REVITALISING NEIGHBOURHOODS   **Appendix 1**

PROJECT BRIEF

1.   **Background to the project**

The Community Plan for Leicester sets out a vision for Leicester as "a premier city in Europe with a thriving and diverse society in which everyone is involved and in which everyone can have a decent, happy and fulfilling life - a city with a strong economy, a healthy, caring and educated society, a safe and attractive environment and an improving quality of life - a sustainable city".

In his annual report the Chief Executive set out the progress made by the Council towards implementing this vision and set out areas where further change and development were required. The report concluded that what was required was a major shift towards:-

i)   Greater community empowerment, identity and democracy and
ii)   More responsive Council Services chosen by local wishes and needs.

Such a shift was seen as developing a greater emphasis on:-

- devolving rights and responsibility to meet local aspirations;
- determining locally certain services;
- enhancing local debate and ownership of neighbourhood developments;
- exploiting new concepts of governance and community engagement;
- harnessing the power of new technologies;
- improving service quality and value; and
- rationalising boundary confusions and partnership arrangements.

This is another major step forward in the process of Modernising Leicester City Council - a programme that has already seen developments and improvements in:-

the Community Plan and partnership arrangements
public consultation and engagement
Best Value and performance management
new Cabinet and Scrutiny committees
a three year budget strategy
ethical standards.

A great deal of progress has been made already to modernise the Council and how it functions.   For example, developments to modernise the partnership between Social Services and Health, major changes in Education, including the new partnership arrangements, and Schools Standards Agency and the area-based initiatives for regeneration and renewal. However, it is

recognised that further major change is required to build on these successes and this exciting initiative to "Revitalise Neighbourhoods" will require a major culture change throughout the organisation and will ultimately lead to changes in roles, responsibilities, behaviour, processes and structures. It will equally lead to fundamental change in how the organisation relates to its partners and to the Citizens of Leicester.

2. The policy context for the project

It is important that the scope of the project is clearly defined at the outset and developed from the existing policy structures and processes. Appendix 2.1 provides a political context for the project in the form of a paper prepared by Councillor Willmott Leader of the City Council. The paper develops a model of a sustainable city in which issues concerning democracy and citizens participation are located alongside sustainability and make explicit the role of government within it. Within Leicester recent policy development has been within the context of this wider framework. Appendix 2.2 shows how some of the key building blocks required to revitalise neighbourhoods have already been put into place since the Council became a Unitary Authority in 1997. For example :-

The Community Plan - setting out our goals within 6 main priorities for the city
19 Key service strategies - to achieve the goals
Key Resource strategies - to ensure our resources are targeted to achieve the goals
Business Planning - to ensure service delivery is effective and efficient
Best Value reviews - to ensure our services achieve the goals cost effectively
Best Value Performance Plan - to report on our progress
Customer Care programmes - to improve service user satisfaction levels.

Within this context there has been a specific policy focus on regeneration and neighbourhood renewal at both the strategic and local level with various initiatives being used as accelerators to improvement and change. For example:-

Single Regeneration programmes within six areas of the city
New Deal in Braunstone
Objective 2 funding
Sure Start programmes in three communities
Action Zones for Education, Health and Sport
Service integration programmes with other agencies, such as the Police and Health Authority
Resources for communities projects in New Parks and Eyres Monsell.

At this strategic level four further key building blocks are about to be completed over coming months involving:-

The new **Local Strategic Partnership**, involving major public sector agencies, the business sector, the voluntary sector and community representation.
The **Neighbourhood Renewal Fund** which will allocate a further £19m of regeneration funding.
Local Public Service agreements which will link further resources to improvements in performance.
URGENCO a partnership company to oversee the physical regeneration of major sites in the city.

By its very nature some of this policy development has been somewhat "top down". However, there are strong indications that many of the area-based initiatives are already developing new ways of working with local communities involving them in local decision-making and there are signs of improved cross-service working between Council departments and between the Council and other agencies on the ground. Despite this, both the Council and other organisations are regularly accused of being out of touch with local people and not working together to tackle local problems. What is felt to be missing to effectively revitalise neighbourhoods across the city is a " bottom up" approach which is geared to developing a local neighbourhood focus, giving local people a real stake and voice in the future of their community and facilitating local joined up service delivery throughout the city. The Revitalising Neighbourhoods project is therefore about putting into place these "bottom up" elements within the context of what has been developed already.

3. Project Aims, Goals and Objectives

Throughout the early discussions to shape the project, it is clear that there are many different views within the Council about the expected outcomes from the project and how the Council itself will need to change. Once we move outside the Council there will be many more views within partner organisations and the community itself about the impact and outcomes from such a project. If the project is to be successful, it is important that we seek to define the aims and objectives of the project at the outset in consultation with members and officers, the key agencies, such as the Health Authority and the Police, the voluntary sector and the community itself in its many forms.

3.1 The Aim of the Project

The overall aim of the project is to contribute to the integrity and sustainability of Leicester and to achieve the goals set out in the Community Plan by revitalising neighbourhoods.

3.1.1 Anticipated Impact

The future of the city as set out in the Community Plan depends not only on organisations working together in an integrated way across the city

to achieve the agreed goals and objectives, but also on people engaging with each other within local communities, to identify and tackle local problems and on the many organisations and agencies working together at this local level to support and facilitate their efforts. If successful, the project will result in the city being a better place to live.

3.2   The Goals of the project

To increase the level of involvement by local people in their communities and in the decisions made about their communities;

And

To improve the delivery of services to local communities.

3.2.1 Anticipated Outcomes

If the project achieves these goals we can expect to see a number of changes in how the Council works and how it relates to local communities, but what will actually change as a result of the project out there in the community? Set out below are some possible outcomes defined by members and senior officers that have helped shape the projects objectives. Others will be added by our partners and the community itself as the project is shared with them.

More people and a greater diversity of people are involved in their local communities.
More people having a real opportunity to influence decision-making.
More people wanting to be councillors or otherwise represent their community.
More people voting at local elections.
Better two-way communication between the Council and the public.
Better understanding about why difficult decisions have been made.
Local people being given credit for improving their local area.

People getting their problems solved or solved more quickly.
Better accessibility and responsiveness from service providers locally.
More flexibility in how services are delivered locally.
Council departments working together better at the local level.
The Council and other agencies working together better at the local level.

Defined neighbourhoods becoming more popular to live in.
More people wanting to send their children to city schools.
The Council is more popular and people are more satisfied with its performance.
More equality in terms of quality of life across all neighbourhoods

3.3   The Objectives of the project are therefore:-

To create local opportunities for communities to engage with the council.

To enable front line members to offer community leadership locally.

To enable people to be more involved in appraising local needs and making local decisions that affect their communities.

To enable the allocation of some resources to be made at a local level.

To facilitate the production of local service plans for defined communities.

To co-ordinate better the delivery of services by the Council and other agencies at a local level.

To optimise the use of publicly owned property within local communities.

To optimise the opportunities for utilising new technology to improve service delivery.

To optimise the use of the financial resources and to maintain effective financial management within any new management arrangements.

To optimise the ability to put resources into front line service delivery through rationalising client, contractor and consultant management arrangements.

To develop an organisational structure and culture to sustain the other changes emanating from the project.

3.3.1 Anticipated Outputs

The outputs are the specific initiatives that will be put into place to achieve the objectives. Although it will be for the project itself to develop the outputs over coming months it is clear that a number of key outputs can be anticipated.

The creation of local forums based around defined communities within the city

Constitutional arrangements that enable these forums to be the means by which local communities can be consulted and engaged in decision-making that affect them

Some element of devolved budget decision-making within these forums

More local delegation of central decision-making

Local service strategies that identify and respond to local priorities

A form of local service management that co-ordinates service delivery between Council departments and other agencies

Improved and more flexible service packaging

Joint use of Council and other agencies buildings to create single points of access to services

Use of new technology to improve customer care

A revised organisational structure at senior management and local levels

More locally recruited staff

3.4   Performance indicators

Performance indicators will be developed to measure the success of the project based on the objectives. These may include for example:-

      Overall satisfaction levels with the Council
      Satisfaction levels with specific services
      Local service performance indicators.

4.   Project Management arrangements

The management arrangements for the project are as set out in Appendix 2.5 The project has been structured under five main sub–projects:-

A.   **Community Engagement.**
B.   **Local service management and delivery**.
C.   **Resource Issues.**
D.   **Client / Contractor Issues.**
E.   **Organisational development issues**

The project timetable is as set out in Appendix 2.3. Each sub-project team will now develop their own project plan to help deliver the overall project brief and the project will be managed through normal project management arrangements. Departments will be invited to be represented as required on the project teams. It is proposed that SRG acts as the project team for all resource issues.

4.1   Consultation

Consultation on the proposed brief will take place with partner organisations through the developing Local Strategic Partnership and representation should be incorporated in the project teams as required. It is important that the community itself is involved in developing the options and ideas. Following the community conference on 30 March 2001 a method of maintaining an ongoing relationship with community-based organisations will be identified that recognises the complexity of consulting effectively with them. Such consultation may lead to advancing work in certain neighbourhoods (eg deprived areas with existing active networks and capacity) before being extended in a structural approach across the city. It will also be important to ensure there are effective consultation arrangements with staff and trade

unions. The model of engaging trade unions directly in Best Value has been very successful and it is proposed that they be invited to join the project teams. Methods will also be found for consulting with front line staff both within the City Council and other agencies.

4.2   Communication

The nature of the project and the scale of possible change involved, both within the organisation and external to it, means that the project will itself need a major communications strategy which will ensure that members, staff, partners and the public are kept informed and are able to comment on and shape its development as appropriate. This strategy will involve the use of Face and briefing processes inside the Council. Link and the use of city wide media organisations across the city, including specific arrangements for targeting hard to reach groups, will also be employed. A communications strategy will be developed early in the project.

4.3   Links with Best Value

Perhaps the most difficult relationship to get clear is the link to Best Value. Directors have already decided to suspend the Regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal and Strategy on Policy reviews and incorporate them into the Revitalising Neighbourhood project. It is feasible to declare the project as a Best Value review. This would ensure the process is rigorous and the outcomes in the form of an improvement plan are subject to effective monitoring and inspection. Even if not formally declared a Best Value review, it clearly makes sense to apply the principles of Best Value to the project ie Challenge, Consult, Compare and Compete. It will be particularly important that the project develops a very Citizen and Service user focus and does not become overly constrained by existing organisational practice and structures. It will also be important to establish performance indicators that will enable us to measure if our agreed objectives have been achieved i.e. are levels of service satisfaction improving and do people feel more engaged with local decision-making? The public opinion survey to be carried out in the autumn can be used to provide some benchmark data.

The remaining reviews have reached scoping stage and it was agreed to review their continuation in the light of this brief. At this stage, given the agreed scopes, I can see no justification for deferring them. However, the improvement proposals will need to be aligned with the outcomes of the revitalising neighbourhoods project, particularly where changes to organisational structures are involved. There may also be an opportunity to develop an area-based approach to Best Value reviews as part of the project, building on from the pilot in Crown Hills. This could be done using Best Value principles and take place in one of the two areas already covered by the Resources for Communities Project, e.g. New Parks or Eyres Monsell or within one of the existing New Deal or SRB areas. This may also be an approach to the development of local service plans.

4.4 Resourcing the project

There are two dimensions to resourcing the project, resourcing the project team to develop the project, and resourcing the outputs recommended by them. Initially, the project team will have to be funded within existing resources, and two policy officer secondments are currently being appointed for a period of twelve months funded in this way, supported by the two posts currently involved in the "Resources for Communities" project. In addition, a bid has been made to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to assist with the project (Appendix 2.4).

There will also be a major issue about building community capacity in those areas where structures do not exist at present. Resourcing this up front out of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund or other initiatives should be considered as a major priority.

The resource implications of implementing the project will be developed alongside the options and ideas and be brought together for consideration as part of the 2002/2003 budget strategy. The underlying assumption, however, is that the outputs should be broadly self-financing and, if possible, help contribute to the Council's overall budget strategy.

Martyn Allison

Assistant Chief Executive

March 2001