

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	12 November 2009
Subject:	Neighbourhood Champions
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Brendon Hills Corporate Director Community and Environment
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Susan Hall Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Introduce a project to develop a network of volunteers called Neighbourhood Champions to enhance contact with the public and to improve and promote the cleaner and safer streets work of Harrow Council and the Metropolitan Police Service at a local level.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is requested to agree:

1. The introduction of Neighbourhood Champions
2. The two phased launch programme with details to be decided by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety in conjunction with the Corporate Director Community and Environment.

Reason (For recommendation):

To support community involvement in the work of the Council, and to contribute to cleaner and safer streets.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

- 1 The proposal to introduce a Neighbourhood Champions scheme in Harrow is part of the response to the challenge of improving residents' satisfaction with the Council and the linked perceptions of value for money and cleaner, safer streets. Consistently MORI and in house opinion polls show that there is a strong positive correlation between residents' perceptions of street cleanliness and fear of crime, and overall satisfaction. Specifically, when asked in the August Reputation Tracker about a 'Street Champions scheme giving residents the opportunity to report street problems, such as litter and fly-tipping' 87% of respondents supported this idea with just 4% against. 25% of residents have indicated that they want to be more involved and to have more influence over decisions that effect on them.
- 2 The Neighbourhood Champions scheme can make a positive contribution to the Council's "A Better Deal for Residents" programme:
 - Delivering the Harrow Strategic Partnership vision for Harrow as set out in the Community Plan;
 - Managing the increasing expectations of residents by promoting behaviour change;
 - Delivering a balanced budget in the medium term;
 - Enabling continuous improvement.
- 3 The scheme will do this by:
 - Providing a network of volunteer residents as Neighbourhood Champions, and giving them a voice in their community;
 - Using the Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators network as a base to provide a quick start for Neighbourhood Champions;
 - Public Realm and Community Safety teams working closely with Access Harrow to deliver cleaner and safer streets and develop a synergy with Neighbourhood Champions.
 - Developing relationships between the Council and Neighbourhood Champions focused on their experience of frontline services;
 - Improving the targeting of information about the Council's services;
 - Improving the information flow about enquiries and the Council's response using the technologies now available through Access Harrow;
 - Developing closer liaison between the public and the Council workforce.

Neighbourhood Champions

- 4 Similar schemes exist in other authorities heavily focused on environmental services, but the very positive relationships in the Safer Harrow Partnership present Harrow with an opportunity to develop a unique and ground breaking scheme.
- 5 This proposal has been developed to date through:
 - Meetings with the Corporate Director, Head of Public Realm Services; Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety.

- Meetings with representatives of Access Harrow and the Head of Communications;
 - Carrying out research into similar schemes operated by other London Boroughs, using desk-based and web-based techniques, telephone interviews and networking within the London Borough data base and other local authority contacts;
 - Exploratory discussions with members of the public at various forums;
 - Preparation of an interim draft report to stakeholders, including the Metropolitan Police, presenting an assessment of options, for discussion.
- 6 The Neighbourhood Champions scheme will start with a focus on public realm matters, and community safety issues affecting streets and neighbourhoods across Council and Partner's services. A second phase, learning from the first, will then develop more sophisticated reporting of other issues, potentially including aspects such as safeguarding, and volunteer opportunities such as training for sports coaching, first aid, languages etc.
- 7 The current performance of Public Realm services as measured by a cluster of comparators is generally good. National Performance Indicator NI195 measures street cleanliness, and the scores for litter (6%), detritus (7%) and fly-posting (0%) in Tranche 1 of 2009-10 all represent good performance when compared with national and wider London standards and with DEFRA targets. Whilst results from a single tranche do not reveal the full picture, these do indicate that service quality is fair or better. The primary objective of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme is to improve residents' perceptions of cleaner and safer streets, together with a boost to addressing known weaknesses or failings in service delivery or responsiveness. Specifically, the scheme will address the following National Indicators in three main areas, and particularly the gaps between measurement and perception:
- NI 5 - Overall satisfaction with the Council and Harrow as a Place to live in.
 - NI 2, 3 & 4- % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood; Civic participation in the local area; and % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality;
 - NI195 & 17– perceptions of street cleanliness and Anti-Social Behaviour.
- 8 The overall objective is to recruit, train and deploy up to 2000 Neighbourhood Champions.

Services in the Scope of a Neighbourhood Champions Scheme

- 9 The scheme will be rolled out in two Phases, as indicated below.
- 10 A key question for the design and implementation of a Neighbourhood Champions scheme has been to consider which aspects of Streetscene and other issues for residential areas are in scope.
- 11 Reporting on the following key environmental maintenance functions is to be at the core of Phase 1 of the scheme:
- Street cleansing;
 - Waste collection and recycling;

- Anti-graffiti;
- Fly-tip and abandoned vehicle removal;
- Parks and woodlands;
- Public open spaces;
- Street furniture;
- Street lighting;
- Highway maintenance.
- Noise nuisance;
- On-street parking;
- General anti-social behaviour such as drug dealing or street prostitution, petty vandalism and criminal damage.

12 Phase 1 will also use the network of Neighbourhood Champions to complement consultative exercises mounted by the Council and its Partners. This will directly address the perception of the ease or difficulty of influencing local decisions in Harrow.

13 Phase 2, anticipates expanding the scheme to include issues of concern to other services in the Council, with guidance and assistance from the specialist services. This phase will require detailed consideration of the roles involved, and the qualifications required.

14 The issues may include:

- Reporting of child or elder abuse;
- Reporting of domestic violence;
- Reporting of racial harassment/hate crime; and
- Other volunteer opportunities such as sports coaching, first aid and languages.

Phasing of the Development of a Neighbourhood Champions Scheme

15 The Neighbourhood Champions scheme be developed in two phases:

- Phase 1 – Design and Launch – November 2009, with expansion up to April 2011;
- Phase 2 – Extension and Development - beyond April 2011.

Phase 1 Design and Launch

16 In the Design and Launch Phase, the detailed operation of the scheme will be determined, and a handbook will be prepared which will explain the scheme to staff, Councillors, Community Safety partners and, most importantly, to the first group of Neighbourhood Champions. This development work will be undertaken by a dedicated project manager.

17 Neighbourhood Champions will be encouraged to report Streetscene issues for attention by the Council in the areas listed above. In return, they will be given a personal response when the issue is resolved.

- 18 The first wave of recruits will be drawn from the existing network of Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators. This group has been chosen for several reasons:
- Already selected and vetted for neighbourhood role;
 - Already known to Community Safety team and supported by them;
 - Have an awareness of potential personal risks and risk avoidance strategies
 - Available for 'quick-start' to the Neighbourhood Champions scheme.
- 19 The Police, along with the Public Realm and Community Safety teams, will play an important role in making sure that the initial launch is a success. There is commitment from Partners to ensure the success of the scheme.
- 20 Recruitment of Neighbourhood Champions from the general public will begin as soon as policies for selection, vetting, training and induction of potential volunteers have been determined and finalised. The targeting of the recruitment campaign will be planned using the Experian data analysis – a way of mapping where various groups of people sharing the same characteristics live in the borough, and the marketing techniques currently available in the Access Harrow and Communications teams. The selection of target groups Neighbourhood Champions and communication channels will be based on the customer segments already developed, and an analysis of Place Survey and Reputation Tracker results. The objective will be to target the recruitment campaign to have the maximum improvement on the perception of cleaner and safer streets as measured in the MORI Place Survey results.
- 21 Phase 1 will include planning for the integration of the scheme into the mainstream activities of the Public Realm team.
- 22 A key part of Phase 1 will be the training made available to the Neighbourhood Champions. The research undertaken of existing similar schemes has shown that initial investment in good focused training is vital to a successful scheme.

Phase 1 Expansion

- 23 In the Expansion element of Phase 1, the scheme will be developed in four main ways:
- Continued recruitment of new recruits from outside the Neighbourhood Watch Network;
 - Development of consultative meetings with groups of Neighbourhood Champions, and the structured feedback of information on the performance and responsiveness of the Council's and Partners' services;
 - Work with Access Harrow to develop automated service completion notifications back to the person who contacted the Council about a particular issue as well as wider feedback to the local neighbourhood.
- 24 These initiatives are designed to respond to the Better Deal for Residents programme, and the challenge of improving residents' experience of living in the Borough, or using the Council's services and their feeling of being acknowledged and listened to. This phase is focused on behaviour change. All

of these changes will be directed towards residents' perceptions of cleaner and safer streets as measured in the MORI Place Surveys.

- 25 In particular it will support the "Better Together" work by encouraging participation, involvement and engagement in environmental behaviour change, reinforcing and promoting the message: Harrow is a place where people **do** recycle and do **not** drop litter or fly tip.
- 26 The project will see the development of contact between groups of Neighbourhood Champions based on local areas. The planning and management of these meetings will be incorporated into the responsibility of Public Realm Service managers. They will include regular feedback on the performance and responsiveness of the Public Realm services. This contact will assist the generation of local solutions to problems and will support the work of the Ward Councillors.

Phase 2 – Extension and Development

- 27 In Phase 2, the recruitment effort will be concentrated on groups not previously targeted and through an evaluation of progress to check and ensure that the scheme is representative of the community in Harrow.
- 28 Using what will be an established and maturing network, the services will be extended to make good use of the opportunities presented by the scheme to develop the work of other Directorates, for example in the area of safeguarding. The expert advice of other sections of the Council, other agencies and the Neighbourhood Champions will be harnessed to develop the most appropriate ways of achieving this step, as indicated above.
- 29 Phase 2 will also see the continued development of the communications technology to allow quicker and more accurate flow of information from the residents into the council and back out to the residents after the service response has been completed.

Access Channel Options for Neighbourhood Champions

- 30 Access Harrow currently offers a range of channels for residents wishing to notify the Council of an issue requiring attention. These are: face-to-face (1%); e-mail and web-forms (10%); or telephone (89%). The percentages indicate current usage.
- 31 The scheme handbook will encourage Neighbourhood Champions to use the most appropriate access channel depending on the Experian analysis, However, the Council's preferred mechanism will be web forms, as 80% of Harrow residents are now connected through broadband and 70% conduct transactions on line. The advantages of this channel are speed, accuracy and availability; it also a far lower cost channel for the Council:
 - Speed: a completed web-form automatically creates a new enquiry in the Public Realm team management system without any delay. The transaction is also captured in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system;
 - Accuracy: as there are no intermediary stages, the possibility of transcription error is eliminated;

- Availability: web-forms are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- 32 The Access Harrow team will investigate the possibility of developing the Harrow website to allow a direct click-through from a Neighbourhood Champions identity to the relevant web-forms.
 - 33 It may be necessary for a Neighbourhood Champion to use the telephone to notify the council of a particular issue. They will be directed to doing this in off-peak hours (between 2 and 5 Monday– Friday) as far as is possible. In this way, any rise in call volumes can be accommodated within existing Access Harrow resources. If additional traffic is generated during the morning peak, either service levels will deteriorate, or additional budget will be needed to handle the extra calls.
 - 34 Personal visits to the Civic Centre are not an efficient way for Neighbourhood Champions to report, and are not contemplated.
 - 35 A particular aim of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme will be to reduce the amount of duplicate reporting of problems requiring attention. Neighbourhood Champions will be encouraged to work with their neighbours to channel reports through their reporting system, rather than flood Access Harrow with multiple reports of the same incident. This is a known problem with the design of the current service, and one that is difficult to eradicate, because no resident can be sure who else might have reported an incident. The establishment of a Neighbourhood Champions network will be a contribution to tackling this duplication of effort.
 - 36 Especially in Phase 1, it will be important in building the early credibility of the scheme to offer something extra. This will be a ‘job complete’ notification. In the earliest part of phase it may be possible to utilise the Police Ringmaster system which already sends automated outgoing telephone messages to Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators. However, there may be technical issues with sharing data and/or having a single response mechanism for Police and Council. There may therefore be a need to adapt the Access Harrow current systems to do this. Investigating the practicalities of this, as well as how ‘You said, we did’ feedback to wider residents in the local area, will be a key part of Phase 1 Action Plan.
 - 37 As part of the Better Deal for Residents transformation programme, the project includes a commitment to direct automated ‘job complete’ messages to all customers who contact the Council with Public Realm enquiries. The scheme will also look at the development of web-forms which will allow for fully automated notification to and from residents. This will build on the work currently being undertaken with the refuse and recycling services to introduce mobile technology to allow the crews to stay in touch in real time with Access Harrow.

Resources Required to Support Neighbourhood Champions

- 38 Other councils which operate similar schemes have had difficulty in disclosing their detailed operating costs. For the most part, the staff resource allocated to this type of scheme is not separately identified and is spread across a number of functions. Where we did get responses, it is in the range 0.5– 3.0 full time equivalents. Specific budgets are required to fund the joining packs of branded

items for new volunteers. These may include some of the following: branded folders, window stickers and other low cost giveaway items. In addition, other schemes allow for costs of newsletters and other publicity; hire of venues for neighbourhood feedback meetings; training, visits and other support meetings for volunteers. The Corporate Communications team will manage all the publicity and promotional items, as well as supporting materials for the recruitment drive. A campaign plan will be developed and a sub-group will be set up to agree these details.

39 To launch the scheme quickly and positively, a project manager will be appointed with an initial budget to deliver Phase 1 as described above.

40 Part of the work of Phase 1 will be to prepare for the mainstreaming of the management of the scheme going forward into Phase 2, so that there are no recurring management costs.

Neighbourhood Champions – Naming / Branding

41 A survey of names/brands already being used elsewhere was undertaken and discussed before arriving at the choice of Neighbourhood Champions.

42 The Corporate Communications team will develop an identity for the scheme, which fits within the Council's branding.

Equalities Impact Assessment

43 An important test of success will be ensuring that the Neighbourhood Champions are representative of the community of Harrow and a significant opportunity will be a renewed avenue for engaging with difficult to access groups. The impact of the scheme in this respect will feature in the development and ongoing monitoring of the scheme.

Financial Implications

44 The budget identified for the first phase is £71,000 and is part of the additional sums allocated to Environment Services for improvements during this financial year.

45 A proposal for ongoing funding of £100,000 will be incorporated into the Community and Environment budget preparation for 2010-11 at no net cost to the Council by identifying efficiencies.

Environmental Impact

46 The Neighbourhood Champions scheme is a network that will use the efficiencies of available technology to minimise the need for travel for reporting. The Neighbourhood Champions will make a positive contribution to local environmental quality of a neighbourhood and will provide a network for stimulating positive promotion of actions to offset climate change.

Performance Issues

- 47 The Neighbourhood Champions will contribute towards improvement on a number of national indicators that the Council has targeted for improvement including NI 195 and NI 186. The scheme will provide a boost and a platform for further development for volunteering.
- 48 The scheme will be very relevant for many of the Place Shaping Survey questions, particularly those that ask how well the public partners work together to promote a cleaner and greener Harrow and reduce the fear of crime.

Risk Management Implications

- 49 A risk has been raised concerning the security of the participants of the scheme, particularly if they are viewed by other parts of the community as providing feedback on criminal activities.
- 50 There has also been identified from research and knowledge of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme a need to retain control of some individuals to ensure that they understand the limitations of the role afforded to them by the scheme.
- 51 Safeguarding actions such as the need for vetting have been identified.
- 52 The induction and training element of the introduction of the scheme is the principle method for mitigating the above risks.
- 53 There is a risk that the take up for the scheme will overwhelm the capacity of Access Harrow and/or Public Realm to respond. Research for the scheme indicates that this is a low risk and that increased activity should be manageable, but the level of activity will be monitored.

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Will be incorporated into the next review.

Separate risk register in place? No

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Myfanwy Barrett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chief Financial Officer
Date: 3 November 2009		
Name: Matthew Adams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of Monitoring Officer
Date: 2 November 2009		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Tom Whiting



Assistant Chief
Executive

Date: 30 October 2009

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: John Edwards



Divisional Director
(Environmental Services)

Date: 30 October 2009

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: John Edwards, Divisional Director for Environment
Tel: 0208 736 6799

Background Papers: None