

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
AND SCRUTINY SUB-  
COMMITTEES**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	27 July 2010
<b>Subject:</b>	Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director Partnership Development and Performance
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member area:</b>	Councillors Nana Asante and Chris Mote, Scrutiny Lead Members for Safer and Stronger Communities
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Final report of the Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

Attached to this report is the final report of the Neighbourhood Champions challenge panel which took place in February 2010. The report was not agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny committee. This report updates the committee on progress towards completion of the review and seeks the agreement of the committee for the findings of the panel to be presented to Cabinet.

**Recommendations:**

Councillors are asked to:

- I. Consider and comment on the attached report from the Neighbourhood Champions challenge panel
- II. Refer the report to Cabinet for consideration

## Section 2 – Report

In February 2010, the Overview and Scrutiny committee received the final report from the Neighbourhood Champions challenge panel. This panel had been convened:

- *‘To evaluate plans for the introduction of the neighbourhood champions scheme, including:*
  - *how outcomes of the scheme will be reported and monitored,*
  - *resources are available to address the problems reported by champions*
  - *processes for selecting, vetting and training and supporting champions.*
- *To identify best practice from other authorities with a view to making recommendations to strengthen local arrangements, particularly for phase two of the project.*
- *To consider how the outcomes of the scheme could be assessed.’*

At this meeting, the committee was advised that the report did not reflect a consensus of opinion amongst the members of the panel and as such, the committee decided that it could not accept the recommendations and that the panel should reconvene to confirm its findings before the report would again be considered by the committee.

Despite several attempts, it was not possible to reconvene the panel and since this time, the election has resulted in a change of administration and change in the membership of the committee itself.

This has left the report in abeyance and means that the recommendations from the review are not available to the new administration which wishes to continue with the scheme and has expressed a desire to understand the concerns raised in the original report. There are a number of options available to the committee to address the approach from Cabinet:

- As the report has not been agreed by the panel or the previous committee, Cabinet can be advised that the report cannot be provided.
- As the report has not been agreed by the panel or the previous committee, the committee can agree to reconvene the panel to reconsider the issue
- The committee can consider the final draft report and its recommendations and can refer its comments, observations from the Safer and Stronger Communities Lead Members and the final report to Cabinet.

Each of these options is considered further below.

- **The report cannot be provided**

Whilst the previous panel cannot be reconvened in order to reconsider its findings, it should be pointed out that 50% of the panel members had confirmed their agreement with the reports findings and recommendations and that concerns raised were as much to do with tone of the report as with its content. To prevent Cabinet accessing the report does present a missed opportunity for scrutiny to influence the ongoing development of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme
- **Reconvene the panel to reconsider the issue**

This would obviously offer a formal opportunity for the recommendations to be confirmed or otherwise. However, it is difficult to see what additional information would be provided than that which has already been considered and in times of serious resource challenge it would not make best use of scrutiny resources or indeed the time of officers from both within and outside of the council who might be expected to contribute to an additional investigation.

- **Committee to reconsider the final draft report**

This offers a compromise approach. The final review report, which is attached to this report can be reviewed at this evening's meeting and comments from this meeting, together with those from the Lead Members for Safer and Stronger Communities can be referred to Cabinet together with the original draft report. It is recommended that this approach is taken in order to finalise the report.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

### **Performance Issues**

There are no performance issues associated with this report.

### **Environmental Impact**

The Neighbourhood Champions scheme can support the delivery of two of the council's corporate priorities 'Deliver cleaner and safer streets' and 'Building stronger communities' which in turn reflect residents concerns regarding the quality of the environment.

### **Risk Management Implications**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

### **Equalities implications**

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? Yes ( )                      No (  )

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken as the attached report refers to the performance of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme which is not within the purview of the scrutiny function. Should any of the challenge panel's recommendations be taken up and result in a change to the scheme, it will be the responsibility of the service itself to ensure that an Equalities Impact Assessment is carried out.

### **Corporate Priorities**

The Neighbourhood Champions scheme can support the delivery of two of the council's corporate priorities 'Deliver cleaner and safer streets' and 'Building stronger communities'.

## **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Not required for this report.

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

Contact: Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny, 020 420 9387

**Background Papers:** None

February 2010

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Neighbourhood Champions  
Report from the Challenge Panel

**Members of the Standing Review**

**Councillors**

Cllr Mitzi Green (Chairman)

Cllr Brian Gate

Cllr Eileen Kinnear

Cllr Richard Romain

Cllr Yogesh Teli

Ramji Chauhan



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## **CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This is the report from the Neighbourhood Champions challenge panel which took place on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The Overview and Scrutiny committee commissioned the challenge panel to consider the implications of the recently launched Neighbourhood Champions scheme, to investigate the potential risks of the scheme and to make recommendations as to how the scheme might be improved. The panel comprised:

- Cllr Mitzi Green (chairman)
- Cllr Brian Gate
- Cllr Eileen Kinnear
- Cllr Richard Romain
- Cllr Yogesh Teli
- Ramji Chauhan, education co-optee on the Overview and Scrutiny committee

We are extremely grateful for the support we received from colleagues from Brent and Hillingdon and would like to thank Graeme Maughan, StreetCare Service Development Manager, Brent and David Frost, StreetScene Locality Manager, Hillingdon for giving up their time to brief us on the schemes operating in their respective boroughs, the information they provided has given us a helpful framework from which to judge the proposals for Harrow.

We are also grateful to Cllr Susan Hall, Environment and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, John Edwards, Divisional Director, Environmental Services and Chief Inspector Nick Davies for attending the panel and for their contribution to our investigation.

The panel has now had an opportunity to consider the Neighbourhood Champions scheme and recognises its usefulness. We feel that the challenge panel has been able to make a number of helpful observations on the scheme and hope that the portfolio holder and Cabinet are able to accept our recommendations.

On behalf of the challenge panel, I commend this report.

**Cllr Mitzi Green**  
**Chairman Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel**

## **BACKGROUND**

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009 Cabinet agreed a report outlining the introduction of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme. The scheme proposes the development of 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 the Council and the Metropolitan Police Service at a local level.

The scheme, the report suggests, 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. It will:

- Provide a network of volunteer residents as Neighbourhood Champions, and give them a voice in their community;
- Use the Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators network as a base to provide a quick start for Neighbourhood Champions;
- Ensure Public Realm and Community Safety teams work closely with Access Harrow to deliver cleaner and safer streets and develop a synergy with Neighbourhood Champions.
- Develop relationships between the Council and Neighbourhood Champions focused on their experience of frontline services;
- Improve the targeting of information about the Council's services;
- Improve the information flow about enquiries and the Council's response using the technologies now available through Access Harrow;
- Develop closer liaison between the public and the Council workforce.

The scheme as agreed will be rolled out in two phases, each covering specific service areas. Services in the scope of Phase One include:

- 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.

Services in the scope of the Phase Two 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.

Phase One, the design and launch of the scheme and general expansion commenced in November 2009, Phase Two, the extension and development of the scheme to include the more sensitive services will commence from April 2011.

The Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November was concerned that there had been no opportunity for the committee to consider the proposal



prior to it being agreed by Cabinet and, which, it was felt, presented a number of potential risks. As a result, the committee commissioned a challenge panel to further investigate the proposals and to make recommendations to minimise any identified risks. The scope of the investigation is attached as Appendix One and the question plan for the panel is attached as Appendix Two.

It was noted that a number of other boroughs had introduced similar schemes and, in order to support Harrow scrutiny's investigation, information was sought regarding the detail of these schemes. A written response from Brent Council, to questions raised by the panel is attached as Appendix Three, information on the Hillingdon scheme is available from Hillingdon Council's website <http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/streetchampions>. Representatives from both councils attended the panel meeting to provide further information.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

The enthusiasm and commitment of the portfolio holder and her officers was self evident and the panel was made aware of what she saw as the inherent benefits of the proposal and the contribution such a scheme can make to improved engagement with residents. She highlighted the potential of the a successful scheme could make to revitalising a spirit of community within the borough and the contribution it can make to the 'Better Together' component of the 'Better Deal for Residents' transformation programme. Having said this however, the panel would make a number of observations which would enable the better working of the scheme and reduce potential risks.

### **Planning process**

Whilst we recognise and welcome the enthusiasm for and commitment to the scheme, we feel that the planning process has been lacking. Whilst we would not wish to dampen the enthusiasm of those responsible for the scheme by proposing unnecessary adherence to overly bureaucratic process, we would point out that the procedures for the development of policy offer a transparent and accountable process and ensure that all relevant parties are able to contribute. We have noted that the proposal does not appear to have been subject to the normal 'forward planning' process and would suggest this was unhelpful.

It is unfortunate that the scheme was not discussed with the Overview and Scrutiny committee prior to launch. We think that it is fairly clear that such discussions would have added value to the scheme given the very constructive dialogue that took place at the panel. Scrutiny has a key role to play in supporting the development of policy and it is unfortunate that the opportunity for discussion with 'critical friends' was not taken up. We would urge that in future, this key role of scrutiny is not overlooked.

It also appears to us that much of the scheme detail has evolved as it has rolled out, whilst this enables the scheme to develop organically and respond to challenges as they emerge, it might precipitate a degree of uncertainty and leave the council open to accusations of unaccountability as there are no plans against which to measure performance.

It is within the context of the planning process that we also make our observations regarding the financing of the scheme. It is not clear to us whether there is a detailed development plan for the scheme based on estimated numbers to be involved and, as such, it is not clear to us how the budget for the scheme has been devised. We would urge that proper project management and monitoring processes are put in place to safeguard the public funding being allocated to the scheme.

Having said this however, we were pleased to hear the portfolio holder emphasise the need for some of the infrastructure to have been in place prior to pressing ahead to implement the Neighbourhood Champions scheme.

### **Role of ward councillors**

We appreciate that the scheme's main ambition is improved engagement between residents and the council and police and we recognise that this can happen as residents increase their interaction with the council/police by becoming more responsible for their local community. However, we do not think that sufficient attention has been given to the impact that this might have on ward councillors or indeed how ward councillors should/could fit with the scheme. We

would urge that this is addressed – linking ward councillors into the scheme can help to enhance engagement not only with the council as an organisation/service provider but also with the democratic process. Marginalisation of the elected member and separation from their constituents will not be helpful.

We would suggest that a clearly thought out process linking ward councillors to the Neighbourhood Champions would enable the Harrow scheme to make a serious contribution to service improvement and community engagement. Without this connection, the scheme runs the risk of becoming a duplicate/parallel complaints process which is more about PR than improvement. In this context we suggest that a clear mission statement for the scheme could help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various groups engaged in the scheme and we would therefore recommend that such a statement is drafted for approval by Cabinet.

We would also like to suggest to the Overview and Scrutiny committee that consideration is given to the adoption of practice as operated in Brent where the borough's Street Walkers scheme is able to provide evidence to the scrutiny process.

### **Safeguards for champions and for residents**

One of the biggest risks of a scheme such as this is the quality of the volunteers and in particular their integrity. We were very pleased to hear that Neighbourhood Champions are subject to significant vetting. Unlike colleagues from our neighbouring boroughs, Harrow has subjected volunteers to a number of formal and informal police checks, which has seen practical, grass roots intelligence applied to applications. We welcome this and urge the portfolio holder, council officers and the police to continue to ensure that residents are safeguarded from over-zealous or even inappropriate champions.

The signing of contracts clarifying roles and responsibilities is also welcome in this context.

### **Phase Two Extension**

It is within the context of safeguards that the panel offers the following observations on the proposals to extend the scheme beyond the Phase One scope to cover more serious, personal issues such as domestic violence and child abuse. The portfolio holder gave an explanation as to how she expects the roll out from Phase One of the scheme to happen. In the context of the advice from both Brent and Hillingdon, that they **would not** contemplate such an expansion, it was reassuring to hear that the proposals for Harrow do not include an increase in champions' responsibilities which could increase the likelihood of them being involved in investigations of very specific and very sensitive incidents more properly suited to police or social work consideration. Not only would this present a serious risk to the champions but could also have serious implications for residents subject to inappropriate investigations. This has been one of our most significant concerns.

The portfolio holder advised that the key purpose of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme is to create an environment of trust and facilitate communication between residents, the council and police. Phase One of the scheme is designed to develop this in such a way that the champions feel confident that they know what to report and to whom in relation to the 'envirocrime' issues included in the initial scope. She made it quite clear, that the roll out to Phase Two is no different: the champions would not be expected to investigate or identify any of the more serious issues proposed but *would* be in a

position to know what to do with any such reports or concerns that come to their attention. We were pleased to be advised that even at this stage, the training being offered to the champions is explaining the limitations of their responsibilities.

The expansion of Phase 2 as stated in the Cabinet paper was entirely unacceptable to the panel. However, if the council is able to offer reassurances with regard the roll out of the scheme in the way outlined by the portfolio holder (and a full evaluation of Phase One reveals no other shortcomings) then we accept a limited expansion. We would expect as a minimum, that the contract between the champions and the council is *very explicit* in these matters. If these safeguards are not forthcoming then the panel would firmly recommend that there is no extension of the scheme.

### **Diversity and representativeness of scheme**

We do not agree with the assertion in the report to Cabinet in November that, *'An important test of success will be ensuring that the Neighbourhood Champions are representative of the community of Harrow'*. We heard from both Brent and Hillingdon, whose schemes are much more mature than our own, that to *strive* for representation is a more realistic aim than to *insist* on it, and particularly, to measure the scheme's success on this criteria could consign it to failure. As such we would suggest that the wording of the scheme is changed to make diversity a longer-term objective of the scheme, not a measure of its success.

However, we do recognise that it is important to try to ensure that the scheme reflects the demographics of the borough. In this context, the portfolio and officers might like to consider the detail of the Eco Detectives scheme for young people being developed in Enfield and also the Junior Environmental Teams being set up with primary schools in Hillingdon.

### **Feedback scheme**

We were very interested to hear of the proposals to streamline the reporting and response processes and in particular the move to ensure this is undertaken electronically. We consider the feedback process as key to the success of the scheme: if residents do not receive responses to the issues raised – whether resolved to their satisfaction or not – then the credibility of the scheme, and thus its long term success will be jeopardised. The development of a dedicated website to enable the champions to 'help themselves' is welcome. We hope that the system being designed to deliver this is successfully implemented and would welcome further updates on this point.

We were concerned that the Neighbourhood Champions scheme should not result in some residents being 'more equal than others'. We were advised that the scheme does not mean better access to services for some residents than others but contact via the scheme should deliver a prompter response to requests. It is hoped that in future an increased number of requests will be presented via the champions which will reduce contact via individual residents.

We would suggest that a system for flagging reported incidents is introduced, to make it clear which incidents in an area have been reported. In this way, duplicate reporting and the need to respond to issues already reported can be minimised. The panel recommends that champions are issued with postcards/notifications which can be placed in the vicinity of potholes, broken lamp posts, graffiti etc. once they have been reported to the council.

**Training**

We appreciate that training for the volunteers is essential and we also appreciate that an alternative venue to the usual civic centre site as a location for training can be more conducive to a learning experience. However, we would urge the portfolio holder and officers to ensure that expenditure in this area is carefully monitored and offers value for money to council tax payers.

We would also recommend that the training for the scheme is extended to all councillors to ensure that they are conversant with the scheme.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Neighbourhood Champions challenge panel makes the following recommendations:

1. That, in order to safeguard the viability of the scheme, formal plans and monitoring processes are put in place which can be subject to review by the council.
2. That proper financial planning, costings and controls are demonstrated and put in place.
3. That in future, the Overview and Scrutiny committee's responsibilities for policy oversight are recognised and scrutiny councillors are given early opportunity to contribute to policy development.
4. That further thought is given to how the scheme can involve ward councillors and that this is incorporated in a revised mission statement for the scheme.
5. That contracts and codes of conduct incorporate safeguards for volunteers and residents particularly in regard to the roll out of Phase Two.
6. That clarification of the scope of the Phase Two roll out be provided to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny committee. In the absence of such clarification as was provided to the panel by the portfolio holder, the Overview and Scrutiny committee recommends that the roll out is not pursued.
7. That the assertion that the test of success of the scheme will be to ensure that the scheme reflects the community of Harrow is amended to state that it should be a long term objective of the scheme that the scheme reflects the demography of the borough.
8. That training on the scheme is provided for councillors
9. That an update report is prepared for Cabinet which addresses the issues raised by the challenge panel. In particular the report should incorporate:
  - An enhanced mission statement
  - Clarification that the longer term ambition of the scheme is to ensure that it is representative of the diversity of the borough
  - Detailed explanation of the roll out of Phase Two of the scheme as discussed with the panel
10. That consideration is given to the development of a reported incidents flagging process
11. That further updates on the Neighbourhood Champions scheme are provide to the Scrutiny Lead Members for Safer and Stronger Communities

## **CONCLUSION**

We were very pleased to have had the opportunity to meet with the portfolio holder and her team to discuss this exciting scheme. Whilst we were disappointed not to have had an opportunity to comment prior to the scheme going live, we hope that the panel has made helpful recommendations which have enabled the scheme to be improved and we look forward to continuing to discuss the proposal in the future.

**Members of the Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel**

**APPENDIX ONE: NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAMPIONS CHALLENGE**  
**PANEL - DRAFT SCOPE**

1	<b>SUBJECT</b>	Neighbourhood Champions
2	<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
3	<b>REVIEW GROUP</b>	Cllr Nana Asante Cllr Brian Gate Cllr Mitzi Green Cllr Eileen Kinnear Cllr Phil O'Dell (TBC) Cllr Richard Romain Cllr Anthony Seymour Cllr Yogesh Teli Ramji Chauhan
4	<b>AIMS/ OBJECTIVES/ OUTCOMES</b>	<p>To evaluate plans for the introduction of the neighbourhood champions scheme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how outcomes of the scheme will be reported and monitored,</li> <li>• resources are available to address the problems reported by champions</li> <li>• processes for selecting, vetting and training and supporting champions.</li> </ul> <p>To identify best practice from other authorities with a view to making recommendations to strengthen local arrangements, particularly for phase two of the project.</p> <p>To consider how the outcomes of the scheme could be assessed.</p>
5	<b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS OF REVIEW</b>	<p>Panel able to contribute to improvements to the neighbourhood champions scheme.</p> <p>Recommendations from the panel implemented by the service.</p>
6	<b>SCOPE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practice from other authorities in delivering schemes of this type (including whether others have broadened the scope to cover more challenging areas such as safeguarding).</li> <li>• Consideration of risks to the scheme and how these might be mitigated.</li> <li>• To contribute to the development of phase two of the project.</li> </ul>
7	<b>SERVICE PRIORITIES (Corporate/Dept)</b>	Corporate priority – build stronger communities



8	<b>REVIEW SPONSOR</b>	John Edwards, Divisional Director Environment Services
9	<b>ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER</b>	Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny
10	<b>SUPPORT OFFICER</b>	Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer
11	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT</b>	Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer
12	<b>EXTERNAL INPUT</b>	To seek input from boroughs operating similar schemes such as Hillingdon.  To engage with partners contributing to the scheme (police, Neighbourhood Watch).
13	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<u>Pre-panel meeting</u> – Members only (time TBC) To determine main lines of inquiry and questioning based on background briefing pack prepared by the scrutiny officer, to include:  <u>Panel</u> (time TBC) Question and answer session to be attended by representatives of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant portfolio holder</li> <li>• Relevant chief officer</li> <li>• Borough with scheme already in operation (Hillingdon?)</li> <li>• Police (any other partners – LSCB or adults equivalent?)</li> </ul> <u>Post-panel meeting</u> – Members only To determine recommendations and thrust of report
14	<b>EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS</b>	The neighbourhood champions will need to be representative of the local community if the scheme is to strengthen community cohesion.
15	<b>ASSUMPTIONS/ CONSTRAINTS</b>	As the neighbourhood champions project is in its early stages the challenge panel will need to concentrate on the plans in place, learning from best practice and identifying potential risks to the project.

16	<b>SECTION 17 IMPLICATIONS</b>	<p>The reporting of general antisocial behaviour is included within the list of areas upon which the champions can report in phase one. In phase two reporting may be extended to cover the reporting of child or elder abuse, domestic violence and racial harassment/hate crime.</p> <p>The panel will therefore need to have regard to the ability of the scheme to support the prevention of crime and disorder in Harrow.</p>
17	<b>TIMESCALE</b>	To report to O&S on 16 March 2010.
18	<b>RESOURCE COMMITMENTS</b>	No resource commitments in excess of Scrutiny Officer time. Officers from relevant directorates will be required to attend the challenge panel.
19	<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Panel supported by Heather Smith
20	<b>REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<p>Outline of formal reporting process:</p> <p>To Service Director            <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>      Late February 2010</p> <p>To Portfolio Holder            <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>      Late February 2010</p> <p>To CSB                                <input type="checkbox"/>      N/A</p> <p>To Cabinet                         <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>      22 April 2010</p>
21	<b>FOLLOW UP ARRANGEMENTS (proposals)</b>	<p>Specific issues to be identified as part of the monitoring process at P&amp;F chairman's meetings and where necessary forwarded to P&amp;F for further inspection.</p> <p>Updates on the implementation of the recommendations to be considered by the Performance and Finance Sub-Committee on a 6-monthly basis.</p>

Contact: Heather Smith, Scrutiny team, Harrow Council

Background Papers: None

## **APPENDIX TWO: QUESTION PLAN**

### **SCHEME DETAIL**

- What was the genesis of the scheme
- Why wasn't the opportunity to share the scheme with scrutiny taken up?
- How much background research was undertaken to support the scheme?
- A number of the other similar schemes are recruiting much fewer numbers than those proposed in Harrow. Why are we recruiting so many?
- Do you think duplicate reporting is necessarily a bad thing
- What risks have been identified for residents and how are these being mitigated?
- How do ward councillors fit into the scheme
- How will the scheme links to other organisations/functions with similar roles e.g. Crime Stoppers, Safer Neighbourhood Teams and what will the Neighbourhood Champions do differently/add to the existing schemes?
- What is the process for resolving issues raised and how does this fit with the service request process, complaints procedure, councillor calls for action or indeed with scrutiny?
- How will the scheme be branded – how will a champion be identified?

### **CHAMPIONS**

- The cabinet report emphasises the need for diversity and representativeness. As this is a volunteer scheme how will this work and how will the scheme avoid recruiting 'single issue' campaigners who see the scheme as a means of lobbying on their own specific interest?
- What skills/experience/qualifications do you expect a champion to have?
- How are champions being recruited?
- How are champions being trained?
- How are the champions being supported and safeguarded?
- What controls are in place on the role of the champions – what is the scope of their authority?
- Would it be better to operated Neighbourhood Champion groups rather than individuals?
- How will over zealous champions be controlled?

## **RESOURCING THE SCHEME**

- The cabinet papers talk about the cost of the scheme (£100k) being funded through efficiencies, is this figure realistic and can you explain what efficiencies are being found?
- If this is a set amount, how will the expansion of numbers be funded as the scheme goes forward?
- Do you think there are sufficient resources to address issues identified by the Neighbourhood Champions?
- Where a number of calls are being made on a specific budget, how will decisions be made about the priority of these demands? Will the Neighbourhood Champions requests have a priority over requests from other sources?
- What are the implications of resources not being available and how are these being mitigated?
- Will champions receive any remuneration?

## **PHASE TWO**

- How will phase one of the scheme be evaluated and how will this information be used to modify/change proposals for phase two?
- Phase two represents a significant expansion of the role of the champions, how will they be supported to undertake this expanded role?
- What evaluation of the risks and safe operation of any expansion will take place?

Will the recruitment, training and support for the champions be different under phase two?

## **APPENDIX TWO: BRENT COUNCIL RESPONSE**

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAMPIONS SCHEME CHALLENGE PANEL**

**4<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 6.45 – 9.30, COMMITTEE ROOM 5**

#### **QUESTION SUMMARY FOR WITNESSES**

##### **SCHEME DETAIL**

- Background to the scheme

Brent's StreetWatchers scheme was established in 1999 to improve & increase the number of reports on environmental quality problems. The scheme allows us to deal with issues before they become stage 1 complaints, giving active residents a direct line and dedicated response to any issues raised.

- What risks have been identified in their schemes and how have these been overcome?

Health and Safety: a full risk assessment was undertaken for scheme members, which identified a number of potential risks. Our StreetWatchers Guide Booklet explains the H&S requirements. New StreetWatchers are required to complete an application form which requires them to agree to the H&S requirements we establish.

Reputation: over the course of 10 years a few (we count about 3) volunteers have started to assume that they speak for the council and are allowed to tell our waste contractors what to do, or their neighbours how to act. About four years ago we updated our application form and Guide to ensure that volunteers sign up to our rules. These effectively say they are "valued volunteers" but not council employees, that they must not bring the council into disrepute, and anything that might constitute confronting someone must be passed to the council to deal with. StreetWatchers are defined as the "eyes and ears" of the council, and this is confirmed in all the application and guidance literature.

- What do they think is good or bad about their local scheme and what can/should Harrow learn from them?

We keep membership to around 200 StreetWatchers very deliberately, so that they can feel they're getting a more personal service. Out of that number, about 35 form an active core group and are familiar faces at our quarterly meetings, trips and annual conference.

We have a dedicated StreetWatchers coordinator, which is around 0.5FTE at SO2-PO1 level. There is also a small budget available, upto £8k, though it is difficult to predict spend. The budget is used for trips to sites of environmental interest (MRFs, compost plants, paper recycling plants, landfill sites, etc), advertising the scheme, materials and equipment (design and print for guide booklets, hi-vis jackets, phone cards, folders, useful phone number reference

cards), room hire for the annual conference, and refreshments for meetings and conference.

Volunteer drift is an issue. Some sign up very keen and reporting everything they can. However when they realise that there are some issues that take a long time to solve (eg, flytipping on private land where there is no obvious ownership) they become frustrated, can blame the scheme for not delivering what they expected, and drift off. We tackle this through the quarterly meetings where we invite officers from relevant services to talk about how their service works. This is very popular with StreetWatchers, who often have no idea how councils work, or the complexities in tackling issues that are the responsibility of different agencies.

The major concern with the scheme is the diversity of StreetWatchers, which breaks down approximately as:

- 62% male, 38% female
  - 74% white, 18% asian, 8% black - the ethnicity breakdown does not match the borough population profile
  - Most are in the age range 46-65
- What overlap is there with other similar schemes within the area and how is this managed?

There is overlap with Neighbourhood Watch. We use our quarterly StreetWatchers newsletter to pass on relevant information from the NW people. However we have to ensure that the focus stays on envirocrimes.

Brent's Green Zones scheme was dreamed up by a StreetWatcher. We can supply information on this separately. There is information available on the Brent website. The Green Zones Coordinator sits in the same team as the StreetWatchers Coordinator (at one point they were the same person).

## **CHAMPIONS**

- What is the role and scope of responsibility of their champions?

StreetWatchers are asked to be the eyes and ears of the council for envirocrimes. Their Guide booklet identified the issues we are interested in. We simply ask that if they spot these issues while out and about in their own time, that they report them to a dedicated phone line / email address / online form.

Some StreetWatchers undertake specific walkabouts. We will supply a hi-vis jacket for this. The Guide booklet gives all the H&S requirements for walkabouts.

- Are the champions paid?

It's voluntary. No payments. If StreetWatchers are invited in to talk to auditors about how the council works with the community, then we will pay travel expenses.

- How are they recruited?

We advertise in the Brent Magazine (the council's monthly publication that goes to all households), directly at residents meetings, and make a particular point about asking Streetwatchers to spread the word and recruit through their own networks. Our SW Coordinator will also talk at Neighbourhood Watch meetings or similar. We have a website with appropriate information. Additionally, our StreetCare Officers and Neighbourhood Working Coordinators will promote the scheme to active residents.

We also ask our Consultation Team to promote the StreetWatchers scheme on a quid pro quo basis – the team gain a consultation pool that they can access at any point for opinions on council services.

- How are they trained?

An application form and Guide booklet. The form must be signed and returned to the Coordinator. We do not give specific training. Occasionally at the annual conference we will have training sessions that link into the NI195 cleanliness survey to improve reporting.

We will also identify appropriate external training, for example, that offered by Neighbourhood Watch on staying safe when out and about, and promote this to StreetWatchers.

- How are they supported?

Dedicated StreetWatchers Coordinator. Quarterly meetings where they can discuss issues, and learn how the council works. Quarterly newsletter with feedback or relevant news items – this also features articles written by StreetWatchers (and edited by the council to ensure there is nothing contentious).

- What safeguards are in place for champions and residents?

H&S risk assessments. 24 hour Control Room that StreetWatchers can report into if they are undertaking walkabouts. Management support for the SW Coordinator if anything unusual happens (we have had to 'sack' a StreetWatchers for trespass).

- Are there any staffing/recruitment issues that Harrow can/should learn from them?

Brent uses a mixture of direct advertising, staff knowledge and promotion, and deliberately asking StreetWatchers to spread the word. In terms of value for money the indirect methods (officers/SWs) works best. An advert for £900 doesn't gain all that much.

You could also advertise the scheme to serial complainants. This offers a good opportunity to take them out of your complaints system and give them the attention and engagement they obviously crave.

## **RESOURCING THE SCHEME**

- How is the scheme funded?

As above. 0.5 FTe at SO2/PO1 level, plus budget of £8k.

- How is the resolution of issues raised funded?

I presume this is about things like flytips? The vast majority of issues are things covered by our core services. Some things we have to refer to other agencies.

- Are there any funding issues that Harrow can/should learn from them?

Spend will be up and down. Some years you get enough feedback to understand that you need a consultation exercise, which could cost >£8k. Other years you may be struggling to spend £1.5k of the £8k budget.

## **SCHEME MODIFICATION**

- Has their scheme been modified since the original?

Yes. We introduced a conference, newsletter and quarterly meetings about 4 years ago, and embarked on a recruitment drive. This saw the scheme grow from 30 members to 200, where we are keeping it.

We know from feedback that StreetWatchers are members of residents associations and will pass on their positive experience of the council, and the information they receive, through their networks. The commercial world will often tell you that each customer can influence another 10-20 customers. I would estimate this as being true for StreetWatchers, too.

- How and why has the scheme modified?

Modifications were inspired by three things:

1. the Chartermark standard, which prompted us to ask questions about how we could closer with the community
2. a feeling that StreetWatchers were an under used resource
3. a long term view that SWs could come up with environmental projects for the council to develop, and could act as environmental champions with the right information and encouragement

- Implications of modification of scheme on the recruitment/responsibilities of champions

Their responsibilities were not changed. We only ever ask of them to report issues they spot, within the time and energy they have available. Anything else we gladly accept. Active StreetWatchers are promoted in the newsletter.

- How was any expanded scheme risk assessed?

As mentioned above, the changes made 4 years ago included H&S risk assessment, and reputation assessments.