

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO:	COUNCIL		
DATE:	31 MARCH 2009	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	ADOPTION OF THE THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS PROGRAMME		
LEAD MEMBER(S):	COUNCILLOR BET TICKNER	PORTFOLIO:	COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS
SERVICE(S):	ALL	WARDS:	BOROUGH-WIDE
LEAD OFFICER(S)	DEBBIE WARD	TEL:	0118 939 0094 Ext:72094
JOB TITLE:	DIRECTOR OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY CARE	E-MAIL:	debbie.ward@reading.gov.uk
LEAD OFFICER(S) (Report author)	CHRIS BLOOMFIELD	TEL:	0118 9390176 Ext: 72176
JOB TITLE:	NEIGHBOURHOOD REGENERATION MANAGER	E-MAIL:	chris.bloomfield@reading.gov.uk
LEAD OFFICER(S)	GRANT THORNTON	TEL:	0118 9390416 Ext: 72416
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF COMMUNITY PLANNING	E-MAIL:	grant.thornton@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report seeks to formalise the Thriving Neighbourhoods Programme (TNP) as a particular Council-led response to issues of persistent and deep-seated deprivation in a number of Reading's geographic communities. The TNP is underpinned by a neighbourhood planning approach that engages with local people and joins up a range of existing locality work, to deliver better outcomes. It therefore provides a focus for a co-ordinated council-wide and multi-agency approach to achieve tangible improvements in the areas of highest social deprivation across Reading.

1.2 The TNP is predicated on a community development approach to engage and establish a partnership with local people in order to inform and improve

services and take-up across a range of key agencies. This approach requires a clear and sustained targeting of limited resources and the programme will focus on those areas of Reading falling within the 20% most deprived in the country, as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

1.3 The following documents are appended:

Appendix 1: Deprivation Ranking Map

Appendix 2: Community Development Staff and Planning Breakdown

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That Council endorses the TNP as a key response to tackling the most serious and persistent levels of neighbourhood deprivation in localities across Reading.

2.2 That Council approves the development of Neighbourhood Plans, supported by a Performance Management Framework, for each of the Thriving Neighbourhood areas.

2.3 That Council acknowledges the important role that other key agencies, and the private and voluntary sectors play in tackling social deprivation and the need to further develop a joined up partnership approach at neighbourhood level.

2.4 That Council agrees that the Corporate, Community and External Affairs (CCEA) Scrutiny Panel will receive regular progress reports and that Ward Councillors will form part of the membership of local steering groups that will drive the programme forward.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Reading is a vibrant multi-cultural town and an exciting place to be with a wealth of opportunities and new developments. However, the pace of change in Reading has been rapid in recent years and the town's economic success has bypassed some of its residents. Within a small geographic area, prosperous communities sit alongside more deprived neighbourhoods, where poor health, lack of skills, community safety and poverty are key features. Current economic conditions are likely to further exacerbate the levels of difficulty experienced

3.2 The following key issues that emerged from the Indices of Deprivation 2007 (as compared with the 2004 figures) set the scene further:

* There is an overall trend that deprivation as measured by the Indices of Deprivation is falling fastest in the north of England. Overall, the

South East is the worst performing region with 17% more areas ranked in the 20% most deprived.

- * In line with that trend there are eleven areas (Super output areas - SOAs) in Reading ranked in the 20% most deprived in England, compared to 8 in 2004 (see attached deprivation ranking map at appendix 1).
- * There are no SOAs in the 20% most deprived in the rest of Berkshire. Indicating that inequality between areas in Reading is a key issue.
- * Overall, the picture has worsened for Income and Employment, but improved in Education and particularly so for barriers to Housing and Services and the Living Environment. Crime continues to be an area for concern.
- * The specific pockets of deprivation across Reading have largely remained the same, although significantly the Amersham Road Estate has worsened in terms of income, while the area around Coronation Square (Southcote) has slipped into the bottom 10% for employment nationally (we previously had no SOA's in this category) and is the only SOA in the bottom 20% for health.
- * In general, there are still a disproportionate number of SOA's in South Reading, making it the most deprived part of the Borough.
- * Our ranking with regard to Income Deprivation Affecting Children has worsened slightly, while in the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People, Reading has remained broadly in the same position.

3.3 Along with these key indicators, the overall levels of community involvement and advocacy are not well developed and are in need of encouragement and development in the areas referred to above.

3.4 In order to establish sustainable change and improvement in the most deprived areas an approach based around tackling issues with local people is felt to be a key underpinning element.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 A new Neighbourhood Regeneration Team, recently augmented by two new Growth Points funded posts and a senior management secondment, will develop and implement a series of Neighbourhood Plans from spring 2009, accompanied by a performance management framework which will measure outcomes and monitor progress. (see attached Community Development Staff and Planning breakdown at appendix 2).

4.2 The Neighbourhood Regeneration Team will encourage increased levels of community involvement through a thorough and imaginative engagement

and involvement process, linked to the “joining up” and promotion of local services across a range of priorities. This will in turn lead to an acceleration in the process of positive change and local improvements in key outcomes for local people.

4.3 In order that there is a strong justification and evidence base for the areas of focus, the programme has been refined to more accurately reflect those areas evidencing the highest levels of multiple deprivation, though resource constraints mean that not all those in the worst 20% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation can be targeted in the first instance. The areas for explicit inclusion in the programme are:

- Amersham Road
- Dee Park
- Coronation Square/Granville Road (Southcote) - and
- South Reading (sub-divided into 3 neighbourhood plan areas).

4.4 Although the programme is a new initiative it builds strongly on existing priorities and activities. It is thus primarily concerned with adding value through more effective plans and priorities for improvements at neighbourhood level. The alignment with other priorities and programmes is taking place at both the strategic level (e.g. links to delivering Community Strategy and LAA targets, progressing the Government’s empowerment agenda and duty to involve) and at the operational level by strong local steering groups and delivery networks aligned to the process of developing Neighbourhood Plans (e.g. ensuring cross-working with community safety structures, Children’s Action Teams and providing a key strand in the Children’s and Young Peoples Trust’s work in tackling child poverty). Both of these areas will be supported by the development of the performance management framework and measurable outcomes.

4.5 A multi-agency/cross service steering group, will drive this agenda forward. This group is chaired by the corporate lead in this area, the Director of Housing and Community Care and will include representatives from key partner agencies = the Police, the Fire Service, Primary Care Trust, Groundwork Thames Valley, several registered social landlords and Reading Voluntary Action.

The Steering Group will have the following responsibilities:

- Leading the Thriving Neighbourhoods agenda and championing buy-in from all partner organisations.
- To develop, implement and monitor a performance management framework for the programme that will align with existing core service indicators, but will also include indicators specific to the individual Neighbourhood Plans in the programme areas. Targets will be set and then monitored against these indicators in order to measure the programme’s success.

The Indices of Deprivation 07 provides us with the overall evidence base

for the broad approach to targeting deprivation. This will be augmented by the programme being aligned with existing and developing targets in Housing, Employment, Training and Benefits, Crime and Anti Social Behaviour, Children, Young People and Education, Adult Services, Health, Quality of Life and Community Engagement/Development.

- Aligning priorities and resources to support the effective implementation of the programme.
- Agreeing project plans and reviewing progress for each of the key strands.
- To ensure that the Programme is aligned with Reading's Community Development Strategy and takes full account of other key locality based developments, most notably the DECS led work, Neighbourhood Policing and local health network activity driven by the PCT.
- Maintain an overview of good practice and effectiveness and enable this to be shared/transferred where appropriate into mainstream activity.
- Review the progress of the overall programme and identify opportunities for its development.

4.6 It is also proposed, that along similar lines to the Dee Park model, that where we have formal Neighbourhood Plans in place (in the Thriving Neighbourhoods Programme areas) that we establish local steering groups that involve Ward Councillors and local residents in the process of promoting change and reducing social deprivation.

4.7 This programme will need the support and appropriate accountability that comes from regular review and therefore it will be presented to the Corporate, Community and External Affairs (CCEA) scrutiny panel on a regular basis.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The Thriving Neighbourhoods Programme contributes to all 3 of the Council's strategic aims.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 The Thriving Neighbourhood Programme is predicated on a model of community engagement and development and this will be an integral component of all aspects of implementation. It will also seek to make information on service provision more widely accessible and increase options and choices for local people. As the neighbourhood planning process matures it will greatly increase levels of accountability back to local people and communities.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None direct from this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The revenue "growth points bid" for £90k for 08/09, 09/10 and 10/11, augmented by existing revenue resources will provide an uplift in the financial base for this programme.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS