

REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 28 October 2010

Subject: Neighbourhood Champions -
Response to Scrutiny Challenge Panel
Report

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Brendon Hills, Corporate Director
Community and Environment

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Phillip O'Dell, Portfolio
Holder for Environment and
Community Safety

Exempt: No

**Decision subject to
Call-in:** Yes

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the response to the Neighbourhood Champions scrutiny challenge panel reported to Cabinet on 14 September 2010.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Endorse the response to the challenge panel recommendations for the Neighbourhood Champions scheme

Reason:

In order that the issues identified by the scrutiny challenge panel can contribute to the future successful development of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

In February 2010 the Overview and Scrutiny committee commissioned a challenge panel to examine the Neighbourhood Champions scheme. The challenge panel produced a report of its findings which was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny committee later in the same month. At this meeting, the committee was advised that the panel's 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 could again be considered by the committee.

To address this, the original report was again considered by the Overview and Scrutiny committee on 27th July 2010 and was agreed and referred to Cabinet for consideration along with comments from the Safer and Stronger Communities scrutiny lead councillors.

Cabinet received the Neighbourhood Champions Scrutiny Challenge Panel Report at the meeting on 14th September 2010, and resolved that:

- (1) the recommendations of the Neighbourhood Champions Scrutiny Challenge Panel be noted;
- (2) a report in response to the recommendations be submitted to Cabinet by the Corporate Director of Community and Environment.

Response from the Corporate Director of Community and Environment

The Corporate Director for Community and Environment thanks the Challenge Panel for the time and contribution that they have made that has assisted in making the Neighbourhood Champions a successful scheme. The assistance provided to the Challenge Panel by officers from other local authorities is recognised also.

The Neighbourhood Champions challenge panel made 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.*

The Neighbourhood Champions was implemented through the work of a project team comprised of officers from a number of sections of the Council (including Community and Environment and Access Harrow), the Metropolitan Police Service, and external consultants. The scheme was launched successfully and now has 600 trained Neighbourhood Champions with a further 400 expressing an interest in being trained. Most of the training sessions have taken place as planned.

The progress of the scheme has monitored through monthly reports to the portfolio holder and Community and Environment Senior Management Team and quarterly reports to the Improvement Board.

- 2. That proper financial planning, costings and controls are demonstrated and put in place.*

These arrangements are in place and monitored.

- 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.*

Agreed, potential future projects are discussed with Overview and Scrutiny officers and members.

- 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.*

Agreed. In addition ward members are invited to become Neighbourhood Champions or to attend the training sessions.

- 5. That contracts and codes of conduct incorporate safeguards for volunteers and residents particularly in regard to the roll out of Phase Two.*

A code of conduct was always a key feature of the scheme, and has been in place from the start. The Phase 2 envisioned in the original Cabinet report

was described as dependant on the experience to be obtained from the practical roll out, and would be subject to further Cabinet approval if likely to proceed. It is not anticipated that the Phase 2 described will take place.

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.*

Please see the response above.

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.*

This recommendation was made on the basis that similar schemes in other authorities had experienced great difficulty in encouraging volunteers from a cross section of the public. The recommendation suggests a less onerous target than the original ambition of the scheme. In the event, the work in implementing the Harrow Neighbourhood Champions scheme has to date produced a volunteer group reflecting the community.

8. *That training on the scheme is provided for councillors*

Agreed. About one third of Councillors have attended the training sessions for Neighbourhood Champions.

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*

Please see the response above. Significant changes to the Neighbourhood Champions scheme will be reported to Cabinet for decision. The assistance of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be sought in the development of a revised mission statement.

10. *That consideration is given to the development of a reported incidents flagging process.*

This recommendation referred to the placing of notices for example in the vicinity of a fly tip, broken street light etc to indicate that the Council was aware of the problem and would be dealing with it. This suggestion has been considered, but as a general principle it has not been adopted. Instead the development of the reporting and feed back facilities for Neighbourhood Champions through the web site arrangement will be developed to ensure that there is wider knowledge of issues and their solutions.

11. That further updates on the Neighbourhood Champions scheme are provide to the Scrutiny Lead Members for Safer and Stronger Communities.

Agreed

Options considered

None

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report as it offers comments on an existing scheme.

Performance Issues

The performance issues to be impacted by the Neighbourhood Champions scheme were considered during its original development and agreed by Cabinet. The purpose of this report is to support Cabinet in the further development of the scheme assisted by the findings of the scrutiny challenge panel

Environmental Impact

There are no environmental issues associated specifically with this report

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications associated specifically with this report.

Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

If yes, summarise findings, any adverse impact and proposed actions to mitigate / remove these below:

If no, state why an EqIA was not carried out below:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken as the report refers to the existing Neighbourhood Champions scheme Any significant change to the scheme in the future will necessitate that an Equalities Impact Assessment is carried out.

Corporate Priorities

Please identify which corporate priority the report incorporates and how:

- Deliver cleaner and safer streets ✓
- Improve support for vulnerable people ✓
- Build stronger communities ✓

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name Kanta Hirani	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 5/10/2010		
Name: Matthew Adams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 6/10/2010		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 11/10/2010		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date: 5/10/2010		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: John Edwards Divisional Director Environmental Services,
Tel: 020 8736 7699

Background Papers:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Neighbourhood Champions Report from the Challenge Panel – February 2010

Cabinet 14th September 2010: Neighbourhood Champions Scrutiny Challenge Panel Report

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE