinators reporting to an area based manager (grade 5). The new team of Neighbourhood Action Coordinators will need to be upskilled to the new way of working and supported by current staff who already have experience in this field.

To ensure that the scheme can be delivered within the ever increasing financial constraints it will be necessary to examine the roles of specific staff groups who already work in communities and on a local basis. It is anticipated that there will be scope to consider how these skills might be transferable to a wider neighbourhood coordination role.

Total staffing costs (if BCC was to fund the whole programme) are: **£1.7-8M** or **£1.8-9M** respectively plus any resource identified for delivery.

Funding

It is anticipated that full roll out to 34 neighbourhoods will cost in the order to £1.8-£1.9m. This is clearly a significant resource commitment either financially or through the reallocation of the current duties of staff and comes at a time of growing pressure on service budgets.

The place Directorate has committed to review all the options available to resourcing Neighbourhood Management and this will form part of the decision report that will be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet Committee Local Leadership.

Within the Place Directorate there are pending service reviews within the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities and Waste Management divisions. Opportunities to redeploy the right calibre of staff from these divisions and will be one option considered.

Invest to Save Approach

There is a need to adopt an 'invest to save approach' i.e. an initial 'investment' is required to implement a Neighbourhood Working Programme in Birmingham in order to 'save' by way of the positive impact that the intervention and coordination of service provision will have in the future by; enabling locally-based groups to deliver on local priorities and more joined-up neighbourhood working.

In addition regional and national investment needs to be sought, for example by maximising the opportunity of the Combined Authority, as part of this programme to enhance and sustain delivery.

Stakeholders

In addition to BCC key divisions such as Neighbourhoods and Communities, Housing and Waste Management, a number of 'key' stakeholders that must be engaged during the development of this approach, these include (and this list is not exhaustive):

- West Midlands Police who are implementing their neighbourhood policing model
- West Midlands Fire Service who have a well-established record of prevention and local engagement
- Registered Social Landlords who have a pool of officers that are deployed to neighbourhoods
- Private Landlords
- Faith Groups
- Local Business
- 3rd Sector organisations and Community Groups such as Neighbourhood Forums, Housing Liaison Board, Neighbourhood Watch groups, active citizens and 3rd Sector Organisations
- Community Activists
- Local Donators / Contributors

The first step in this engagement is a working session with Housing Providers in the city to discuss and agree a mutually beneficial approach to Neighbourhood Management.

The creation of a 'Virtual Team' at neighbourhood level which is mobilised by the Neighbourhood Action Coordinator to address local issues is key to the success of a Neighbourhood Working approach. For this to work all BCC key divisions and stakeholders, as necessary, must be signed up to a tenure blind Neighbourhood Working Model.

9. **Intelligence and Reporting**

Strategic Assessment
Although anecdotal information and local intelligence are essential contributors to prioritising action, qualitative data and intelligence is essential. Strategic Assessment across all wards is essential for future priority action planning. The capability to map data across a number of key identified data sets (Place Strategic Assessments) is required for an intelligence led approach.

The newly introduced Ward Action Tracker, which is maintained by the Governance Managers, is now proving to be an important method of mapping emerging priority actions within wards.

There is a need to make better use of existing reporting tools identifying where improvements and enhancements can be made.

In addition there is a need for a new Member Enquiry System and a Case Management Tool to enable councillors, along with Neighbourhood Action Coordinators, to interact with service departments and assist them to effectively carry out their case work.

10. **Next Steps:**
   • Obtaining comment on and support for the 'new' approach
   • Undertake detailed engagement with key partners and stakeholders to agree a joint approach to Neighbourhood Management
   • Identifying mechanisms to resource the initiative
   • Agreement of new job descriptions and person specifications
   • Recruitment and selection
   • Buy-in to approach from local stakeholders
   • Alignment of service provision to avoid duplication
   • Realignment of BCC's services and practice to the new approach
   • Mapping local stakeholders and key people/organisations
   • Establishment of a single known point of contact in neighbourhoods – Neighbourhood Action Coordinator.

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[i] Minutes of Cabinet committee – Local Leadership 19th July 2016

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