



Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter



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ODPM is currently leading the development of a vision of what local government across England should look like in ten year's time. An introductory document 'The Future of Local Government – Developing a 10 Year Vision' was published in July 2004. The present document forms part of a series of documents which are being published to inform the overall vision and the specific issues to be considered within it.

If you wish to find out more about our work on local:vision please visit: www.odpm.gov.uk/localvision
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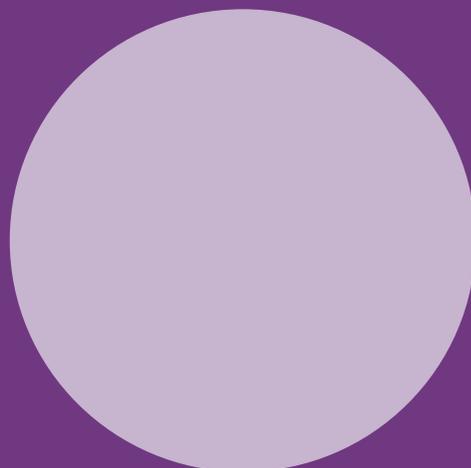
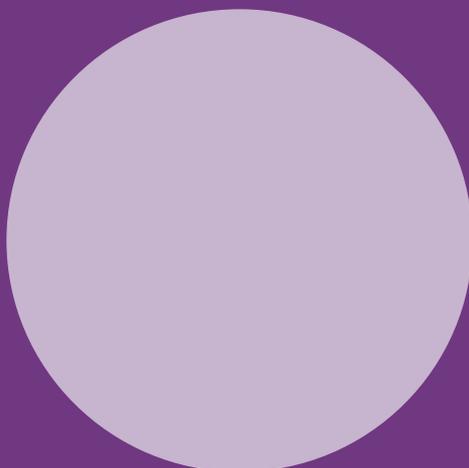
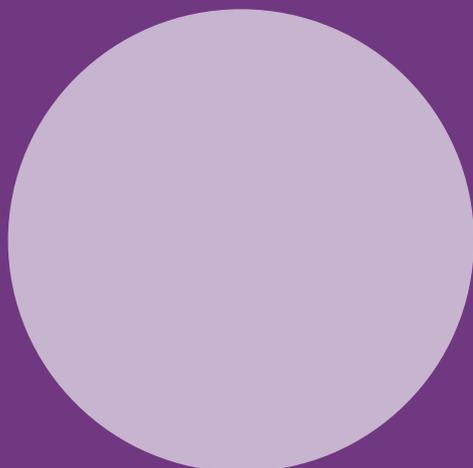
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Foreword

The aim of this publication is to offer new opportunities for neighbourhoods everywhere. We want people to help shape the local public services they receive, and we want them to become more involved in the democratic life of their community.

This document is being published alongside ODPM's 5 year plan, 'People, Places and Prosperity' and is one of four documents being published by ODPM in early 2005 as part of the Local Government Strategy, following the publication of 'The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision' in July 2004.

Many more people are now sharing in real decision making in New Deal for Communities areas, Sure Start, tenant participation, Local Strategic Partnerships, Youth Referral Panels – these are nurseries for democratic participation.

We believe that by action at the neighbourhood level people everywhere can make a significant difference to the quality of our country's public services. In this way, local people can play their part in creating sustainable communities where it is good to live and work.

There can be no "one size fits all" approach, and that's why we are proposing a framework for neighbourhood arrangements that works with what people are doing already. So we are proposing a neighbourhoods charter, a menu of options for action at the neighbourhood level, and key principles for neighbourhood engagement.

Our aim is for councils everywhere to provide opportunities and support for neighbourhood activities that are right for their localities. They should support their ward councillors in the enhanced leadership roles that we want them to have in their neighbourhoods.

These are our ideas – but we welcome your views on our approach, in particular regarding the principles for neighbourhood engagement and our ideas for a neighbourhoods charter with a menu of options. We want to hear your ideas on how local people can help to improve public services – and strengthen our democracy in neighbourhoods across the country.



Rt Hon John Prescott MP
Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State



Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

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Chapter 1 – Improving Public Services – Why neighbourhoods matter

Public services and citizen engagement

1. Like other Governments across Europe, we face two central challenges:

- a) to secure sustainable improvements in our public services; and
- b) re-engage our citizens with the institutions of government.

2. These two challenges are closely interconnected. Public services must meet the needs and expectations of the public, and be delivered at a cost that is broadly acceptable. And by enabling communities to help shape decisions on policies and services¹, we will support civil renewal and strengthen the legitimacy of the institutions of government². The more effectively communities are engaged in shaping services, the more likely it is that quality will be delivered³. The more that communities understand the issues and limitations around decisions on services, the more realistic and sustainable those decisions are likely to be⁴. Indeed, reform and modernisation of the public services will not be accepted as legitimate unless it is based on citizens' support. These two challenges are therefore about making public services more effective and responsive by tailoring them more closely to the needs of their users and providing greater choice⁵.

3. Civil renewal and the improvement of public services can also play a vital role in mending fractured communities by challenging discrimination and promoting fair access to goods and services.

¹ An audit of political engagement: Electoral Commission, 2004.

² As above.

³ 'Tenants Managing: an evaluation of Tenant Management Organisations in England.' Cairncross, Morrell, Drake and Brownhall, 2002. 'New Localism: Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government.' ODPM 2005.

⁴ For example, in work on people's willingness to pay for services in the BSA survey, it is noted that where people are more willing to pay for services, it is for those which affect them directly, such as police and street cleaning, but not for services targeted at specific individuals like local schools. It could be concluded that service users are able to make complex, rational decisions about their services – 'Links between the finance and non-finance elements of local government'. ODPM, 2002. See also evidence collected as part of the Balance of Funding Review, which also demonstrated the capability of the public to make rational, sustainable choices about local government finance – 'Public knowledge and attitudes to the balance of funding: NOP World, October 2003 (available on ODPM website – www.odpm.gov.uk).

⁵ See Appendix A.

⁶ As above.

⁷ See, for example, work by MORI for Cabinet Office First Unit, using the People's Panel 2000 'Delivery of Public Services, 24 Hours a Day, Seven Days a Week (24x7)'.

Improving public services

4. The need for an improvement in public services is primarily driven by:

- a) rising public expectations; and
- b) economic and demographic change.

5. People's expectations have risen with their incomes, and with changing lifestyles. People expect that the improvements which they are seeing in market-based services – such as telephone and internet banking, and changes to businesses' opening hours – should be available in the public services⁶.

6. Technological development has been a major contributory factor to rising expectations. With the advent of e-mail and the internet, people now expect services to reflect the efficiencies that technology can bring and to be offered services online where that is sensible⁷.

7. At the same time, society has become more diverse in both economic and demographic terms. The increasing size of the elderly population poses enormous challenges for UK society, especially in the future provision of public services. Increasing mobility and ethnic diversity also require public services to be more flexible and responsive.

8. Rising expectations, coupled with economic and demographic changes, put pressure (and will continue to put pressure) on public services to respond.

Increasing citizen engagement

9. At the same time, Western democracies are all facing a decline in interest in conventional forms of

politics⁸. Voter turnout at elections in England has generally declined. The gap between local and national turnout remains high, as demonstrated by the graph below. Fewer people are willing to participate in political parties and traditional democratic processes. All this has serious implications for the legitimacy of existing political institutions and the priorities they set for public services⁹.

10. There is, however, a great deal of evidence showing that people are interested in the improvement of public services, and want to be directly involved in making services better. Respondents to surveys have said that the services in which they would most like to be more involved are: tackling crime (41%), education (33%) and traffic (31%)¹⁰.

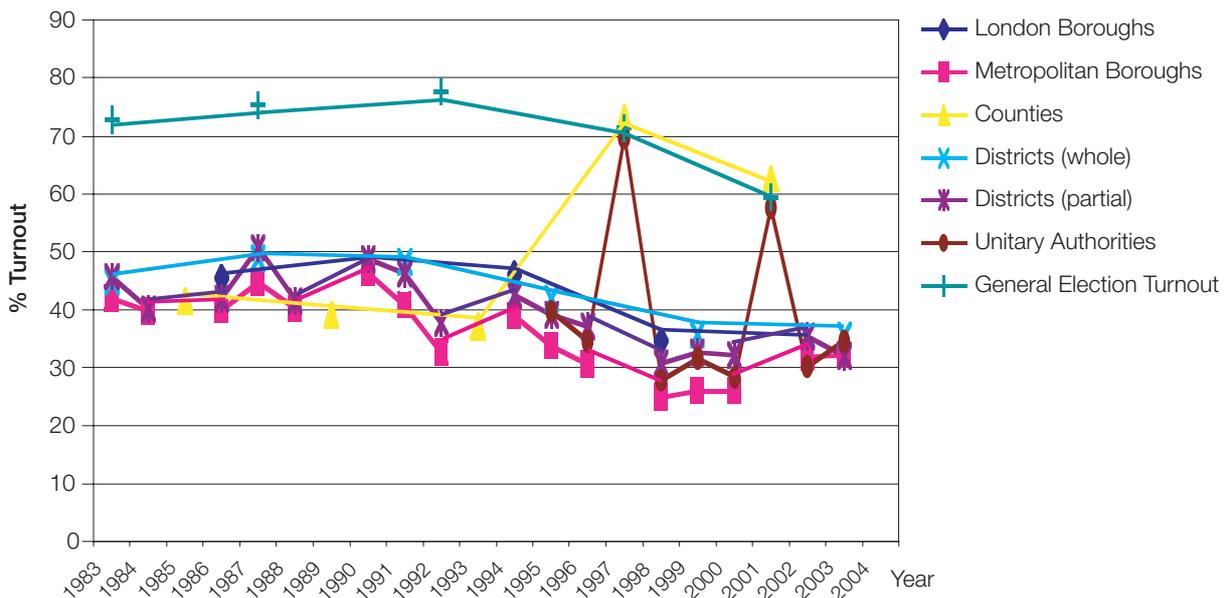
11. People want to know that government (at all levels) is listening, how decisions are reached and how they can influence them. More than half of people (55%) say that they would be interested in being more involved in the decisions their local council¹¹ makes, and a third of these would like to get involved in helping their council undertake detailed work on

planning and delivering services. 82% support more community involvement, 26% are interested in being involved, but only 2% are actually involved¹².

12. In particular people are interested in specific, often local, and very practical issues – they feel strongly about the places where they live, work and play. They are especially interested in things that are close to home – e.g. how safe their streets are, how clean the environment is, whether they can physically access local services, how good local schools are, and what opportunities there are for young people¹³. There is a natural sense of pride in a well-planned, well-managed and attractive locality to which people want to feel they belong.

13. Not only do people want to be involved, but they need to be able to influence decisions if the public services are to meet their needs and their communities are to flourish. Inclusive approaches to governance encompassing, where necessary, new forms of involvement can support and reinforce traditional institutions. The empowerment of all people and communities, including minority groups, to

Overall Turnout at English Local Elections and General Elections 1983-2003



Data from LGC Elections Centre and House of Commons Research Paper - UK Election Statistics 1945-2003

⁸ See, for example, ODPM (2002) 'Turnout at Local Elections', London. M. Franklin et al 2004, 'Voter turnout and the dynamics of electoral competition in established democracies since 1945' Cambridge University Press, International IDEA 2002 'Voter Turnout since 1945' International IDEA Stockholm (national turnout), R. Putnam, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community Simon & Schuster, 2001.

⁹ See, for example, Electoral Commission 'An audit of political engagement' 2004 and 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities, December 2004.

¹⁰ Revisiting Public Perceptions of Local Government: A Decade of Change. DETR, March 2000.

¹¹ Unless the context otherwise requires, references to councils are references to principal authorities.

¹² Revisiting Public Perceptions of Local Government: A Decade of Change. DETR, March 2000.

¹³ 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities. Home Office, December 2004.

improve their quality of life is crucial to the achievement of a wide range of Government objectives¹⁴ and to the commitment of local government to devolve power to local people, communities and other organisations.

14. Different communities, both of groups and place, will have very different needs and expectations. Citizen engagement in the delivery of public services is particularly important in minority and disadvantaged communities, where a lack of community engagement can often undermine the effectiveness of services delivered to standard templates¹⁵. The National Audit Office's value for money study of the ODPM's Single Community Programme stated that:

“Community participation is vital in ensuring value for money in public services. Services designed and delivered without community input risk wasting public money because they will be unused or underused if they are not what people need. Local people must have the opportunities to identify their needs and contribute to finding solutions, rather than feel powerless in the face of public authorities that deliver services on their behalf.”¹⁶

15. There are intrinsic benefits of increased participation and engagement in promoting social inclusion, challenging discrimination, strengthening community cohesion and building sustainable communities. Voluntary activity in the community is associated with better health, lower crime, improved educational performance and greater life satisfaction¹⁷. Indeed, 1.5 million more people are involved in formal or informal voluntary activity now than in 2001¹⁸. Active involvement in decisions that affect individuals and the places with which they associate can give greater depth to citizenship. It can enhance confidence in decision-making processes by placing more emphasis on how things are decided as well as what is done¹⁹.

Neighbourhoods matter

16. An important part of responding to the twin interconnected challenges – securing sustainable improvements in our public services and re-engaging our citizens with the institutions of government – is to promote and develop activities at a neighbourhood level, harnessing people's interest in those local issues that affect their daily lives. Such activities can:

- make a real difference to the quality and responsiveness of services that are delivered to or affect those neighbourhoods;
- increase the involvement of the community in the making of decisions on the provision of those services and on the life of the neighbourhood(s);
- provide opportunities for public service providers and voluntary and community groups to work together to deliver outcomes for the locality; and
- build social capital, reducing isolation whilst building community capacity and cohesion.

17. The Government's 15-20 year National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal recognises the importance of neighbourhood arrangements. Particularly relevant is the conclusion of Policy Action Team (PAT) 4 in April 2000 that it saw “neighbourhood management as the key vehicle, at local level, that could provide the focus for neighbourhood renewal. Neighbourhood management should work within the context of local government reform, not bypass local authorities. Its role should be to help deprived communities and local services improve local outcomes, by improving and joining up local services, and making them more responsive to local needs”²⁰.

18. Local government's role is fundamental, but it too is changing. Whereas in the past councils were primarily seen as service deliverers, it is now

¹⁴ Firm Foundations: The Government Framework for Building Community Capacity. Home Office, 2004.

¹⁵ Getting Citizens Involved: Community Participation in Neighbourhood Renewal. NAO, October 2004.

¹⁶ As above.

¹⁷ “The Art of Happiness...Is volunteering the blueprint for Bliss?” Economic and Social Research Council, September 2004.

¹⁸ This means that approximately 20 million people now give up their free time to work for the benefit of others. 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities. Home Office, December 2004.

¹⁹ Government departments have adopted a common framework for building community capacity and agreed a shared objective: to increase voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion, and increasing the voluntary and community sector's contribution to delivering public services.

²⁰ See www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

increasingly recognised that councils must provide democratically accountable leadership to the whole community. In doing so, they have to work with the wider and more diverse range of service providers which impact on local communities, including the voluntary and community sector. Effective neighbourhood arrangements require strong, self-confident and engaged councils – leading and co-operating with their communities, securing good local services, working effectively with local, regional and national partners, and with a strong democratic mandate. In this way local government, having the unique position of being democratically elected, is able to provide leadership in developing arrangements for neighbourhood engagement working with other service providers and community organisations.

Neighbourhood activities today

19. There is already a wide range of existing mechanisms and structures for neighbourhood engagement. They all draw on local peoples' desire to be involved in making services better and reflect:

- Long-established representative bodies – i.e. parish councils;
- Initiatives taken over the years by councils to devolve some responsibility or decision-taking – e.g. local authority area committees;
- Initiatives in neighbourhood renewal areas;
- Other initiatives taken by service deliverers to involve local communities – e.g. Tenant Management Organisations, Sure Start, police consultative forums etc.; and
- Initiatives by local voluntary or community groups – e.g. tenant associations, faith communities.

20. Examples of these initiatives are described and considered in Appendix B. These show that the need for mechanisms to engage communities at

neighbourhood level is increasingly recognised as essential to the efficient delivery of services.

21. We have also learnt lessons from the past. There is a growing recognition that while devolution to a neighbourhood level may well help to improve outcomes, there are many issues which need to be determined at a more strategic level. For example, in the 1980s and 1990s, Walsall, Islington and Tower Hamlets each put in place quite radical forms of devolved decision making²¹. Each was very different, and needs to be understood in context, but none proved sustainable, and there are a number of general lessons which emerged and which suggest that unduly extensive devolution to the most local level is unlikely to be effective or efficient²².

22. The experiences clearly illustrate the need for any future initiatives to pay heed to the principles of efficiency and proportionality.

23. Equally, current experiences demonstrate how neighbourhood engagement can make a real difference. Evidence shows that action at the neighbourhood level is likely to be more effective where councils and the Local Strategic Partnerships²³ (LSPs) have in place effective arrangements at the more strategic level. The relationships between these levels is important; for example, the evidence from neighbourhood management pathfinders is that without a more strategic engagement from councils and other partners, it is more difficult to make effective arrangements for services at a very local level.

24. Neighbourhood arrangements must also be dovetailed with the arrangements (including decentralised arrangements) councils and other service providers have for delivering services and providing strategic leadership, such as LSPs and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). They can build on any existing infrastructure of community organisations and engagement and existing devolved structures at area level such as Community Empowerment Networks, area committees and area forums.

²¹ 'The politics of decentralisation: revitalising local democracy'. Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett, 1994.

²² See Appendix C.

²³ Local Strategic Partnerships are overarching partnerships of stakeholders who draw up community strategies for sustainable improvements to the local quality of life. They involve local people in this process of shaping the future of their neighbourhood in how services are provided. There is an extensive long term evaluation of LSPs, which including action learning. A number of reports have been published – see the ODPM website (www.odpm.gov.uk)

25. Neighbourhood activity today, though widespread, is far from universal. Its variety demonstrates both what can be achieved and the potential for new and innovative forms of activity. To develop neighbourhood arrangements further, structural, managerial, operational, democratic and financial issues will have to be considered and new frameworks may need to be defined. Equally, questions about people's capacity, interest and opportunity to engage will have to be addressed.

Chapter 2 – Improving Public Services – New opportunities for neighbourhoods

A framework for neighbourhoods

26. Given the outcomes that neighbourhood arrangements can achieve, the Government believes that there should be opportunities for neighbourhood arrangements everywhere. It wants to see neighbourhood arrangements being adopted far more widely, and the development of new and innovative forms of such arrangements.

27. The Government recognises there can be no “one size fits all” for neighbourhood arrangements, and that it would be wrong for Government to be prescriptive about the forms of neighbourhood arrangements or about the circumstances where such arrangements should exist. It also recognises the central role councils and councillors will need to have in neighbourhood arrangements everywhere.

28. Accordingly, the Government intends to work with local government, other service providers such as the police and primary care trusts, the voluntary and community sector, business, and others to establish a national framework for neighbourhood arrangements. This work will build on the many examples of effective neighbourhood arrangements currently in place.

29. The framework will consist of:

- a statement (“the national framework statement”), agreed as widely as possible nationally among all those involved, setting out the principles for neighbourhood arrangements and identifying when and how people in neighbourhoods can act; and
- the undertaking by Government, local authorities, and others as appropriate, of the measures necessary to resource and build capacity for arrangements for neighbourhood engagement²⁴.

30. The framework would be the foundation for a neighbourhoods charter which would set out what people can expect in their neighbourhood from Government, local government and other service providers. Such a charter would both clearly demonstrate the commitment to empower people in their neighbourhoods to shape the public services they receive, and let people know the opportunities open to them. The headline illustration of a neighbourhoods charter shown below indicates the possible scope and potential. When working with partners to establish the national framework we will be seeking views on such a charter.

A HEADLINE ILLUSTRATION OF A CHARTER

THE NEIGHBOURHOODS CHARTER

1. We recognise that people should expect:
 - Their neighbourhood to be clean and safe
 - To live in a good quality local environment
 - To receive in their neighbourhood good quality local services
2. We expect that people should recognise and respect:
 - The diverse views and culture of other people in the neighbourhood
3. We therefore give neighbourhoods the ability:
 - To establish neighbourhood bodies to work in conjunction with the council
 - To require co-operation by local service providers
 - To take responsibility for/ownership of local assets where appropriate
 - To “trigger” action by service providers
 - To agree neighbourhood contracts with service providers
 - To request the introduction of model byelaws in appropriate circumstances
 - To levy fixed penalty notices and apply for ASBOs when authorised to do so
 - To raise additional funds in certain circumstances
 - To be responsible for their own neighbourhood fund or budget where this is delegated to them
 - To influence others’ budgets

²⁴ The starting point for this undertaking will be Firm Foundations: The Government’s Framework for Community Capacity Building. Home Office, 2004.

Principles for neighbourhood arrangements

31. Central to the national framework statement will be a set of principles for neighbourhood arrangements. Whilst the Government would welcome views on the scope and content of such principles it believes the following five principles are likely to be at the heart of any set of key principles about how the various players should act when establishing and operating neighbourhood arrangements.

Five key principles for neighbourhood arrangements

There are five guiding principles to which we must work when establishing arrangements for neighbourhood engagement:

- 1) All councils, in partnership with other service providers, should provide opportunities and support for neighbourhood engagement through appropriate arrangements so that they can respond to the needs and priorities of neighbourhood communities.
- 2) Neighbourhood arrangements must be capable of making a real difference to the everyday lives of citizens.
- 3) The nature of neighbourhood arrangements must be appropriate to local circumstances, be flexible to changing circumstances over time and be responsive to the needs and diversity of the community and its organisations.
- 4) Neighbourhood arrangements must be consistent with local representative democracy which gives legitimacy to governmental institutions, and places elected councillors as the leading advocates for their communities, and with the requirements of local democratic accountability.
- 5) Neighbourhood arrangements must be balanced with the demands of efficiency and proportionality.

32. Within these principles there is a wide scope of neighbourhood arrangements which can best be described in terms of a spectrum of responsibility (see diagram on page 14). Any consideration of these principles must be in the context both of this spectrum and an understanding of what is meant by a neighbourhood.

The scope of neighbourhood arrangements

33. Depending on the activity involved, the neighbourhood arrangements can range from informal forums or ad hoc meetings to formal bodies having devolved responsibilities for the delivery of certain services. Neighbourhood arrangements do not require the establishment of a body. At the “information” end of the spectrum this could be disproportionate and costly. The more the arrangements are towards the “service control” end of the spectrum the greater the likely need for some kind of body and for strong and effective accountability processes.

The neighbourhood

34. What people perceive as their neighbourhood depends on a range of circumstances, including for example, the geography of the area, the make-up of the local community, senses of identity and belonging. People’s perception of their neighbourhood will also depend on whether they live in a rural, suburban or urban area.

35. It may be that people regard one area as their neighbourhood for certain issues or events and a different area as their neighbourhood for other purposes. For example, a single street or village could be the neighbourhood when people are addressing issues of safety e.g. street lighting or neighbourhood watch. Equally, those same people could see a much wider area as their neighbourhood when considering, for example, the contribution a school could make to the life of that locality. Thus neighbourhoods will be essentially self-defined by the people who live in them.

36. Local government is fundamental to neighbourhood arrangements. Democratically elected councillors will have a pivotal role in any form of neighbourhood arrangement. The ward, therefore, will often be a key unit of area in establishing and maintaining any neighbourhood arrangements. This is not, however, to define the ward as the neighbourhood. In some cases a ward might be the neighbourhood, in others the neighbourhood could be either part of a ward or an area consisting of several wards such as a parish.

The first principle

All councils, in partnership with other service providers, should provide opportunities and support for neighbourhood engagement through appropriate arrangements so that they can respond to the needs and priorities of neighbourhood communities.

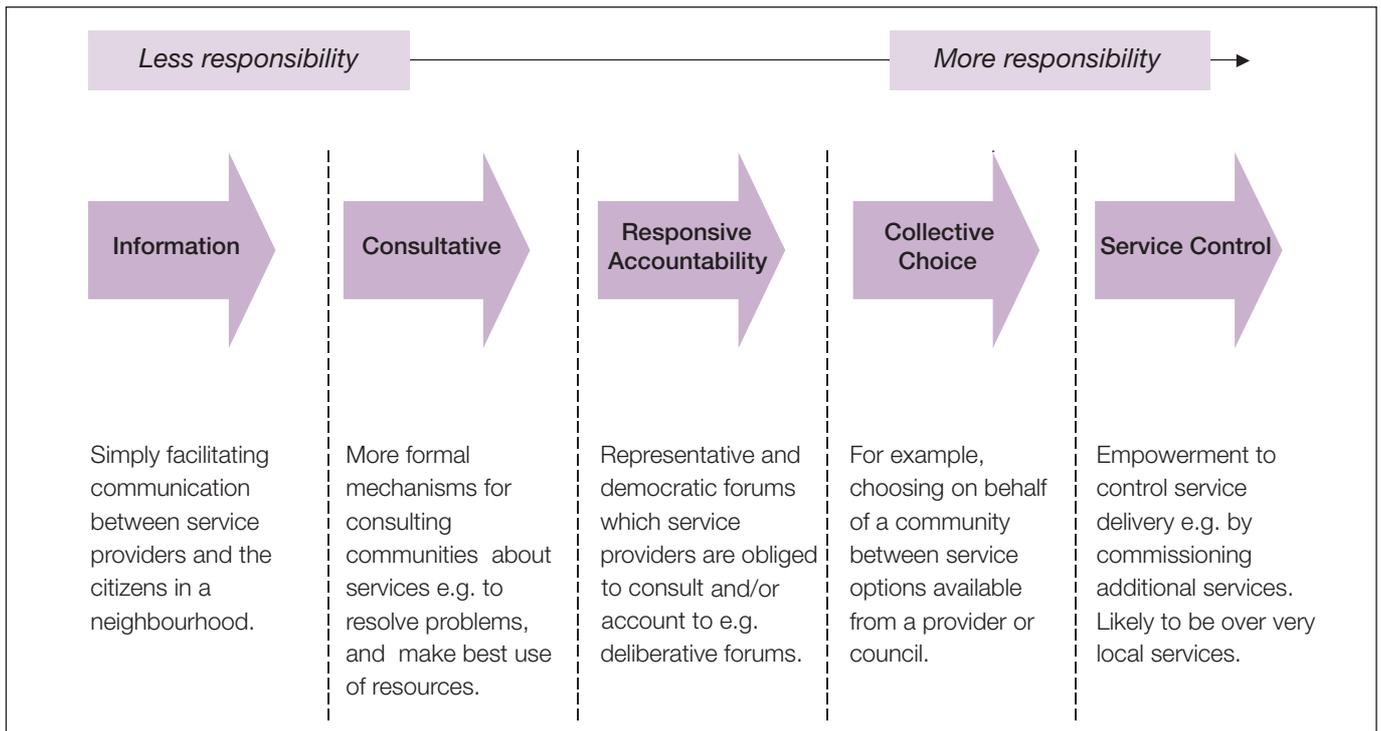
37. It is fundamental to democratic local government that councils engage effectively with their communities²⁵. This necessitates citizen engagement and participation both at and between elections. The range of opportunities for citizens to engage with councils between elections has increased significantly in recent years, with most councils now routinely consulting their citizens on key decisions.

38. As explained in this paper, the Government believes that this range of opportunities must include opportunities for engagement through appropriate neighbourhood arrangements. Moreover, these arrangements must involve not only the council but

also other local service providers. Councils and other local service providers need to draw on the ideas of those who use their services to have a better understanding of their priorities and so be more responsive. Local people – the residents, businesses and service users in a neighbourhood – must have real opportunities to have their say in, and in some cases take responsibility for, how their neighbourhoods are run.

39. For example, where they are piloted, Local Area Agreements (LAAs) could provide a useful means for councils, local service providers and neighbourhood partners to agree on shared outcomes and delivery plans²⁶.

The spectrum of responsibilities



²⁵ The 1998 White Paper – Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People – set the vision: “Modern councils should be in touch with the people, provide high quality services and give vision and leadership for local communities”. This vision was played out in the Local Government Act 1999 which set out the Best Value regime and the broad requirement to consult on all services.

²⁶ See Appendix B for further discussion on LAAs.

40. Providing opportunities at neighbourhood level will involve making available appropriate mechanisms and structures. The range of neighbourhood activities already taking place is very broad, as the examples in appendix B demonstrate. In short neighbourhood activities can include:

- responding to particular issues/challenges (including the performance of a council or another service provider) that may change over time;
- setting priorities for the area for a range of services reflecting the views of neighbourhood organisations and bodies;
- consultation in order to influence the decisions of the council, the LSP or other service providers, including where services have been contracted out;
- making devolved decisions about certain services;
- having direct responsibility for certain budgets; and
- managing the delivery of some services.

41. In deciding what is appropriate councils and other service providers will need to have regard to the spectrum of neighbourhood activities.

42. CPA from 2005 will assess how effectively councils, with their partners, understand their communities and take into account the diverse needs of different users and neighbourhoods when setting priorities and delivering services.

The second principle

Neighbourhood arrangements must be capable of making a real difference to the everyday lives of citizens.

43. At the heart of the Government's intention for more neighbourhood engagement is a desire to create more responsive and customer-focused public services. If public services are not being delivered satisfactorily, people need to know why and to be able to do something about it.

44. Neighbourhood arrangements can make real differences to the everyday lives of citizens by providing opportunities for influence over and improvement in the delivery of public services. Where they can do so, they should be established or maintained.

45. Neighbourhood arrangements should not exist for their own sake. Nor should they exist simply to provide a platform or vehicle for a narrow interest group to pursue their agenda that is not in the general interest of the neighbourhood.

46. Some of the mechanisms whereby neighbourhoods could make a difference are discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

The third principle

The nature of neighbourhood arrangements must be appropriate to local circumstances, be flexible to changing circumstances over time and be responsive to the needs and diversity of the community and its organisations.

47. The form of neighbourhood arrangements will vary widely between different neighbourhoods. What is a high priority issue in one neighbourhood might not be an issue in another. Equally, one neighbourhood might come together to deal with an issue in a very different way to how another chooses to address the same issue.

48. The form of arrangements will also vary within neighbourhoods at different times. Some neighbourhoods might come together to deal with an issue or problem very actively at the outset, but become less active as that particular problem or issue is dealt with. Others might look to progress through the spectrum of activities as their capacity develops.

49. Whatever form neighbourhood arrangements take they must be responsive to the needs and diversity of the community and its organisations. Ethnicity, age, disability, and gender differences, and issues of language and faith, can all be relevant to the way in which people need to be engaged with. Neighbourhood engagement will often be the best level at which to reach out to the whole community, and especially to include the most vulnerable people and groups. Voluntary, community and faith groups can all contribute to this, alongside statutory bodies.

The fourth principle

Neighbourhood arrangements must be consistent with local representative democracy which gives legitimacy to governmental institutions, and places elected councillors as the leading advocates for their communities, and with the requirements of local democratic accountability.

50. Local representative democracy gives councils their legitimacy. Ward councillors are democratically accountable to all the communities in the ward they represent, giving them a unique role, including the responsibility to act as advocates and community leaders for their ward and neighbourhoods. They have a responsibility both to ensure that the views of all communities are articulated and heard, and to provide leadership in reconciling or balancing conflicting local interests and brokering local solutions.

51. Any form of neighbourhood engagement should be complementary to this. Neighbourhood arrangements – be they informal forums or more formal bodies – must be integrated with and supportive of the council's role as a democratically elected institution in that area. The national framework statement will need to provide for this requirement and reflect the issues discussed below.

52. Councillors should be at the heart of neighbourhood arrangements stimulating the local voice, listening to it, and representing it at council level. Councillors also need to be pro-active, instigating initiatives to improve participation levels, drawing in hard to reach groups and those who have previously been excluded. They are vital in maintaining the link between the users and the providers. Neighbourhood leadership must be a central element of every ward councillor's role which should include being an effective partner in his or her ward's neighbourhood arrangements.

53. In these roles the ward councillor will need both to work with and through the various neighbourhood arrangements in place, and at times inspire and lead the development of new arrangements. They should be supported by the council's officials and representatives of other service providers who have an important role to play in facilitating effective

communication between the council and people in the neighbourhood.

54. The Government's recent consultation exercise on police reform revealed strong support from the public for a community advocacy role within communities. It should be democratically elected local councillors who are advocates for their communities and represent the views of the public about the services they receive²⁷. Clearly giving councillors this role of neighbourhood leadership should strengthen local democracy. It can counter the perception, perhaps unfair, but held by many, that councillors are "out of touch" and put the needs of their party ahead of the needs of local people. Recent research has also shown that people are far more likely to vote in local elections when they feel a strong attachment to their neighbourhood and can name their local councillor²⁸.

55. The document being published in parallel with this paper – "Vibrant Local Leadership" – looks at how this and other leadership roles might develop over the coming decade. It is clear that more needs to be done to emphasise the importance of the ward representative roles and for councils to support it more effectively in every locality.

56. Other "community advocates", whether they be representatives of local service providers, or community groups, can help ensure effective representation of people's concerns. They all have a role in communicating local concerns to councillors, the council, and to other service providers, such as the police. This is a function which neighbourhood wardens already do in keeping the councils informed about very local issues; and those who play key roles in the life of their local communities (including in some cases, those from faith communities and other community organisations) often play this role.

57. In developing local leadership, whether through councillors, neighbourhood managers, wardens, or other "community advocates", it will be important to ensure that these roles are open and attractive to people from all sections of the community, including women, black and minority ethnic citizens, people with disabilities, and representatives from varied social backgrounds.

²⁷ Building Communities, Beating Crime: A better police service for the 21st century. Home Office, November 2004 (www.policereform.gov.uk)

²⁸ Local Electoral Participation: The Importance of Context. Rallings, Thrasher and Jeffreys, 2003

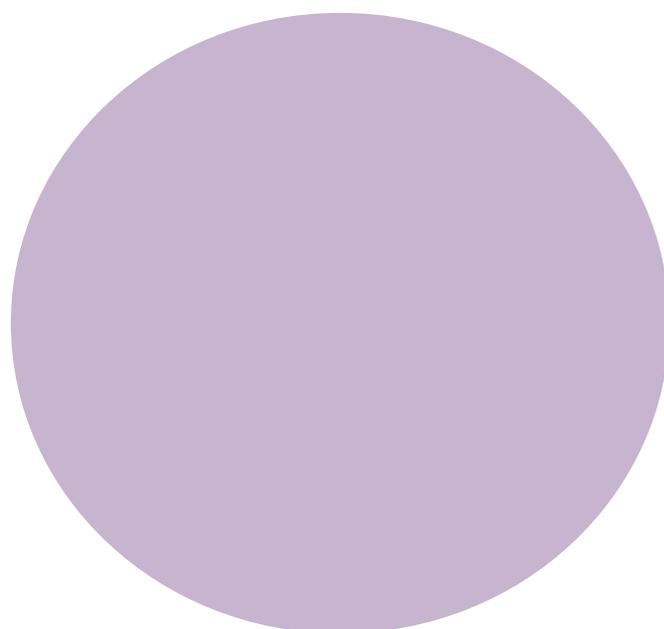
The fifth principle

Neighbourhood arrangements must be balanced with the demands of efficiency and proportionality.

58. Whatever form neighbourhood arrangements take it will be important to ensure that they are proportionate and are effectively dovetailed with the arrangements and activities of councils and other service providers. The aim of neighbourhood arrangements is to provide the means for the neighbourhood to work effectively with the council and other service providers to deliver a better deal for the people of that locality. It is not the Government's intention to set up some new tier of local government or impose unnecessary bureaucracy, where neighbourhood arrangements are established.

59. Where neighbourhood arrangements involve decision making about service priorities and the use of resources these will necessarily involve proper processes to ensure accountability and that the resources are effectively managed for the benefit of the neighbourhood. These processes will need to be proportionate to the activities – both in terms of scale and substance – that the neighbourhood is undertaking. Where a neighbourhood is working in partnership with service providers, including the council, it will be important that the management processes of the neighbourhood can be effectively integrated with the measures the service provider is taking to enhance efficiency, including measures about procurement and asset management.

The Government would welcome views on the scope and content of principles for neighbourhood arrangements.



Chapter 3 – When and how people in neighbourhoods can act

60. In addition to setting out the principles for neighbourhood arrangements the national framework statement will contain certain specific provisions about when and how people in neighbourhoods can act. The Government would welcome views on the issues that the statement should cover. Our initial consideration is that the following may need to be addressed:

- Establishing neighbourhood arrangements
- Standards for neighbourhood bodies
- Parishes and neighbourhood arrangements
- Accountability of neighbourhood arrangements
- Working with voluntary and community organisations
- Triggers for neighbourhood action
- Formation of neighbourhood contracts
- Use of model byelaws
- Levying fixed penalty notices and applying for anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)
- Extending neighbourhood management

Establishing neighbourhood arrangements

61. Given the scope of neighbourhood arrangements the Government does not propose any single approach. We do, however, envisage that the national framework statement will provide for:

- neighbourhood arrangements to meet minimum requirements that local and central government have identified for specific functions; for example, a council and its LSP could give guidance to their area about how neighbourhoods might best organise themselves to make a contribution to decisions about health provisions in their locality; and

- a joined up approach to be taken that:
 - gives citizens a voice that is heard;
 - balances priorities across a range of issues and services;
 - avoids capture by single interest groups;
 - avoids a series of different arrangements being developed in silos;
 - provides service providers with an appropriate framework for community engagement which makes the issues clear to people – i.e. what is and what is not being devolved and consulted on;
 - provides neighbourhoods with choices about the services provided locally; and
 - in some cases, gives communities direct responsibility for the provision of local services.

62. Neighbourhood bodies will need to dovetail with any other devolved arrangements already in place. For example, some councils have already devolved powers to area committees or area panels which operate below the level of the full council. It is important to embrace the opportunities offered by area level arrangements in the development of engagement at the neighbourhood level. Where there are effective arrangements of this type there may be less need for neighbourhood arrangements to take on some of the functions situated towards the service control end of the spectrum of responsibility.

Standards for neighbourhood bodies

63. A body that is recognised as speaking for its community will need to be inclusive, representative and accountable. Some of the available models for such neighbourhood bodies have formal processes for elections, audit and ethics. Others do not. Standards for neighbourhood bodies making decisions about service delivery or resources could be included in the national framework statement.

64. Issues covered by such standards could include:
- being open to all – either all individual local residents or all local community groups;

- having policies or electoral arrangements that ensure that there is representation for all groups in the area;
- ensuring that there is provision for the inclusive involvement of minority and excluded groups;
- ensuring that forums, processes and activities created and undertaken at the neighbourhood level value diversity and promote equal opportunity; and
- having agreed standards of conduct.

65. Neighbourhood level bodies must seek to reach out to a wide range of local people, and encourage under-represented groups to participate and have their voice heard. Councils and councillors have an important role of pro-actively facilitating and supporting neighbourhood bodies to do this.

66. The application of such requirements could range from minimum standards where a body carries out a specific function, to a more formal accreditation system. Accreditation might build on approaches such as the Quality Parish Scheme, where quality status is conferred by county accreditation panels, established as part of the Government's scheme. It would imply a system of continued assurance that the criteria were met, and there would be a need for the ability to remove accreditation from bodies that no longer met the standards set by the scheme. However, accreditation inevitably involves some bureaucracy, and the act of formalising the arrangements in this way may dissuade some communities from participating.

67. In many circumstances, therefore, it may not be necessary for there to be formal processes, standards or accreditation. A light touch would allow neighbourhoods to come together as and when necessary to tackle local issues and problems in partnership with their ward councillor(s).

Parishes and neighbourhood arrangements

68. Parishes are a level of local representative democracy which offers opportunities to develop neighbourhood engagement. A large number of parish councils already exist and the Quality Parish Scheme set up in 2003 has sought to boost the role of parish councils²⁹. It has helped parishes to take on service functions, typically exercised at district and county level, which have a significant impact on local people. The maintenance of highway verges, footways and footpaths, the management of recycling provisions, and street cleaning are examples of this.

69. The Quality Parish Scheme has enabled parishes to do more on behalf of their district and county council, thereby making services more responsive to local needs. Measures to achieve this have included:

- consultation and co-ordination arrangements (set up by principal local authorities and other service providers) to focus on how services are delivered in the parish area;
- local access to information on the services of principal local authorities and other service providers; and
- charters which district and county councils have negotiated with parishes, setting out how they will involve and consult them in the authorities' decisions, and detailing the functions they will delegate. District and county councils have been encouraged to enter into such agreements with all parish councils and to consider negotiating additional roles and responsibilities for Quality Parish Councils.

70. The Government believes that more could be done at the parish level and councils should play a key role in facilitating this. We believe there should be opportunities everywhere for communities to set up a parish council if there is sufficient demand. We should therefore seek to remove the existing barrier on urban

²⁹ A Quality Parish Council is representative of, and actively engages, all parts of its community, providing vision, identity and a sense of belonging. It is properly managed, upholds high standards of conduct and is committed to work in partnership with principal local authorities and other public service agencies. By meeting the requirements of this scheme and receiving Quality status, a parish council is sending out a message that it is a truly competent and worthy representative of its community. To become a Quality Parish, parishes need to meet a number of 'tests' to demonstrate that they are fully representative of their communities and have the capacity to take on the stronger role envisaged for a Quality local council. The tests include full adherence to the Code of Practice as well as electoral mandate, a qualified council clerk, and effective communication activities.

parishes which currently exists in London. We should work with councils to find ways to make it easier for communities to set up a parish council. The Quality Parish Scheme should be further promoted with councils taking a proactive lead in devolving more responsibilities to parish councils. Under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill authorised officers or employees of parish and community councils will have powers to levy fixed penalty notices for 'environment crimes' such as litter, graffiti and fly-posting. It may be appropriate, for example, for Quality Parishes to have additional responsibilities in relation to hedge disputes, recommending alcohol licence reviews or applying for ASBOs.

Accountability of neighbourhood arrangements

71. The arrangements put in place for a neighbourhood must be consistent with the requirements of local democratic accountability. In essence these requirements are that where decisions are being taken about priorities, services or the use of resources, those decisions are transparent, those who take them are visible and can be held to account, in particular by those in the neighbourhood potentially affected by their actions or who have contributed to the resources involved.

72. The legitimate needs of communities of interest, and of socially excluded groups, must be accommodated.

73. The accountability arrangements will be necessarily dependent on the nature of the neighbourhood arrangements. In the case of informal ad hoc meetings, for example, accountability may involve little more than the meetings being well advertised, open to all in the neighbourhood and capable of being reported on by the local media. Neighbourhood bodies taking decisions on priorities and budgets will require more rigorous accountability mechanisms and reporting requirements for their decisions.

74. Where funds and resources are involved there will need to be appropriate audit and probity requirements. In such cases there may be

accountability not only to the neighbourhood but also to others who, for example, are providing resources – such as the council – or who are partners with the neighbourhood body. Bodies that take the form of companies or charities will necessarily have the reporting and accountability processes required by law of such organisations.

75. Where ward councillors are involved they are accountable through the ballot box to the ward which may be a wider or smaller area than the neighbourhood concerned. Such democratic accountability may need to be buttressed with tailored audit regimes where the councillors have responsibility in the neighbourhood arrangements for spending money and using resources.

Working with voluntary and community organisations

76. Wherever neighbourhood arrangements are established they need to recognise the activities and diversity of existing voluntary and community organisations, and work in partnership with the community and those organisations in an inclusive way that promotes cohesion³⁰. In making available the opportunities for neighbourhood arrangements councils need to recognise and guard against the potential for division and conflict if one area with neighbourhood arrangements is seen to be more 'successful' in getting things done or changed than an adjoining area.

77. Thus it may be appropriate to include within the national framework statement some generally accepted principles about how community organisations and public sector bodies might develop community participation. The framework could provide that these principles should be followed by those playing a part in neighbourhood arrangements.

78. In their value for money study of the ODPM Single Community Programme the NAO identified a set of such principles which they saw as underpinning the role of communities in service delivery. The Government wishes to consider its response to the NAO recommendations, and would welcome views on these principles.

³⁰ The starting point for this will be Firm Foundations: The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building, Home Office 2004 and Compact: Getting it Right Together – Compact on Relations between the Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England, Home Office 1998.

Principles underpinning the role of communities in service delivery

These principles can be used by community organisations and public sector bodies in developing community participation.

Know and understand the communities using the service

Organisations need up to date and complete information on the communities they serve, including their needs and preferences.

Help to build the confidence of the community

Deprivation may limit the development of community resources and capacity. Less experienced people and groups need to be supported in making their voice heard.

Take active steps to involve the community as widely as possible

Reliance on a few well-established channels of communication may restrict engagement to those already active in the community. Innovative ways of reaching out to the widest range of groups should be used to involve the diversity of the community.

Ensure no sector or group dominates

Groups and individuals helping to give voice to a community need to be as representative as possible of that community. Manage tensions between representatives to promote a common purpose.

Make sure procedures for ensuring representation are transparent

The procedures organisations use to engage communities need to be transparent and open in order to sustain people's confidence.

Principles underpinning the role of communities in service delivery (cont.)

Provide practical assistance

Organisations' procedures and practices may inhibit community participation. Practical steps need to be taken to tilt the balance of power towards the community, such as arranging meeting times outside of normal working hours and making sure that documents are free from jargon.

Demonstrate positive support for community engagement

Help community groups to see the impact of their input by celebrating success. This will help to sustain their engagement.

Source: Getting Citizens Involved: Community Participation in Neighbourhood Renewal. NAO, October 2004

Triggers for neighbourhood action

79. The neighbourhood arrangements available to individuals and groups should provide mechanisms whereby people can trigger action when the quality, accessibility and standards of public services in their neighbourhood fall below the level they have a right to expect. Such action may involve influencing or prompting the service provider to address the issue and to take remedial measures.

80. A prerequisite for such a trigger mechanism will need to be the ability of people to establish, or use existing, neighbourhood arrangements to achieve the improvements in service delivery described above. This would involve the neighbourhood arrangement having access to information about a service provider's performance. All this would need to be recognised in the national framework statement. Proposals for increased accountability to service users through neighbourhood arrangements will form part of the wider discussion about the local government performance framework in a future local government strategy document.

81. For example, the statement could provide that the people of a neighbourhood, with the support of their ward councillors, could petition the council or other service providers for changes and improvements to address any shortcomings in service delivery. The service provider concerned would be required within a specified period to provide a formal response setting out how and by when they will address the shortcomings in their services. Where in the case of certain specified services the neighbourhood is seeking to have responsibility for the service devolved to a neighbourhood body, the service provider might be required to accede to this request, unless there are overriding reasons for not doing so.

Formation of neighbourhood contracts

82. In some instances it may be appropriate for a neighbourhood body (or a number of neighbourhood bodies working together) to agree a “neighbourhood contract” with the local authority or service provider to agree minimum standards of service provision across a wide range of services to reflect local priorities. This could provide a service guarantee to the people in the neighbourhood. The formation of contracts between service providers and neighbourhood bodies might be an effective way of ensuring sustainable improvements in public service delivery and providing for avenues of redress where these are not met.

83. Community organisations are developing a number of arrangements whereby they contract with other public and/or private agencies on the basis of a mutual service level agreement for delivering community services. A number of different approaches are available

including the Community Service Agreements™ model advocated by the Scarman Trust³¹. Such approaches would enable people in neighbourhoods to come together to negotiate community service agreement arrangements with service providers. For example, a group of residents might negotiate a contract with the council whereby they agree to clean up a public space in return for the council building a playground in that space.

84. A study in 2001 looking at sub-national democracy in a number of states has shown that experience in France, Italy and the Netherlands supports the expectation that positive results can be achieved by agreeing covenants or contracts between different tiers of governance³².

Model byelaws

85. In some circumstances, where national legal remedies are proving insufficient, byelaws might be an effective conduit through which a neighbourhood could work with the council to take action in order to improve the environment of the neighbourhood. A model set of byelaws might be an effective way of indicating to a community expected standards of behaviour. For example, in such a model, it could be established that parking on verges or skateboarding on the street were not acceptable types of behaviour in a particular neighbourhood.

86. If a model set of byelaws is prepared, it is much easier in the future for a council to introduce and enforce them. It avoids possibly different provision applying in different localities in relation to the same

³¹ Community Service Agreements™ have been developed by the Scarman Trust as ‘reciprocal service level agreements’, negotiated between a range of community based organisations on the one side and outside agencies on the other. They are essentially bottom-up, community defined contracts that can help to mobilise the broadest range of local resources and energies to tackle local issues. Community-based organisations will sign up to take broad actions of different kinds – clear up a piece of waste ground, provide new activities for teenagers and so on. Outside agencies similarly will be expected to make early practical commitments to action to be delivered within a defined timeframe – within days and certainly within a month. Policing Priority Areas provide good examples of this approach, for example with commitments to tow away abandoned cars within 24 hours. From here, they may progress to wider ambitions and deeper collaborations.

To enable them to participate, communities will be provided with a small amount of initial financial support, including the cost of employing a community organiser. Dedicated staff resources will also be provided by agencies. It is anticipated that as the value of different activities is proved, community organisations will be able to gain access to a range of resources, so as to sustain activities in the longer term – for example through the Local Area Agreement Process.

³² Subnational Democracy in the European: Challenges and Opportunities. John Loughlin et. al., Oxford University Press, 2001 (paperback edition 2004).

problem, which could be confusing to the public and hence difficult to enforce. The need for public clarity and effective enforcement also means that in any area a proliferation of byelaws needs to be avoided.

Fixed penalty notices and anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)

87. It may be appropriate in certain circumstances for certain neighbourhood bodies to be empowered and authorised to levy fixed penalty notices and apply for ASBOs. This course of action might be appropriate if there is a persistent problem in the neighbourhood in relation to, for example, litter, graffiti or other anti-social behaviour.

88. The Government is already proposing to create new powers in relation to fixed penalty notices through the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill, allowing authorised officers or employees of parish and community councils to levy fixed penalty notices for ‘environment crimes’ such as litter, graffiti and fly-posting. The Police Reform White Paper also sets out proposals for community support officers to be able to issue a range of fixed penalty notices.

89. Local authorities, police forces, registered social landlords, the British Transport Police and housing action trusts can already apply for ASBOs. The Home Office’s forthcoming Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill will provide local authorities with a power to contract out their ASBO functions to other persons. Notwithstanding any contracting out arrangements, the local authority would still retain the power to discharge ASBO functions in its own right. The bodies or types of bodies to whom ASBO powers may be contracted would be defined by the Secretary of State following consultation. The Bill also provides for the Secretary of State to add by Order to the list of ‘relevant authorities’ able to pursue ASBOs in their own right. It may be appropriate for certain neighbourhood bodies working to reduce anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood to be designated as such a ‘relevant authority’ or ASBO functions be contracted out to such bodies.

90. There is obviously a potential for excessive use or abuse by unrepresentative groups or individuals if mechanisms for penalty notices such as these were offered indiscriminately. There must be safeguards in place to ensure that neighbourhood action is legitimate and in the interests of the neighbourhood and wider local community.

91. For example, a body might be able to apply for ASBOs only if it had effective accountability arrangements, transparent decision taking, and had published criteria on which it would take any ASBO decision. To be a body able to apply for ASBOs, it would also need to have met requirements demonstrating that it had the capacity to enforce its decisions as necessary. Restricting ASBO powers to such bodies would help to prevent arbitrary, malicious or inappropriate use of these powers.

Extending neighbourhood management

92. Neighbourhood managers offer a single point of contact for residents, agencies and businesses and should have the clout to negotiate with service providers – like the council and government agencies – about how services are delivered. The Government would be keen to extend neighbourhood management beyond the areas where such initiatives already exist³³. The nature of neighbourhood management initiatives would depend on a neighbourhood’s specific needs, existing arrangements and engagement of the council and other partners.

The Government would welcome views on how and when people in neighbourhoods might be able to act, and in particular on the issues discussed above.

³³ Existing neighbourhood management initiatives are discussed in Appendix B.

Chapter 4 – Resources and capacity for neighbourhood arrangements

93. Within the national framework the building of capacity for neighbourhood engagement will be just as important as the principles for neighbourhood arrangements and other provisions of the framework statement. There are two central aspects to capacity for action at the neighbourhood level:

- Resources available – ensuring resources are available to enable neighbourhood arrangements to achieve the aims for which they have been set up.
- Capacity of people to engage – this includes the capacity both of people in neighbourhoods and the officials working for local service providers to participate in neighbourhood arrangements and, most importantly, the capacity of the ward councillors to undertake their pivotal role in all neighbourhood action.

Costs of neighbourhood arrangements

94. Neighbourhood arrangements are principally about using existing resources more effectively, not about increasing expenditure overall. As the experience of existing arrangements shows, when a council actively engages with the neighbourhoods in its area, or devolves decision making to the neighbourhood level, some of its administrative resources are re-allocated to support the neighbourhood activity. In turn this activity should lead to improved service outcomes.

95. However, the Government accepts that certain neighbourhood arrangements – for example, the provision of neighbourhood managers or the provision of support and capacity building for improving and extending neighbourhood engagement – may have a net financial cost for a council or for other service providers who may be involved, even though it would be expected to yield significant benefits in terms of improved outcomes for the neighbourhood. Where councils and others choose to adopt such arrangements, this will be for them to decide having

regard to the resources available to them and their own budget priorities. However, in cases where Government is involved in such decisions by requiring or promoting a particular neighbourhood arrangement, the Government would act in accordance with new burden procedures it has agreed with the Local Government Association.

96. The Government has invited Sir Michael Lyons to examine the present system of local government funding. Sir Michael will report by the end of 2005. We will be taking steps to ensure any necessary read-across between the development of ideas for increasing neighbourhood engagement (and in particular the funding aspects of these) and the Inquiry's work.

Resources for the neighbourhood

97. A central question is how those acting through neighbourhood arrangements can influence the resources deployed in the neighbourhood and the extent of that influence. There is a spectrum of possibilities ranging from arrangements for the people in the neighbourhood to be consulted by the service provider about the levels of services and resources it allocates to that locality through to a neighbourhood body having its own funds and resources undertaking its own initiatives or spending programmes. Between these two possibilities there can be a variety of arrangements involving the neighbourhood having some kind of say and control over budgets which service providers devolve to the neighbourhood.

98. Having authority to spend resources provides a powerful signal that neighbourhood bodies can make a difference. However, there are issues about how such resources are provided and about the controls on such provision. The degree of control needs to be proportionate to the spend.

99. In some cases neighbourhood bodies may receive government funding (for example in disadvantaged areas). In those cases the financial and accountability regimes would need to provide in a simple and integrated way not only local accountability but also the necessary accountability to the grant-giving body.

Delegated budgets

100. A further possibility for providing at the neighbourhood level real decision making on spending would be for councils to devolve spending power to each ward's councillors over a small pot of money for that ward. Some councils already follow this approach of delegated budgets.

101. Such an approach might involve a council establishing a fund or budget for each of its wards, the spending of which would be entirely at the discretion of the ward councillors for anything of benefit to the neighbourhoods of that ward. We would need to consider how delegated budgets could operate in two tier areas. The size of such a fund would probably vary considerably between different areas and councils, but this would be a decision for individual councils.

102. The Government believes that such delegated budgets arrangements can make a real difference in the neighbourhood. It can be an effective means for tackling liveability issues, improving the local environment through making it cleaner, safer and greener. A number of councils have already delegated small budgets to the ward with positive results, and without increasing pressure on council tax. Existing budgets have been delegated rather than additional expenditure being incurred. The ward councillor is well placed to make use of neighbourhood funds because, as discussed in more depth in the paper "Vibrant Local Leadership", it is the ward councillor who should focus on leading and listening to the neighbourhood and be able to further its aspirations and wishes. Ward councillors would be accountable to the people in the neighbourhood for how the neighbourhood fund would be spent.

Neighbourhood Improvement Districts

103. An option involving new powers to raise finance for neighbourhoods might be to follow the sort of approach underpinning Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Such an approach might be termed a "neighbourhood improvement district" (NID).

104. A NID could raise additional revenue through the council tax in a particular area (as with a parish precept). The funds could allow the provision of additional services (by the council itself or by other organisations) in the area concerned. For example, a NID could be used to fund a new park warden or neighbourhood manager for the neighbourhood.

105. The council would arrange for the local community to vote on a proposal for a NID and its levy. There would also need to be safeguards for taxpayers if a majority of potential voters were receiving council tax benefit. It might be necessary to set a maximum limit on the additional amount that could be raised per head. Such safeguards might also include a role for the council being able to seek changes to the boundaries of a NID and voter turnout thresholds for approving a NID.

106. Such voting mechanisms and safeguards would help ensure that all communities in the neighbourhood are able to influence decisions about NIDs and would prevent self-selecting narrow interest groups being able to act without regard for the wider interests of the community. The council and ward councillors would have a vital role in enabling communities to set up NIDs and to mediate between the various interests in the neighbourhood.

107. In establishing any such special funding arrangements, the following issues would have to be resolved:

- how to guarantee that there would be true additionality for the area (and to avoid double taxation);
- the potential inequity in the treatment of one part of the local authority compared with others; and
- the possible use of funds by some communities for purposes that might, for example, damage the cohesion of the area.

108. Some of these issues might be addressed by establishing a veto mechanism. In the case of BIDs, the billing authority has such a veto. This provides a safeguard to ensure that the BID cannot operate against the wider interest of the area. An analogous approach might be appropriate in the case of a NID.

109. The Government would be keen to work with councils to pilot the NID concept in order to seek resolution on these issues.

110. Following the debates and discussions launched by this paper, were any of these possibilities judged to be proposals worth pursuing our intention would be to present them to the Lyons Inquiry for them to be fully evaluated in the wider context of the work and analysis being undertaken by that inquiry on local finance.

Neighbourhoods without own resources

111. There will, however, be many cases where neighbourhood bodies do not have their own resources and indeed where neighbourhood arrangements do not involve any form of body. In such circumstances the neighbourhood may still have a significant role in influencing the level of resources and services for that locality.

112. For example, the council or other service provider may decide to develop more formal response mechanisms to address priorities being expressed by neighbourhood level arrangements or seek to involve neighbourhoods in procurement decisions.

113. Participatory budgeting offers a further innovative opportunity for involving communities in the planning and delivery of services by local government. Where it has been tried internationally it has enhanced participation in local democracy, improved the delivery of local services, and enhanced the roles of local councillors. In England a small number of pilots are now underway which draw on some of the experiences in setting priorities for regeneration spending in New Deal for Communities programme areas³⁴. The Government would be keen to encourage participatory budgeting and work with other councils to roll out further pilots.

Neighbourhood ownership

114. Community ownership and management of assets such as village halls, community centres, libraries and recreational facilities can lead to improved service delivery. For example, a local residents' association might be a more appropriate body to look after the upkeep of a children's playground than the local council. The residents' association might well look after its upkeep better if assigned the responsibility and given the resource to do so, since it will be their children who are affected.

115. Research by the Confederation of Co-operative Housing has shown that community ownership of land and property in some areas of Birmingham has played an important role in regenerating areas of low demand³⁵. The Development Trusts Association is a network of community-led organisations which take over the ownership and management of derelict or under-used public property such as town halls, warehouses and wasteland. Each organisation is a not-for-profit trust accountable to the local community. Its aim is to transform the property it takes over into an amenity for local people from which revenue can be generated which can be reinvested for the future benefit of the community³⁶.

116. Development Trusts are just one example of the various forms community ownership might take. The Government would be keen to hear views on community ownership and in particular on the possibility of the development of a community right to buy scheme, perhaps drawing on ideas and experience from the Scottish Executive's Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 which provided a community right to buy for rural communities in Scotland³⁷.

³⁴ Participatory budgeting (PB) brings local communities closer to the decision-making process around the public budget and makes new connections between residents, political representatives, and local government officials. It is a flexible set of community engagement techniques, adaptable to local circumstances. The size and type of public budgets that might be considered under PB varies. Where it has been taken up internationally, typically it begins at around 1% to 3% of the annual revenue budget for a particular neighbourhood or city and then rises. In some places it has risen to 17% of the city budget over a period of 15 years. Money allocated within an authority area remains within it, as PB re-distributes resources internally, not to outside agencies. PB principles could equally be used by Local Strategic Partnerships, regeneration areas, or neighbourhood bodies – or even within an individual school, health service delivery area or housing estate.

³⁵ Community Land Trusts – A Feasibility Study, ART Homes, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services, Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Focus Housing Association, HACAS Chapman Hendy, Mercian Housing Association, the Housing Corporation, Trowers and Hamblins, June 2002.

³⁶ A case study of Development Trust success in Wales is set out in Appendix B (18).

³⁷ The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 enables rural communities with a population of less than 10,000 to establish a community body and register an interest in land or buildings, thereby providing the option to buy when the land/buildings come up for sale, following a community ballot. At the same time, the Scottish Land Fund has been established, with support from the New Opportunities Fund, to assist communities to own and develop land.

117. However, such neighbourhood ownership would only be appropriate in certain instances. Communities considering seeking ownership of assets need to recognise that such ownership also brings important legal, financial and administrative responsibilities.

118. Councils and ward councillors, working with partners in the community, would have a key role in advising on and facilitating proposals by neighbourhood bodies for bringing assets into community ownership. For example, neighbourhood ownership and the ability to deliver improvements to a service would require the necessary resources; the provision of delegated budgets might be one way of meeting this need.

Capacity of people to engage

119. Action by Government, councils and other service providers will be needed to ensure that more people are able to engage effectively with their council and other service providers, and encouraged to do so. People need to have access to the necessary knowledge and information in order to get involved and influence decisions. Such information will need to include information about the performance of the council and other service providers and about how to raise concerns and complaints with those providers.

120. To make an informed input into decisions about service delivery people will need to have information about the levels of resources currently going into their particular area from different services. ONS and ODPM are developing the Neighbourhoods Statistics Service. This aims to provide statistics at a small area level. Whilst it has been primarily designed initially for the purposes of regeneration users, by March 2006 a range of up-to-date statistics will be provided which will allow communities to find out more information about their local area. These statistics will, for example, be on health, crime, education and housing.

121. Capacity to engage also means ensuring that people have access to the training and practical support that they need to engage effectively³⁸. For

example, those involved in a neighbourhood leadership role may require training in diversity and equality issues to help them understand how such issues relate to neighbourhood activities. It would also be important for those involved in neighbourhood activity to be able to share experience and ideas. We would need to consider how central and local government might help facilitate such exchanges.

122. A key priority is to build and sustain the capacity of ward councillors to undertake their neighbourhood leadership role. A crucial task of councils is to provide this support for their councillors. Councils and councillors are being supported through national initiatives such as the new Local Government Leadership Centre which was launched in 2004. The aim must be to attract, equip and retain the best people of all communities and backgrounds to serve as councillors and hence to be effective neighbourhood leaders. This is considered more fully in the paper “Vibrant Local Leadership”, published in parallel with this document.

123. For capacity building to be effective, ways will have to be found:

- to provide accessible support at community level;
- of ensuring that those in the most marginalised communities (which may often be based on shared interest or problems, rather than location) will not be excluded; and
- of allowing experience to be shared within and between communities.

124. Capacity building will have to accommodate the particular needs of disadvantaged communities³⁹. This should build on the work of the Community Empowerment Networks which have been supported by the Single Community Programme (which from April 2005 is being supported by the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund).

³⁸ It is important to note that (using BVPI data) users of services tend to be more satisfied than non-users. This is a clear indication that *perceptions* of local government services fall well below the reality of when people actually experience services. There are implications from this for helping people know about and understand services. We also know that where communication is good, satisfaction tends to be higher. Good, clear information helps people understand what help is available from local government and helps them get the right service first time. ‘Best Value User Satisfaction General Survey – Topline Report’. ODPM 2004

³⁹ See Appendix B(20) for an example of how one disadvantaged community – people with disabilities – is being engaged.

125. It is equally important to engage and build capacity among young people. The introduction of citizenship education as a statutory part of the secondary school national curriculum in 2002 and the development of extended schools are aimed at improving citizen participation and engagement. Through citizenship young people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to become active members of society. In primary schools, there is a non-statutory framework for citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The development of active citizenship for post-16 learners (in schools, colleges, work-based training and community-based training) is being piloted.

126. The example of Lambeth Youth Council set out in Appendix B(19) illustrates what can be achieved when young people engage effectively at the neighbourhood level. The Government is keen to hear views on how to encourage more young people to get involved at the neighbourhood level and the forms such involvement might take.

127. The Government completed the Building Civil Renewal review of support for community capacity building at the end of 2003, and consulted on its findings. It has now completed its final report, 'Firm Foundations', which sets out a cross government framework for action to enhance community capacity⁴⁰. This report recognised that key objectives can only be achieved if we fully involve citizens and communities, and build up their skills, abilities, and confidence to take effective action and leading roles in their communities. Development and training within the public services will also be needed so that they are better equipped to engage with their communities. The review also underlined the need for public services to be organised so as to facilitate engagement.

The Government would welcome views on the funding and resourcing of and capacity building for neighbourhood arrangements.

⁴⁰ Community capacity building is defined as: 'Activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities.' Building Civil Renewal: Government support for community capacity building and proposals for change – Review findings from the Civil Renewal Unit. Home Office, 2003. Firm Foundations: The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building. Home Office, 2004 presents the government's framework for community capacity building.

Chapter 5 – Neighbourhoods – The future

The Neighbourhoods Charter

128. The approach centred on the framework that we are proposing would as explained earlier lead to a national neighbourhoods charter entered into by Government, local government, other service providers and the voluntary and community sectors (see headline illustration on page 12). This would recognise the ability of people to take neighbourhood action, and those entering into the charter would commit themselves to act in accordance with the agreed framework for neighbourhoods.

129. We recognise that any charter for neighbourhoods would in practice potentially be addressed to a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations. Their ability to act in the ways laid out in section 3 of the charter would depend on the nature of the individual or group in question and any necessary authorisation or designation by the council or other service provider to carry out the function.

130. Individual councils and other service providers could decide to enter into the charter. This would represent a commitment of that organisation to act in accordance with the national framework; for example, a commitment by a council to establish neighbourhood funds if this option is adopted in the framework.

131. Equally, a national charter could be complemented by councils having their own local charters. This might better address the specific circumstances of the area concerned, and identify how groups or individuals in that area could expect to develop any or all of the approaches in the charter. Those involved in neighbourhood arrangements – ward councillors, other service providers, the voluntary and community sector and other neighbourhood partners – could work with the council helping it to produce its charter which would cover all the neighbourhoods in its area. By helping to draw up the

local charter people in the neighbourhoods could readily understand the part they have to play in ensuring neighbourhood arrangements make a real difference to their everyday lives⁴¹.

A Menu of Options

132. A charter – national or local – could be accompanied by a menu of options for neighbourhood arrangements. Such a menu would be the offer for neighbourhoods of the future:

AN ILLUSTRATIVE MENU OF OPTIONS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD ARRANGEMENTS

Neighbourhood Engagement

- Opinion surveys and customer panels
- Council meetings with neighbourhoods
- Parish arrangements
- Deliberative forums
- Dialogue with community organisations

Neighbourhood Action

- Rights to establish neighbourhood bodies
- Appointment of neighbourhood managers
- Access to information on the performance of a council/other service provider
- Rights to make formal complaints about performance
- Neighbourhood contracts and service guarantees
- Community Service Agreements™
- Triggers for action
- Levying fixed Penalty Notices and applying for ASBOs
- Using model byelaws

Funding and Resources

- Delegated budgets
- Neighbourhood Improvement Districts
- Community Ownership

⁴¹ Bolton provides an example of an existing type of charter at neighbourhood level. There, the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder has brought together residents and service providers to negotiate a “Safe and Clean Charter”, covering the neighbourhood. The service provider signatories are the Chief Executive of Bolton Borough Council and the Chief Superintendent of Police. This Charter clarifies where responsibility lies for a variety of problems, the standards and levels of service the community has the right to expect and key contacts that residents can contact if service providers do not deliver to these levels/standards.

133. Within the context of the agreed charter, the menu will evolve as initiatives develop. The essence of success will remain the opportunities for neighbourhoods to set up arrangements tailored to their circumstances and having the flexibility for innovation and continuing development.

Next Steps

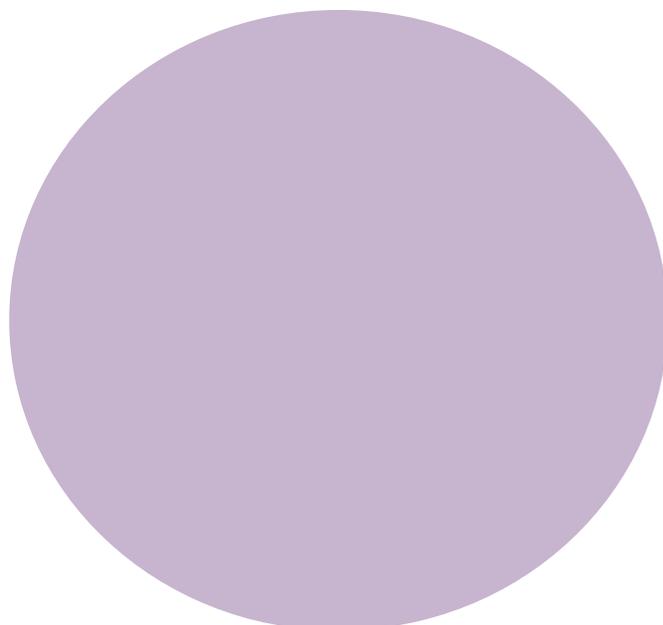
134. This document sets out how opportunities for neighbourhood arrangements might be widened and offers options for engaging citizens and communities through neighbourhood activities in the democratic process more widely, and help deliver better public services. It shows how neighbourhood arrangements can both harness the interest in and commitment people have to their locality in order to create a cleaner, greener, safer environment for those localities and the communities that live and work in them. It recognises how neighbourhood arrangements can be a seedbed for democracy, giving opportunities for people to participate at the most local level, which can perhaps lead on to their seeking office and involvement more widely in the democratic governance of the country.

135. The options and approaches offered in this paper can only be realised through local government, the voluntary and community sectors and Government working together and involving at the local level all the key stakeholders in the wider community. To move forward we therefore need an open and inclusive debate on how best we can progress the already extensive and varied activities that are happening at the neighbourhood level. Please send us your views and comments to:
neighbourhoods.localvision@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

136. For our part we are committed to seek as parliamentary time allows any legislation that might be needed to give effect to what is developed in an agreed national framework for neighbourhoods. For example, legislation would be required to provide for Neighbourhood Improvement Districts, to enable neighbourhood bodies to apply for ASBOs, and to allow parishes to be set up in London. We would like people to discuss and respond to the issues which we have raised, particularly on:

- a national framework statement;
- the principles for neighbourhood arrangements;
- how and when people in neighbourhoods can act;
- the neighbourhoods charter; and
- the menu of options.

137. We will be taking this debate forward through a series of national and regional seminars, workshops and meetings with local government and representatives of the public, private, voluntary and community sector over the coming months. More details can be found at www.odpm.gov.uk/localvision. The feedback and key issues arising from that debate will be drawn together, along with the issues from discussions on other documents published on local:vision, in a fuller strategy document over the next twelve months.



Appendix A – The role of users in public services

Users should be involved in developing public services

<p>“Improving Service Delivery – how auditors can help”; National Audit Office and HM Treasury; November 2003</p> <p>The National Audit Office and HM Treasury developed this guide to share lessons and highlight examples of good practice.</p>	<p>“Services are more likely to deliver intended outcomes if they are developed on a sound knowledge and understanding of what people want, believe or need. An important way of determining expectations and satisfaction with services being delivered is through consultation with key stakeholders.”</p>
<p>“The Royal Parks – an executive agency”; HC 485 2003-2004</p> <p>The report examines management of a backlog of works maintenance in 8 Royal Parks.</p>	<p>“The Agency should consult under-represented groups, using methods such as consultation groups, to identify the main obstacles to more frequent use of the Parks.”</p>
<p>“Improving Service Delivery: the Veterans’ Agency”; HC 525 2002-2003</p> <p>The report examined performance in meeting targets and improving service delivery.</p>	<p>“More developed approaches to quality assessment now ask customers about their expectation of what the service should provide and then how far this expectation is being met. This information provides a much better yardstick because the results ... can help target action on introducing improvements that are likely to be of most benefit to customers ... The Agency does not compile information on how claimants initially find out about the Veterans Agency ... This information is useful because it would allow the Agency to target potential users of its services better ... would also help assess the cost effectiveness of campaigns run by the Agency.”</p>
<p>“Access to the Victoria and Albert Museum”; HC 238 2000-2001</p> <p>The report looks at work to increase access, understanding and knowledge in relation to collections and to share expertise.</p>	<p>“For the Victoria and Albert Museum to attract new visitors, it needs a clear appreciation of what potential visitors might want – it has yet to carry out research amongst non-visitors to find out why they do not visit the Museum”</p>
<p>“Making a Difference: Performance of Maintained Secondary Schools in England”; HC 1332 2002-2003</p> <p>The report notes the need to take account of prior academic achievement and economic, social and cultural issues in measuring schools’ performance.</p>	<p>“A range of information collected during the visits suggested that an effective school ethos is derived from a shared understanding between management, staff, pupils, parents and governors, and incorporates recognition of, and links with, the wider community.”</p>
<p>“Inpatient and outpatient waiting in the NHS”; HC 221 2001-2002</p> <p>The report identifies a number of areas where the Department of Health and NHS trusts have taken positive steps to reduce waiting lists and waiting times, but argues that further changes could be made.</p>	<p>“Initiatives to reduce waiting lists and times ... a revised Patients’ Charter in December 1998 which recognised the importance of identifying and responding to patients’ needs.”</p>

Source: National Audit Office reports

Appendix B – Neighbourhood activities today

Long-established representative bodies

There are over 10,000 community, parish and town councils in England and Wales. This very local tier of elected government exists in urban as well as rural areas. They have a range of discretionary powers, and play an important role representing their communities, and providing services for them. They can contribute towards the costs of service provision by others and they have specific rights to receive information from other authorities, and to represent community interests to them. By involvement with district and county councils in public consultations and otherwise, they can influence the decisions which will affect their localities.

In practice the role played by parish councils in the local community varies widely: some play a very modest and local role, while others are more active, with a scope similar to that of some of the smaller district councils. In Milton Keynes, an urban area, the council has decided to devolve and delegate functions by the creation of parishes, rather than to area forums or committees.

(1) Peterlee Town Council

Peterlee Town Council in County Durham is a Quality Parish Council that works very closely with a number of partners including the local authority, health authorities, government agencies, sports bodies, voluntary organisations and the private sector to achieve shared objectives. Heath Close Play Area is one of five new play areas created across the town in financial partnership with the 'Sure Start' (Peterlee) Project. This project was identified in a recent Institute of Local Government report as best practice.

Rural Community Councils

Parish councils are often found in rural areas where they are complemented by other initiatives. For example, DEFRA's promotion of performance improvement in Rural Community Councils through Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE).

This is a two year initiative to help Rural Community Councils achieve specified quality standards, which are independently reviewed and accredited through a system of external peer review. DEFRA have linked up local partners in rural delivery to pilot innovative new approaches to delivering rural policy and tackling social exclusion, addressing social, economic and environmental issues. As a result, better value has been achieved out of the wide range of funding streams available, by bringing strong local leadership to bear in tackling rural disadvantage.

Initiatives by Councils

Some councils have devolved elements of service management to a more local level giving, to a greater or lesser degree, local communities the means to influence the way in which services are delivered.

Area level arrangements are well placed to make a significant input to priority setting and to representing views from more local areas to the council or the LSP. The scope of area bodies varies, but their focus is often on liveability issues. Almost half of councils have *area forums*, which are consultative bodies set up by the council to discuss issues at a local level and influencing the decisions of the council, CDRP or other partners. Other councils have set up area committees. Such area forums or committees will typically have delegated responsibilities and may hold budgets. These types of area structures offer a useful mechanism for developing engagement at the neighbourhood level.

(2) Gateshead

Gateshead has developed an approach to neighbourhood management, splitting the borough into 5 broad areas and realigning council and other providers' services into the 5 areas. Within these broad areas much smaller neighbourhoods have been identified which provide the focus for the development of local neighbourhood plans which focus on improving the quality of life for people within communities.

(3) Thurrock Council

Thurrock Council has developed a proactive approach of neighbourhood engagement to take advantage of the Thames Gateway proposals. In tackling this the Council has successfully sought to develop the ability and opportunity for the communities to be involved in influencing local services.

Through an area committee structure with devolved budgets, area forums have been established and a programme of community training to develop people's capacity to be involved has been successfully implemented.

By making local democracy more relevant to the people of Thurrock it has been revitalised; there has been an increase in turn out at local elections of 10% with 8 of the new councillors emerging from the area forums.

Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) provide another example of how councils are involving citizens in service delivery. ALMOs are companies wholly owned by councils which are set up to manage all or part of that council's housing. The homes remain council owned and the tenants remain secure council tenants but the ALMO is able to focus on delivering the housing management service. Through ALMOs tenants get a direct say in the way their homes are managed. An ALMO's management Board includes tenants, as well as local authority nominees and independent members with relevant experience, which may include local businessmen or other representatives of the community. Tenants are also consulted about the ALMO's operation including how resources are used, and often work with the council to help monitor the ALMO's performance.

(4) Ashfield Homes ALMO

Ashfield Homes was an ALMO created in 2001 to manage all of Ashfield District Council's housing. It achieved 3* (Excellent) rating from the Housing Inspectorate in September 2002.

Ashfield Homes reports that, as an ALMO, it has more freedom to explore new ways of delivering the service and meeting the community's needs. It has established high quality tenancy support services to assist vulnerable people in managing and maintaining their tenancies, as well as signposting them to education, training and employment opportunities. Housing officers work directly with vulnerable tenants and families to ensure they can take full account of their specific needs. Those tenants are also involved in preparing newsletters and leaflets targeted at those who may need support.

The ALMO has also built effective partnerships with other bodies such as local colleges and the police, and has established a Neighbourhood Safety Team which has recently rolled out a neighbourhood warden service across the district.

Other models commonly used by councils to engage communities include citizens panels, 'Planning for Real', citizens juries, youth juries, focus groups, service user forums, complaints/suggestions schemes, satisfaction surveys and the new councils' constitutions which seek to make them more accessible to citizens⁴⁰. Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs) will also enable communities to actively participate in the planning of their areas and help people to strengthen their neighbourhood. A range of forums, some supported by new technology, can help engage communities in ways which are interactive and accessible, and can be part of people's normal life patterns. For example, the Local e-Democracy National Project will deliver to local authorities a range of new and enhanced tools and techniques for using new technology to encourage increased participation and stronger bonds between the citizen, their council and their representative.

⁴⁰ For a summary of related evidence, see chapter 2 of 'New Localism: Citizen Engagement, Neighbourhoods and Public Services: Evidence from Local Government. ODPM, 2005.

Also see:

'Citizens: Towards a Citizenship Culture.' Crick (ed), 2001.

'The Locality Effect: Local Government and Citizen Participation: Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker, 2002.

'A theoretical model of what motivates public service users to participate'. Birchall and Simmons, 2002.

'Public Participation in Local Government: A survey of local authorities.' ODPM, 2002.

Communities also have the opportunity to positively influence the planning process through e-planning initiatives such as the Planning Portal.

Initiatives by service deliverers

Neighbourhood Renewal, Neighbourhood Management and New Deal for Communities

In framing its National Strategy Action Plan to deal with deprived areas, *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*, the Government recognised the importance of local communities in setting local priorities. The Plan set out the Government's policies for community involvement in tackling deprivation in the 88 most deprived areas of England. A key element of the strategy was the improvement of mainstream services to help increase employment, raise economic performance, reduce crime, improve educational attainment and health, and deliver better housing. The strategic programmes implementing the Action Plan are now beginning to reveal valuable lessons that could be applied elsewhere.

There are 35 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder areas, a network of over 150 other Neighbourhood Management Initiatives (NMIs), and 39 New Deal for the Community programmes (NDCs). All of them place active involvement by local people at the heart of their work to improve neighbourhood public services. NMIs and NDCs are developing community engagement in disadvantaged areas and are using this to improve services through negotiation with service providers. For NDCs in particular, additional funding is also available to improve services, and residents are deeply involved in deciding how it should be spent. NMPs, NMI and NDC partnerships have brought together local communities, service providers and other agencies to tackle the problems in their neighbourhoods in an intensive and co-ordinated way.

Neighbourhood Management Initiatives have been set up by a wide range of organisations and are in place in a diverse range of areas across England. The principal 'added value' from Neighbourhood Management appears to be identifying and raising local issues to service providers, and facilitating pilot projects. Neighbourhood Management also helps to develop a 'vision' of how the neighbourhood could, and should, change for the better and raise aspirations amongst both residents and service providers about changing this.

(5) Stockton-on-Tees Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder

Stockton-on-Tees NMP has suffered from high crime, drug use, high levels of joblessness and environmental problems. At the start of the 7 year programme 75% of people in the area wanted to move away. There have been real successes in starting to turn the area around.

One area of success has been tackling the wide spread problem of fly tipping. By listening to local people it was clear that with only 1 in 4 households owning a car, it was too difficult to take items to the Council dump. Resources were directed to clearing the streets and keeping them clean and free of any fly tipping making a real difference to the area in reducing crime by 31% and dramatically improving the cleanliness of the area making it a more pleasant place to live.

(6) Bournemouth Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder

The Bournemouth NMP has helped to foster stronger connections between the community and the service providers.

The tenants' forum, the youth forum and the traders' forum have been consolidated and a 50+ forum set up and provided with 'Voices' training by Age Concern. The tenants' forum has ensured that tenants contribute to the landlord accreditation scheme and other housing initiatives. It is planning to provide advice and advocacy for private tenants in the area as an independent organisation with its own resources.

The Pathfinder has developed a Street Improvement Co-ordinator's post which was seen as an ideal opportunity to reconnect people with a whole range of service providers. The accreditation scheme will undoubtedly be different because of tenant input and surgeries at the NMP office allow greater access. Service providers have underlined the importance of hearing issues directly from residents, because this had more impact.

(7) Wolverhampton Neighbourhood Management Strategy

Wolverhampton City Council has seven neighbourhood management pilot areas, prior to rolling out across the city in 2006-07. Each has a neighbourhood manager and a small team, line managed by managing agents working with a cluster of neighbourhoods, funded through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, the Housing Corporation and a housing association. The model places a particular emphasis on improvements to mainstream service provision and joining up local services to ensure that they meet the needs of the community. Neighbourhood boards in each priority area have been set up to guide neighbourhood management activity. This approach is starting to produce service change. For example, £¼ million pump priming for street scene and recycling changes has led to the Council allocating £1 million of mainstream resources to adopt a new approach to liveability.

(8) Hartlepool New Deal for the Community

Hartlepool NDC is working with ethnic minority residents through a local centre to improve their access to training and employment prospects. The project also aims to increase the involvement of Bangladeshi and Pakistani residents in other NDC projects, where they have perhaps not been fully represented. The centre has had an immediate effect on both fronts. The take-up of adult education courses is thriving. And, with the NDC helping to change attitudes of other service providers including the police and local authority, there is a growing confidence in the Asian community. Services are becoming more accessible and respond to people's needs.

Neighbourhood wardens also work closely with residents, police and local authorities to tackle deprivation and anti-social behaviour at grass-roots level. They promote community safety, community engagement, assist with environmental or housing improvements and help with neighbourhood management fostering social inclusion.

(9) Coventry street wardens

Coventry's team of street wardens supports residents in a number of ways. They:

- Help report housing repairs
- Identify and feed back on environmental issues
- Provide a link between community and major organisations
- Help with home security measures
- Tackle anti-social behaviour

Reports from focus groups and stakeholders say that residents welcome the street wardens and that they have made a big difference to everyday life in the area. The city council has now made the wardens part of the mainstream, including them in their budget.

The Government has also provided funding for a range of programmes to help communities create cleaner, safer, greener neighbourhoods. One example is the Living Spaces Programme which is providing £30 million to help people improve their local environment – the gardens, parks, play areas and other public areas – near to where they live. ODPM is collaborating closely with Groundwork, the environmental charity that, with support from Green Space, manages the Living Spaces scheme. In its first year the scheme offered nearly £8 million to over 300 community groups which helped them create or improve 121 play areas, 69 community gardens, 23 local parks, 30 footpaths and 20 village greens.

(10) Living Spaces and Droylsden Road Tenants' and Residents' Association

Groups that have received support since Living Spaces started include the Droylsden Road Tenants' and Residents' Association, in Audenshaw, East Manchester.

The association received a grant of £25,000 to tackle the lack of green space on its estate, and members found the expert support provided by Living Spaces guided them through the project step-by-step. Instead of a dingy wheelie bin alley, they now have a community garden for everyone to enjoy.

(11) Neighbourhood Policing in Merseyside

In April 2001, Merseyside Police introduced a new style of policing in order to re-engage with the public.

Neighbourhood policing redeploys response officers into dedicated teams in each of forty-three neighbourhoods led

by an inspector who is accountable for the policing needs of that community * a mini chief constable of the community. The inspector has a team typically consisting of three sergeants and sixteen constables as well as community support officer support.

The aim was to give residents in Merseyside a familiar and reassuring local police service, empowering communities to determine policing priorities. In order to achieve this, the force needed to completely change its structure and systems, and required a performance focus on public satisfaction and confidence.

In the last three years, crime has not only been reduced, but surveys have shown increases in public satisfaction. Robbery has reduced by 25% and vehicle theft has reduced by 24%. Street interview surveys have shown levels of confidence and satisfaction in the police have risen by 10%.

Community Empowerment Networks

The Government is firmly committed to building the capacity of local communities so they are able to work together and have a range of opportunities to be involved in the improvement of their neighbourhoods. Achieving stronger, more cohesive communities will depend to a large extent on empowering the people within them. An essential part of that process involves citizens having a greater say in how local agencies deliver services. To support these aims, Community Empowerment Networks (CENs) have been established in the 88 most deprived areas.

The establishment of CENs is funded through the Single Community Programme. Where they are established, we expect their role to grow from 2006 as they co-ordinate, on behalf of all partners, the LSP's community empowerment activities as set out in the statement of involvement which LSPs are required to

include in their Local Area Agreement. In other areas, a range of alternative arrangements are developing for the same purpose.

Self Management Organisations, including Community Alliance

There are direct management opportunities for communities. For example, over 250 Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) manage 85,000 homes and their immediate estate surroundings. They are elected, accountable and representative. Research shows that many TMOs perform better than their landlord did in the past and compare favourably with the top 25% of councils in England in terms of repairs, re-lets, rent collection and tenant satisfaction. Many TMOs also carry out a wide range of social and community development activities which help to make their communities and social links stronger.⁴³

(12) Bloomsbury Tenant Management Organisation

Bloomsbury TMO in Birmingham has set up a credit union to help to tackle poverty on the estate. A number of other TMOs including Belle Isle and Digmaor Estate Management Boards are also involved in credit unions as part of a holistic approach to reducing arrears, tackling poverty and social exclusion on their estates.

A wide variety of other community anchor organisations manage particular local services on contract to, or with funding from, local statutory bodies. These include development trusts, settlements, community associations, faith groups, extended schools and other similar bodies. Many have very strong user and citizen involvement in their management, and a high commitment to inclusiveness.

The Community Alliance has drawn together four major national networks⁴⁴ which work directly with over 1500 organisations, which are or have the potential to become 'community anchor organisations', as well as many more smaller groups, to strengthen their ability to provide co-ordinated support.

⁴³ 'Tenants managing: an Evaluation of Tenant Management Organisations in England'. Cairncross, Morrell, Drake and Brownhall, 2002.

⁴⁴ The Community Alliance brings together bassac, Community Matters, The Development Trust Association and the Scarman Trust.

Management of public services closer to communities

A number of public services are managing their services at local level. The Government's Sure Start programme provides a good example of localising service delivery. Sure Start aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by delivering community based services in disadvantaged areas. One of the key Sure Start local programmes beginning to make a difference to people's lives is the establishment of children's centres where they are needed most – in the most disadvantaged areas – to offer families early education, childcare and health and family support with advice on employment opportunities. The Government intends that the provision of good quality integrated services should have broad and lasting impact on children, their parents and the wider community. The Chancellor confirmed in his March 2004 Budget Report that there will be 2,500 children's centres by 2008, and that the Government's long term goal is a centre for every community. Children's centres build on existing successful programmes like Sure Start local programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries and Early Excellence Centres.

Additionally, the Government believes that using schools with extended opening hours to provide local opportunities to use services and activities will bring benefits to local communities. These 'extended schools' will work in partnership with local bodies (Primary Care Trusts, social services and other schools) to provide services including NHS Stop Smoking sessions and sexual health services. They will work to provide sport, exercise and recreational activities for all members of the community.

The Government outlined proposals for the future of policing in Building Communities, Beating Crime: A better police service for the 21st century, published in November 2004 and available at www.policereform.gov.uk. As part of this reform agenda a programme will be put in place to help forces implement neighbourhood policing and make sure that the highly skilled role of neighbourhood officer is recognised, valued and trained in the same way as other specialists within the police service. The roll-out of neighbourhood policing will be supported

with substantial investment through the new Neighbourhood Policing Fund, delivering 25,000 community support officers and wardens by 2008. A national community policing TOGETHER Academy programme will be run in March 2005 to ensure police officers and their Community Support Officer (CSO) colleagues have the tools, the know-how and the backing to tackle anti-social behaviour in the communities they serve. Every force will have national standards of service in place by the end of 2006 and will agree in a 'Contract' with their communities how these can be built on locally, to reflect the particular needs of the communities they serve. The Government will introduce minimum enforcement powers for all CSOs such as the power to require a name and address, to confiscate alcohol and to issue fixed penalty notices.

Initiatives by local voluntary or community groups

Local action-planning

Local action-planning describes processes in which the members of any community work together to produce a plan. The plan will normally set out their vision and objectives for their neighbourhood or community, and the actions and initiatives which will help achieve them.

Local action planning is taking various forms. For example:

- village appraisals and parish plans in rural areas
- neighbourhood action plans in neighbourhood renewal areas
- option appraisals in tenant management schemes
- Planning for Real exercises and other forms of community action plans.

The Local Strategic Partnership in Bradford, for instance, is using Neighbourhood Renewal Funding to enable neighbourhoods and communities of interest to develop their own action plans⁴⁵. Similarly, in West Berkshire the council has supported the development of 27 parish plans, which are together influencing Community Strategy priorities⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Firm Foundations: The Government Framework for Building Community Capacity. Home Office, 2004, page 25.

⁴⁶ As above, page 24.

(13) Grimethorpe Neighbourhood Watch

Grimethorpe is a former mining village in Yorkshire. Following the closure of the local colliery the area was plunged into a deep recession that left a third of residents jobless. So rampant was criminal activity in this part of South Yorkshire that it was rapidly being dubbed Crimethorpe.

To combat this situation a resident created a proactive neighbourhood watch scheme.

Neighbourhood watch draws together the main themes of a community based approach towards tackling social problems. In Grimethorpe they established a youth club, raised funds for outings for the elderly, found young people employment that helped to bring:

- car crime down by 44 per cent
- burglaries by 24 per cent
- recreated community spirit – trust between residents and local agencies

In 2000, the village won a national crime-fighting award in the Neighbourhood Watch Awards and was a finalist at the European Crime Prevention Awards.

(14) Downland Courts Residents' Association

A run down estate in Hove neglected by the local council with few facilities that had become a hotspot for crime and a no-go area.

The drive and determination of one person led to the creation of a community association that engaged with the local council and police to help realise the aims of developing and sustaining a strong community feel which in turn improved the quality of life for the residents of Downland Court.

Community meetings are well attended and the association has contributed to the following:

- Massive crime reduction
- More visible police presence and creation of neighbourhood watch scheme
- Better relationships with local council and police
- Physical improvements e.g. new park area, new porches, double glazing
- Strong and inclusive community spirit
- Further projects aimed at involving youths and the elderly

(15) Joint Tasking and Co-ordination Groups

In the Ingol ward in Preston, Lancashire, fortnightly ward level Tasking and Co-ordination Group meetings are held. These are now chaired by community representatives (e.g. the chair of local community association) and partners.

Each meeting produces an action plan with clear objectives, including ownership of each element. Members of the community are frequently tasked with specific activities. Examples include collection of intelligence about specific problems, participation in environmental clean ups and attendance at court to provide evidence of community impact in ASBO cases. Community representatives and partners are also key participants in problem solving activity.

The meeting also includes an opportunity for community members, partners and police to raise issues that they believe pose a threat to tackling local priorities. Problems that have been highlighted include, perceived weak sentencing in cases of anti-social behaviour and policy on the housing of anti-social or problematic individuals. Community members are involved in deciding how best to take these issues forward.

Joining Up

More recently there has been increasing recognition of joining up, to avoid silo-based responses to problems which require a more holistic approach. LSPs, CDRPs, children's trusts and the health scrutiny role of local authorities all represent progress towards better co-operation, and more effective scrutiny of public services. Local Area Agreements (LAAs), currently being piloted in 21 areas, are driving this approach further forward. Through LAAs, central departments are joining up to agree shared outcomes with councils and their local partners, working in the LSP. LAAs may be one way for councils and their partners to integrate neighbourhood groups into the design and delivery of local priorities.

(16) Liverpool INclude partnership

The Liverpool INclude partnership has secured the commitment of local service providers, including the local authority, the fire service and the primary care trust, to address key weaknesses in the neighbourhood. INclude's co-ordinating role means that there is a joined-up approach to the daily operation of services.

(17) The Lea Bridge Gateway partnership

The Lea Bridge Gateway partnership in Waltham Forest has brought together the police, local authority, social services and a social landlord to support vulnerable residents. This has co-ordinated and formalised links between these partners, working closely together to meet data protection requirements.

Community Ownership

(18) Arts Factory at Highfields Industrial Estate in Ferndale, Wales

Established in 1990 as an independent Development Trust to create local employment opportunities for excluded people in Rhondda Valleys.

Based in Highfields Industrial Estate in Ferndale, with office, training workshops, graphic design service, pottery, environmental and arts enterprises

Acquired Trerhondda Chapel in 1996 after local campaign. Refurbished as vibrant hub of community with creche, Citizen's Advice & job search, open learning centre and local cinema. Recently acquired land for Parc 21 – a green business park for community enterprises including sustainable living learning centre, garden centre, café, gym and creche and office space.

Engaging young people

(19) Lambeth Youth Council

The Lambeth Youth Council is run by young people for young people. This forum has supported and enabled members to discuss and implement changes on issues such as teenage pregnancy, stop and search.

The Council exists to:

- Highlight issues of concern to young people
- Allow young people to influence policies that affect them
- Make a difference by initiating special projects
- Train young people to have a positive effect in their communities

The Lambeth Youth Council is highly respected and received recognition and was a winner in the young people's category in the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) and The Guardian Public Involvement Awards 2002. These awards recognise projects, which empower people to engage in issues that affect their lives and play a role in decision-making.

Engaging people with disabilities

(20) Bristol Disability Forum

The Bristol Disability Forum (BDEF) is supported by the council in terms of staffing and facilities and is consulted on a wide range of matters related to council service provision and proposals for improvements e.g. the forum recently took part in a review of the benefits system. But importantly in Bristol, this traditional form of engagement has been expanded to include representation on key decision making forums. BDEF is represented on the Council Scrutiny Committee and is a partner on the Bristol LSP, Bristol Partnership.

Appendix C – Lessons learnt from past initiatives

Lessons learnt from past initiatives pursued by some councils on devolved decision making and decentralisation:

- A high number of access points can potentially be costly and staffing costs can be high;
- Remoteness from the centre can lead to a lack of specialist advice being available;
- To ensure reliability and cover for staff in smaller units, it may be necessary to have broader generic skills and lose specialisms;
- Reinventing the wheel and loss of economies of scale;
- Inexperienced staff may have a high level of authority without the expertise necessary for decision making;
- Services can become too demand led and fragmented, neglecting the need for strategic planning, time and reflection on some issues and services;
- Relations between different services or different neighbourhoods can lead to rivalries with some areas losing out;
- Budgeting issues – there are issues around how budgets are allocated and the funding of services across neighbourhood boundaries;
- Legislation needs to be complied with – for example, there were difficulties around ensuring that there was compliance with discrimination legislation; and
- Accountability can be difficult to monitor or enforce.