

North Somerset Partnership South Ward Neighbourhood Management Programme



Introduction

The Neighbourhood Management programme was commissioned by the NSP in April 2006. The programme is externally funded and was awarded £3.7 million of government funding to improve the quality of life across south ward and in particular to tackle the disadvantage experienced by people living in one particular area within the Bournville.

Neighbourhood Management is a process which brings together the local community and local service providers at a neighbourhood level to tackle local problems and improve local services. The core premise is that of putting community information at the heart of local decision-making, if communities are involved in influencing the design and delivery of local services, those services will, by definition, be more targeted and effective. More targeted and effective services locally lead to increased public satisfaction and public services which are cost effective and improve quality of life for local residents.

Achieving this change of focus does not require vast sums of money, what it does require is a change of attitude and approach and an acknowledgement on the part of service providers that local residents are key partners in service design and delivery rather than simply recipients of services.

We have adopted a twin track approach to delivering neighbourhood management in South Ward

- We have worked to narrow the gap between quality of life for local residents compared to other wards and North Somerset as a whole. We have done this by **improving the effectiveness of service provision** in areas of locally identified priorities and supporting a wide variety of service partners to coordinate their efforts in the neighbourhood to maximise joint working and shared gains
- We have based our programme priorities on the **needs expressed by residents** and then brought those residents together with agencies to identify concerns, jointly plan solutions and monitor effective delivery.

Neighbourhood Management integrally links these two strands of work and aims to achieve a balance between the professional expertise of agencies and the unique experience and broad range of skills of residents. In doing this we have moved away from the 'one off consultation approach, which is hit and miss at best, to an ongoing dialogue.

The programme

A combination of capital and revenue funding has been used to deliver significant improvements to the neighbourhood. The work programme has been designed to respond to the concerns and priorities raised by local residents. This has included delivering change in the following areas

- Reducing crime and anti social behaviour
- Improving the quality and quantity of parks and open spaces
- Developing joined up responses to the needs of younger people
- Tackling the area's high levels of worklessness and low levels of skills
- Involving local residents in shaping and directing change

The major projects delivered during 2010 include

The arts strategy, which has involved the creation of a series of pieces that reconnect people with the forgotten landscape and history of the area. Local residents have worked with artists to rediscover the unique character of the neighbourhoods that make up South Ward. Recently completed pieces include

Continuum Diatom created by Rodney Harris



Golden Dandelion
by Andy Hazell



Donkey Crossing
by Sally Matthews



The Windermere Communal Garden, has been developed, in partnership with NS Housing, from disused drying and garage areas to create a beautiful space for residents to enjoy.

Other major projects include ...

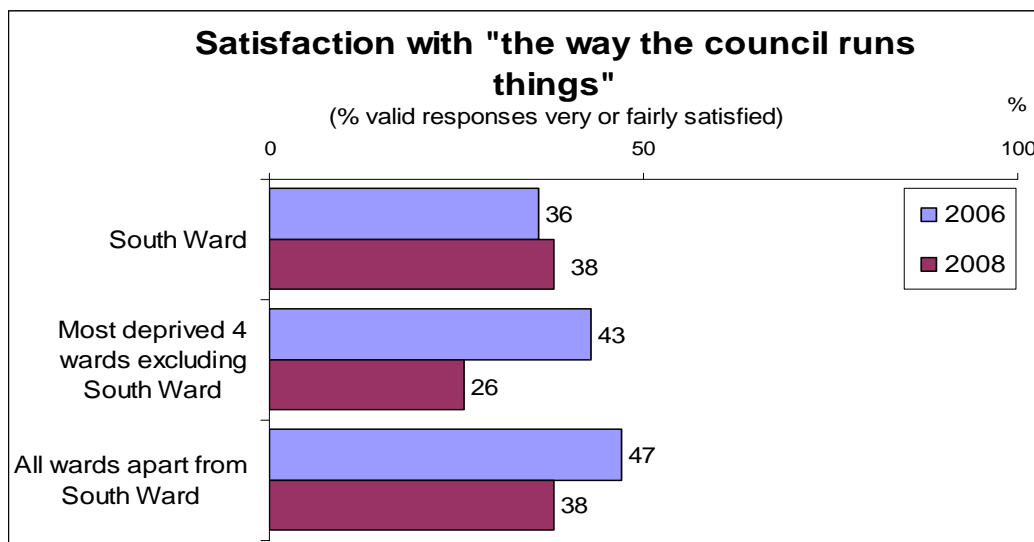
- Refurbishment of 3 local shopping parades
- Redesign and enhancement of 3 local parks
- Development of a community warden scheme
- Creation of a neighbourhood youth project



For the future

As the programme winds down we are looking forward to the next phase which will see the development of a neighbourhood partnership to enable local residents to continue to meet with service providers to plan and prioritise service delivery.

What has been the impact?



In 2008 the Household survey showed:

- 40% of our sample feels able to 'influence decisions'. (24% 2006)
- In 2008 71% of our sample 'feel satisfied with their neighbourhood' (54% in 2006)
- 70% think street cleansing 'good or very good' (56% in 2006)
- 16% think crime is getting worse (27% in 2006)

What have we done?

- **Involving local people in defining problems and shaping solutions**
Local people, through the Board and other structures, have had an impact on decisions about local services. The capital programme has enabled the development of a dialogue with a range of local people. We have been able to build on this through resident involvement in joint tasking and local community meetings. We have developed a range of ways for local people to be informed / engaged / consulted and involved.
- **Community Chest** has been instrumental in igniting lots of sparks of very local activity – residents doing it for themselves – examples include Oldmixon Parents Group who have trained as community researchers, organised trips for parents and children, worked with service providers to increase level of services on Oldmixon; BARA have successfully fundraised for the development of the Chocolate Garden; communal gardens where residents have reclaimed disused communal space and with a small grant turned them into communal gardens, Recycle a Cycle to provide affordable bikes for local people.
- **Community Wardens** are a visible presence on the streets and practical approach to tackling environmental crime, educating residents on

responsibilities, signposting people to other services; modelling a way of interacting with residents. Part of a wider strategy to tackle environmental issues.

- The **Neighbourhood Youth Project** has enabled new approaches to be piloted; the model developed is a combination of detached, activity based and drop in opportunities and meets the needs of young people in the neighbourhood in a more flexible way. The Youth Centre has become better used by young people as a result of relationships that have been developed.
- **Understanding the neighbourhood and using an evidence-led approach** – using a robust process to identify and discuss local issues and priorities. An action planning process which started with household survey and joint planning between service providers and residents has been used; taking account of the local situation and all the work that has gone before; building on success and energy.
- **Joint Tasking Meetings** – fly tipping in the neighbourhood has reduced by 50% in the past 12 months; criminal damage has also reduced. Multi agency meetings are held every 2 weeks with mapped data to facilitate joint problem solving. The process now includes local residents as part of the PACT process.
- **Communication strategy** – Using a broad range of ways to engage local people who are not interested in being more involved but who can be informed. These include a website, newsletter, targeted campaigns, community meetings, posters and issue based consultation

What have we learnt?

- **Understanding the neighbourhood is critical** – Neighbourhood Management does not move in to blank sheet, we need to understand the neighbourhood and identify key partners including community champions. Our first step was to map South Ward to understand land ownership issues.
- **It can be difficult to evidence impact** – neighbourhood level data is difficult to obtain against some of the key issues (KPIs) that neighbourhood management seeks to influence.
- **Encouraging front line workers to engage with residents** – the NM team has been acting as honest broker in the dialogue, supporting service providers to engage with residents and build trust. Developing a more proactive relationship between service providers and local residents requires a considerable culture shift for some workers. There is a need for senior level buy in to this way of working within organisations, and senior leadership/co-ordination capability/capacity at the local level (provided by the NM Team in this case).
- **Breaking down agency / departmental silos** – the programme tries to develop behind the scenes relationships between service providers so that residents do not get passed from one agency to another when they raise

issues. The result of this is residents see a more visible, positive and can do approach to service delivery

- **Being accountable, open and honest with people** – develop a dialogue which is honest, discuss constraints and barriers, involve people in problem solving, be clear about what you can and will do and provide feedback.
- **Partnership working is critical** – often there are good partnerships between front line workers but these practices are not always embedded into the organisation. There can sometimes be resistance at middle management level, issues of turf, funding etc.
- **Top down services and policies can impact negatively on communities** – services need to be designed, delivered and monitored against local needs. £28.50 bulky waste charge has had a disproportionate impact on South Ward where there is a very high concentration of people on low incomes. Youth Worker employment contracts mean that there are no youth workers at the weekend or during school holidays. It may not be possible to change everything but it is important to feed back to agencies and that are open to new ways of working.
- **Changing the relationship between service providers and residents** – moving from the ‘you ask’ and ‘we do it for you’ to a more active and involved relationship with residents. Friends of parks; communal gardens, junior wardens. This takes time and currently can only be seen as small scale examples.
- **Elected members have a critical role to play** – potential to energise local democracy; local elected members can act as honest broker in their neighbourhoods. Opportunity to make this a core part of their role in the future.
- **Harness the energy of local champions** – use the motivation of the small number of local people who are already involved and build their capacity. The NM Board is now chaired by a local resident who is also a Town Councillor.
- **Dedicated Community engagement resources** have been key to enabling the dialogue with residents to be sustained and have enabled capacity building work to be carried out with local groups. Community engagement workers have a skill set which is very specific. Other agency workers may need support to develop these skills.
- **It takes time and consistency to build trust and relationships in fragmented communities** – succession planning is critical to ensure that improvements are sustained and the dialogue with residents is sustained.
- **Being based in the heart of the community has created visibility and accessibility** – it has been advantageous to be located within the community. We have been able to get out and about and get known by the community.