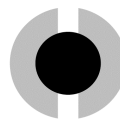


# **Leicester City Council - Revitalising Neighbourhoods project**

**Report**

**November/December 2001**



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Management*

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## **Introduction and methodology**

The Office for Public Management (OPM) was commissioned by Leicester City Council (LCC) to conduct consultancy work around the Council's "Revitalising Neighbourhoods" project.

### **The Revitalising Neighbourhoods project**

The project aims to achieve the following broad objectives:

- to increase the level of involvement by local people in the communities and in the decisions made about their communities
- to improve the delivery of services to local communities
- to make the council/council services:
  - more integrated
  - more strategic
  - more involved locally
  - more performance oriented

The proposals are being developed under five themes:

- neighbourhood co-ordination and service improvement
- local forums and local decision making
- client/contractor/consultant issues
- senior management/organisational structure reforms
- resource issues

A summary of the current proposals under these five themes is included in the Appendices.

The project to develop and implement the proposals is divided into five phases. Phase One, already completed, consisted of scoping the issues and drafting proposals. Phase Two consists of consultation on the proposals. Subsequent phases will focus on detailed planning and implementation of the proposals.

### **OPM involvement**

OPM was asked to "add value" to the consultation at Phase Two, and specifically to carry out discrete tasks to:

- build a picture of the consultation to date

- act as a critical friend, looking at robustness, usage of methodologies and inclusivity of approach, and to offer observations on the proposals and the project, drawn from OPM's own experience
- conduct independent analysis of the generic Phase Two consultation which is being undertaken by the project team
- add an in-depth qualitative perspective to the Phase Two consultation through targeting specific audiences; specifically, focusing on the aspects of cultural change which may be necessary to ensure the success of the proposals, and what barriers and constraints there are likely to be
- undertake desk research to benchmark the experience of other local authorities that have introduced decentralisation and/or devolution strategies; looking, in particular, at changes they have made to senior management levels to support such structures

During initial project meetings with LCC we discussed priorities for the consultancy with various internal audiences, including the R/N project team, the Directors' Board and the Leader of the Council. From these meetings we framed a detailed methodology and work programme for the consultancy, as follows:

**OPM's work programme**

<b>Work element</b>	<b>Approach</b>
<b>Desk research</b>	
Benchmarking	Background work/literature review and interviews with 3-4 contacts from 4 authorities chosen in conjunction with LCC
<b>Consultation</b>	
Staff	2 departmental slice groups (drawn from front-line staff and middle management from across all directorates)
Senior management	Around 10 individual interviews with directors and assistant directors nominated by LCC
Elected members	Around 10 individual interviews with elected members nominated by party leaders (proportionate to party representation in council)
Local partners	Facilitated working session/individual interviews with four partners nominated by LCC
Education	Telephone interviews with sample of headteachers and governors
Trade unions	Facilitated group meeting with key contacts*
<b>Synthesis</b>	
Analysis of written submissions collected by LCC	Staff written consultation, voluntary/community sector written consultation, partner/other stakeholder consultation, written submissions from trades unions
“Critical friend” role, reporting and presentation	

The framework for all consultation exercises was a written/verbal presentation of the proposals, exploration of positive and negative points and suggestions for ways forward under each theme. General questions on cultural/behavioural barriers to change and how these might be tackled were also incorporated. More details on the consultation are included in the Appendices.

**Note to the reader**

As with any project of this type, constraints imposed by time, availability of resources and personnel, and the wealth of detail generated by consultation around the proposals have limited the amount of work we were able to complete. In particular, the analysis of data collected by LCC and benchmarking with other authorities have had to be restricted in scope. Some data collation was conducted by LCC and incorporated

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\* Reference to trade unions' responses at the meeting with OPM is made in the next section of the report, "Comments on the development of the proposals"

into OPM's analysis. Where this is the case, it is marked as such in the Appendices.

Some data was also submitted to OPM close to the finalisation of this report. As such, the Summary and Recommendations section of this report should be read in close conjunction with the detail of consultation in the Appendices.

In addition, it should be noted that the samples of people we interviewed/consulted in workshops were chosen purposively in order to get as much detailed information and comment on the proposals as possible.

Lastly, but importantly, we would like to stress that we have tried as far as possible to portray accurately what people told us, and have not attempted to qualify the strength of feeling or context surrounding any views expressed. In any consultation of this type people are likely to focus on the uncertainty and anxiety around a change process. In discussing how the proposals for change could be improved, it is likely that people will highlight the negative in the proposals and the ways of working within the council at present. In addition, people may have discussed their views based on misconceptions of the way that the council works, or the detail of the proposals. However, in that misconceptions may reflect perceptions of reality, we have included them as given to us.

The reader should bear these notes of caution in mind.

### **Acknowledgement**

We would like to thank the individuals and groups of people who helped us carry out this consultation in the limited timeframe, in particular the R/N Project Team and those within and outside LCC who found time to speak to us at very short notice.

## Comments on the development of the proposals

From our consultation activity with audiences internal to LCC, our review of activity to date and analysis of written feedback, OPM has the following observations on the development of, and consultation around, the proposals to date.

### Consultation or involvement?

We found a widely held view that key stakeholder groups have not been involved in the development of the proposals from the very start. Trades unions and front line staff were particularly concerned about this. Consultation to date has been described as “narrow” and “partial”.

We recognise that, during Phase One, LCC did consult on the broad principles behind focusing service and decision-making activity towards neighbourhoods, in order to develop the Phase Two proposals. However, there is a widespread feeling that this activity was not sufficiently broad-based. As a result, there is some discomfort that the detailed proposals may be based on principles that have not been accepted or signed up to

As such, some key stakeholders (in particular staff and unions) wish to hold further discussions about some of the principles underlying the proposals before talking about options for change in more detail.

### Inclusivity and ownership

Leading on from this, there is also concern that detailed work around the development of proposals up to this stage has not involved residents and service users, outside some established groups such as community groups and residents associations. One person commented in discussion with OPM that “people and services have not been the starting point”.

Other comments about the “top down” as opposed to “bottom up” development of the proposals expressed concerns that proposals developed so far will focus on the *perceived*, not *actual*, needs of citizens and consumers. OPM shares the view that service (non-) users need to be closely involved in subsequent stages of the project, to enable potential beneficiaries of changes to be involved in shaping the changes and proposals and, ultimately, owning them.

This point is particularly important in respect to groups such as black and minority ethnic residents, young people, older people and others where special needs from public services may be important in shaping provision.

It is also important in thinking about other stakeholder groups such as elected members, schools (headteachers, other key teachers and governors), trade unions and other staff groups, existing service managers in LCC community offices (mainstream or pilot sites), existing service user groups, and so on.

Some people have expressed a wish to shape and debate alternative options for change from which choices can be made (some have been suggested by, for example, the teachers' unions).

Our benchmarking evidence points to the need to involve as many people as possible in developing proposals, showing commitment from the authority and ensuring networks are built up that can be used in the roll-out of proposals. In particular, elected members will have to be clear about the objectives and priorities of their involvement in the proposals.

## **Consistency of communication**

We would also like to comment on the consistency of the communication process about changes. Communication on them generally needs to be more comprehensive. Information about the proposals, the underlying rationale, how stakeholders have been involved in shaping them and the process planned for future work has been provided to some people. However, this information needs to be provided in a clearer way to all stakeholder groups, including those who have been involved in the consultation to date, but also more widely to staff and residents across the city.

In addition, we highlight the fact that consistent messages are not necessarily the result of consistent approaches to communication. Different audiences will find different formats accessible. Many types and grades of staff, and other stakeholders, commented on the detailed nature of the proposals and the "jargon" and complex language used. Some also commented on the messages they drew from what the documentation did *not* say – for example, fears about privatisation of services and significant redundancies.



Where proposals were set out in detail, many people and groups responded with "don't know" or "no view". This may have been because the proposals were not seen as contentious, or because people could not see how they would work in practice. However, it may also have been because they did not understand the proposal being made.

This finding is likely to be reinforced when the proposals are taken out to wider consultation. OPM advises that written materials are backed up with verbal briefings of the main issues to reinforce the messages; perhaps additional tools, such as lists of "frequently asked questions", could also be developed. Other ways in which the consultation could become "live" to staff and other stakeholder audiences include developing scenarios showing how the proposals would work in practice, or developing a number of options around the proposals and asking people to comment on these.

## **Consistency of consultation processes**

In the internal consultation, formats used for consultation differed across departments, although a template for responses was provided. Of particular concern is the level of variation between numbers of returns and staff consulted in each department. We have little comprehensive information on response rates in departments, methods used to cascade information and consultation through departments, and so on.

Just as we cannot analyse all the figures, we cannot give the reasons for non-response to staff consultation. It may be that people did not feel the proposals affected them, or that they did not feel strongly. Alternatively, it may be that they were not aware of the consultation (a significant minority of staff have said this), or that they did not find the approach accessible. Others were told by managers that the proposals were not up for consultation – that they were effectively a "fait accompli".

We recommend that the responses received from departments be analysed in more detail in order to devise broadly consistent yet departmentally appropriate approaches to staff consultation and involvement in the future.

## **Timescale**

*"We feel steamrollered"*

*"The consultation process is flawed"*

Perhaps the issue behind many, if not all, of the concerns raised above is the timescale for the project, and particularly for the consultation process. Many people felt that there had not been sufficient time to consider the proposals, the options for change and the implications of the changes. As mentioned earlier, some wanted to develop alternatives to the options presented to them (indeed, some groups did just that).

**Trade union** representatives expressed particularly strong concerns about the consultation. Although OPM attended a meeting of trade union representatives, they did not feel able to talk to us given the short time they had had to consult with their constituencies and consider their response. They wished OPM to convey that the consultation was flawed in this respect. Written responses were subsequently received from trades unions as detailed in the Appendices.

Among many other concerns about the consultation, details of which can be found in the unions' written response, they also wished to state that consultation with specific groups of staff within the authority, such as the Black Workers' Group, the Disabled Employees' Group, the Corporate Race Equality Group and the Best Value Lead Officers, had not been undertaken.

## Summary and recommendations

### Views on proposed changes

A clear message from the consultation was that the **objectives of the proposals are seen as sound**, and are endorsed by consultees. Many people recognise from their own work and experience, and the broad thrust of the local government modernising agenda, that the justification for services and decision-making being closer to communities is clear.

Within this, as mentioned in the previous section, it should be noted that some stakeholder groups, particularly staff unions, expressed concern that they were not involved in shaping the objectives and goals of the proposals; so even if *sound*, the objectives are not felt to be *owned*.

However, LCC's own **rationale for change both organisationally and politically is less apparent**. People are not clear about the motivation behind the changes. In particular, there is confusion over the following points:

- Where is this coming from in the organisation?
- What needs to change and why?
- What are the expected outcomes – how will we know this has been achieved?
- What will the changes look and feel like?
- What are we not being told? (for example – will job cuts, privatisation of services result)

Although uncertainty is to be expected in any significant change process of this kind, unclear answers to these questions is leading to unease about the speed and direction of change. Our benchmarking research has highlighted the need for clarity over these issues. A strong commitment to area devolution has been backed up in a number of cases by a specific policy vision (tackling poverty, increasing dialogue with residents, community cohesion and so on).

**Lack of clarity about links** between the sets of proposals is adding to this uncertainty. The link between senior management reform and refocusing of activity at a neighbourhood level is an important issue here: what happens “in the middle” of the organisation? In addition, the links between the revitalising neighbourhoods proposals and existing review

processes such as Best Value, the local strategic partnership (LSP), community planning, service specific reviews and processes and so on are unclear to stakeholders.

The need to centre on **cultural, not only structural, change** is perhaps the main focus of the consultation findings. To make the proposals work, people felt this needed to be a major strand of activity in the future:

*“We are so far removed from where we need to be – it’s scary”*

Particular aspects of the "Leicester way" were seen as needing to be addressed, including:

- departmentalism
- a blame culture within the authority
- low levels of trust, particularly between officers and politicians
- unusually high fear of change through the organisation; "can't do" culture
- external/initiative focus, to the detriment of successful internal working
- a "them and us" culture: excessive bureaucracy and lack of access to senior management hampering effective vertical working in departments; front-line staff not being valued

These issues were thought to be likely to take some time to address, and to be key to the success of the proposals. Where might structural changes help in this? Where would they not be so helpful or relevant?

Leading on from this was a question about the **speed and staging of change** – should change happen all at once (a "big bang" approach) or should it be evolutionary? The importance of piloting and learning from trial processes was stressed. However, others felt that at least isolated radical change was needed to "kick start" the process, particularly in the way departments and management are structured.

Finally, as mentioned above, there is much debate about the way that the proposals have been developed to date; in a "**top down**" rather than "**bottom up**" style. Many feel that the proposals have been imposed on communities and staff "on the ground", rather than shaped together with them. People believe that the best chance for the proposals to succeed is for those involved in delivery to feel they have been consulted and engaged in the process throughout. Again, the benchmarked authorities

stress that structures and processes need to have the backing of local people, based on an inclusive and consultative approach. Staff ownership of, and commitment to, the proposals is also important in these authorities.

It is clear that many of the issues raised above have yet to be solved; people have tended to bring up problems and paradoxes around the proposals as much as solutions and ways forward.

## **What is needed for change?**

Looking at all these issues, it is worth assessing whether the council is prepared for change in its ways of working: are the conditions for change in place across the organisation? OPM summarises the key conditions for change as follows:

- **Pressure for change in the organisation**
- **A clear shared vision**
- **The capacity for change**
- **The presence of first steps that lead to action**

The "weight" of these conditions together should amount to more than the costs or effort of change in the organisation.

Following our assessment of the key themes emerging from the consultation, it is our view that there is some work to do on each of these conditions to make the organisation ready for change:

- **Pressure for change** – where is this coming from? Is it from the top of the organisation or from the grass-roots/across the organisation/within the city? Where is the critical mass for change?
- **A clear shared vision** – where is the vision for change? Has it been communicated and shared/owned among staff and the wider community of Leicester? Who has been involved in developing it?
- **The capacity for change** – will this be influenced by structures, culture or both? Are people able to buy into, and follow, a clear, sustained change process? What skill and capacity building work needs to happen?
- **The presence of first steps that lead to action** – will changes be "big bangs" or more evolutionary? Will change be staged and early steps learned from?

## **How might these issues be addressed?**

We recommend that LCC considers the following actions in the next stages of proposal development, to enable change within the organisation and city to occur:

### **1. Send out strong signals about the rationale for change**

The vision for change may exist within LCC, but it needs to be clear to all those with a stake in the changes – staff, partners, communities and residents of the city. The messages need a strategic focus and to be communicated well. They need to be strong and appropriate to each audience (e.g. there will be splits between staff and communities where stakes in the proposals and current involvement levels are different), although core communication should be consistent. There needs to be a clear, shared commitment from the authority's management and political leadership.

Communication should also make clear that the proposals developed to date have been subject to critical analysis and reflection in order to improve them, and take forward workable and practical solutions; and that this consultation process will be continued.

These messages about the rationale for change should be complemented with clear communication processes around the proposals themselves, as at the moment misinformation and lack of clarity is leading to uncertainty; as one consultee noted, *"the little that staff do know frightens them"*.

### **2. Establish the links between the proposals in the "middle ground" – between top management and local level changes**

It is not clear that the proposed senior management reforms will affect change in LCC. Consultation feedback was mixed on this point; some felt that change in structure was a distraction from the main purpose of the proposals, or at worst a barrier to progress; others that it was one of the key "first steps that lead to action". (The weight of internal consultation feedback is behind the former position; fewer people raised the latter view but perhaps did so more vehemently. In the benchmarking authorities, a variety of approaches have been adopted).

However, it is clear to us that structure change (alone) will not create the desired results. More integrated and cross-cutting working styles will not "filter down" without other work being done. A greater emphasis needs

to be placed on developing and working within strategic frameworks across the system – both within and outside LCC. This was highlighted particularly in the staff consultation and benchmarking work.

There are a number of ways this might be developed (selected examples from the benchmarking are given in brackets):

- **Structures:** setting new structures in place at the top of the authority or in other locations, to quickly change reporting lines, accountabilities and responsibilities (for example, establishing a strategic directors' board (Walsall), area co-ordinators reporting to corporate centre (Coventry)).
  
- **Systems:** developing robust frameworks for strategic working across and within departments, for example:
  - development of the ways that the local will influence the central, both within and outside the authority (Birmingham's local plans are aggregated and built into the central budgeting and planning process; Walsall has adopted the "softer" influence model where more responsibility lies with the central authority).
  - more joint targets for sections/heads of service and shared performance management arrangements (ensuring quality services across the city despite local management arrangements, with links into Best Value to take account of new local delivery arrangements)
  - clearer shared planning and policy priorities around, for example, regeneration and other cross-cutting areas
  - clearer referencing generally between council activity and LSP/community planning processes (again, at central and local level)
  - loosening (un)written protocols around vertical and horizontal ways of working (for example, encouraging liaison where necessary between senior management and junior staff, establishment of cross-functional teams for specific projects). This should also include clarity about the role of area co-ordinators/forums) and how they feed into strategic planning (Sheffield's areas have no role in service devolution but rather in contributing to service improvement, central strategy and policy).
  
- **Culture:** culture change and development work concerning ways of working within and between departments, the elected council



and the organisation as a whole and those outside LCC (in Walsall, community meetings are no longer run in an adversarial style, but in more productive sessions).

- **People:** including all stakeholders in change processes; elected members, staff at all levels, unions, partners, community groups, residents of the city (all benchmarking authorities saw this as crucial).

### **3. Making local changes manageable**

There is clearly a lot that could be done at local level to change service delivery and decision-making. However, from the benchmarking and other evidence, we suggest that Leicester should use a staged approach to move forward.

From some of the consultation with LCC stakeholder groups, there is a sense that service *access* changes, rather than *delivery* in local areas, are more important to prioritise. Consultees have highlighted failures of local delivery in other local authorities. In addition, the benchmarked authorities have told us their change processes have taken up to ten years to develop and implement, and are still developing.

Initial devolution with a smaller scope (in terms of services, budgets and influence) will create a platform on which more changes can be built. For example;

- this will allow time for assessment and development of skill and capacity for change in individual areas
- it will also allow time for consideration of additional neighbourhood level structures that could feed into the area forums. (Again, there is evidence from the benchmarking work and the consultation that community involvement will be more effective where people are able to exert influence at the most local level. Birmingham and Coventry have developed neighbourhood structures at the "hundreds of households" level, subsequent to the setting up of their original structures.)
- the process of developing ways of working with partners, and shaping the structures with them to ensure their needs for consultation/ involvement are met, will be facilitated if changes are staged
- the ways in which the area structures influence the scrutiny and creation of policy, strategy, performance management

frameworks and so on can also be developed and built on, again taking account of local requirements and capacity (for example, Sheffield has made the link between areas and scrutiny through a scrutiny board that has a lead on area action)

It is important, however, that communities are clear about the rationale for this: that initially small changes will develop into different, bigger structures and ways of influencing. It is also important that communities are involved at each stage in developing and shaping the systems and structures of which they will ultimately take some ownership.

All of the above suggestions, but particularly points 2 and 3, are ways of developing the links between the proposals and the activity needed in the "middle ground". Located between top management and local level changes, work is needed to create and develop "upward and downward" lines for communication and influence throughout the system, to loosen up existing protocols/hierarchies, and develop new ones where necessary. **The evidence we have gathered shows that this is the key area where changes are thought to be needed.**

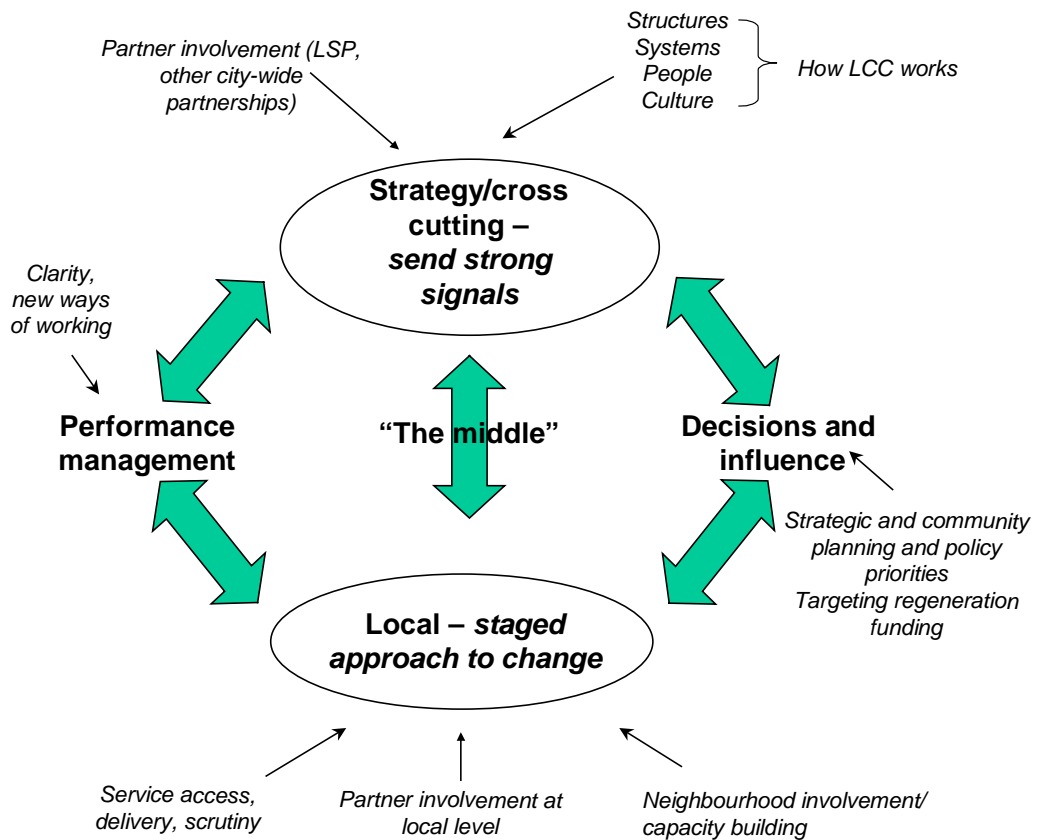
**A model for change**

OPM has developed the following diagram as a summary of the key issues raised above, and as a tool for developing and checking next steps of development of the proposals.

It will help to formulate ways forward for a whole system approach to change which, although it will have to be somewhat imperfect and "noisy", will need to be staged in activity and clear in focus.

It shows the importance of the vertical linkages (both upwards and downwards) through the "middle ground" between strategy and local influence/delivery; through, for example, different systems of performance management to take into account local service delivery and user feedback.

it also shows the potential for developing mechanisms, whether through structural change or systems/processes, to increase dialogue with communities, partnership working, a stronger cross-cutting/strategic focus and so on.



### **A checklist for change – next steps/recommendations**

The following list may help LCC in planning for change from here. It is an initial checklist, developed by OPM and people we talked to through the consultation. We would recommend that the list is further developed, in conjunction with key staff, partners and communities.

- ❑ Communicate a **clear vision** for change: including the story of the development of the proposals and how stakeholders will be involved from now on.
- ❑ Involve staff and politicians in **debate around this vision**: using facilitated open negotiation processes with staff, managers and politicians (with the focus on resolving problems and long-standing issues). (This could be linked to a wider programme of **member/officer development**; see below.)
- ❑ Place emphasis on **shared diagnosis** of issues and solutions, with more initiatives such as staff conferences and town hall meetings: adopt a "can-do" approach to this type of communication.
- ❑ Explore **different ways of working together** with managers and officers: for example, cabinet members and directors sharing responsibility for area structures.
- ❑ Adopt a policy of **open communication** and briefing through departments and sections, and a culture of ownership and involvement of change and improvement through, for example, suggestion schemes; get rid of the "everything is confidential" mantra.
- ❑ Improve access to and **sharing between senior management and front-line staff**: promote learning between different "strata" of management.
- ❑ Conduct **development work for consultation and involvement** of stakeholders in the detail of proposals: initially, consultation should be done with internal and external audiences on how to create structures/systems/ approaches to achieve a broad vision for change.
- ❑ Work on **shaping proposals in detail** when rationale/vision is clear and shared, and putting structures in place for change. This will enable LCC to consult stakeholders with reference to "givens", and to talk through various options and models for change, particularly at a local level with residents/ community groups.
- ❑ Explore the possibility of working with **different models/"packages"** of approaches: consider the involvement of "users"/active citizens and "non-users" to seek contrasting views. These approaches could be used with partners at the interim stage of consultation, allowing both LCC and partners to be the "face" of the next set of proposals.

- Run an **open simulation** on the new ways of working, involving staff, partners and community representatives (perhaps people involved in earlier consultation) to test out relationships and issues around neighbourhood focus, and encourage further 'ownership' of the process of change.
- Plan a **development programme for managers** focusing less on "narrow" competencies and more on partnership working skills; recognise the need for second, third and fourth tier managers to develop new skills and ways of working if strategic directors are to be introduced.
- **Training for all staff** - design induction and staff development processes with a broader focus on **working across departments**, freedoms and possibilities; introduce practical training for staff to find out what other parts of the organisation do; build key contacts and connections across the organisation.
- Create **opportunities for staff to work in other areas**: for example, by offering secondments between departments and sectors (e.g. between health and local government); joint appointments with appropriate frameworks for performance management and accountability; shorter term job-swapping; and so on.
- Develop more **joint planning arrangements** and cross-accountability structures, like the present crime and disorder arrangements.
- Encourage and develop approaches to **project management** between and across departments; use certain projects as "beacons" demonstrating the successes of the approach.
- Build **strategic priorities** into the performance management of more tiers of staff, and introduce cross-sector output measures and policy-led rather than department-focused budgeting (including the realities of budget "pots" needing to be available for local service delivery).
- Generally, gear up LCC for a new **neighbourhood focus** with a comprehensive development programme for staff directly or indirectly affected by changes (benchmarking authorities raised this as a key issue).

Additional across the board recommendations:

- Plan appropriately to allow sufficient time for all this activity to occur.
- Examine existing policies around, for example, participation and partnership working, and work towards integrating these statements of good practice into LCC's new strategic approaches.

## **Key findings by proposal theme**

There is a wealth of detail in the proposals and the consultation about them. From the data we have analysed (including the consultation and benchmarking information) the following summary draws out the main findings around each proposal theme.

Details of comments made on each theme by each group of stakeholders we consulted can be found in the Appendices.

## **Neighbourhood co-ordination and service improvement**

### **Review of services to be developed locally – functions and resources**

- Broad agreement around the types of services to be delivered locally, although some respondents disagreed with the need to deliver local services, as opposed to providing local service access points
- Linked to this, lack of clarity about what levels/which services will be devolved – for example, advice/information, local co-ordination and local presence are all likely to differ in different circumstances
- Some concern about the level of review of these services. What format has the review taken? More analysis needed of tasks and skills required to deliver services
- Concern too about service “review” being a proxy term for “privatisation”
- Which services should be delivered centrally (care needs to be taken particularly over statutory responsibilities, services for those with special needs/excluded groups)
- Importance of developing processes for delivery that allow local issues to feed in throughout the organisation
- Partners feel it is important to attempt to rationalise service boundaries
- Need to examine weight of evidence for types of change and look at experience from other areas (e.g. existing pilots); a sense from participants that this review has not been sufficiently rigorous

### **Neighbourhood co-ordinator role – saviour or fall guy?**

- Risk of appointed co-ordinator being blamed when projects/initiatives fail, and for others to take the credit when they succeed
- Need for a particular set of skills: clear, strong relationships with central LCC, influencing skills, certain level of power, good political relationships
- “Not just another layer of bureaucracy”; effecting improvement in local service provision
- Need too for appropriate salary, terms for the role
- Fear of failure of this role if LCC does not “gear up” to a neighbourhood focus: need to put processes in place to ensure



co-ordinators can deliver what is required of them on ground (available budgets in departments, "routes in" to departments from outside)

- Recruitment of the co-ordinator – from LCC and/or outside – required skills may exist in voluntary sector, health
- Development of processes for neighbourhood co-ordinators, committees to "talk" to each other; regular meetings etc

**Accountabilities/power/ownership (see also “Local forums and decision making”)**

- Question mark over level of devolution to areas of money, power, responsibilities. Difficulties of "bending" existing fora to new rules
- Attendant difficulties of too much money/power/influence at an early stage and risk of failure (tendency of groups to focus on money available rather than opportunities)
- Question over mechanisms for area co-ordinator role to “fit” with political steer locally/centrally
- Risk of overly political influence locally

**"Fit" with partners, existing area activity/structures**

- Areas, aims, mechanisms for involvement – need for partners to work closely together
- Incorporate existing area activity/structures (LCC services/activity such as SRB, housing, schools; non-LCC agencies such as police, health, VAL)
- In addition, a wealth of other partnership agencies/structures (Sure Start, sports activities, YOT/DAT activities) should link in
- Concern about how some of these activities/services would work at neighbourhood level
- How will existing locality buildings/infrastructure be used? Possibility of more innovative ways of working, e.g. with schools? Has this even been considered (thought to be relatively little evidence in proposal document)
- This work towards "fit" offers a possibility of making the central LSP structure leaner and area structures more broad based, with the possibility of more stakeholders feeding into this process

**Importance of quality, monitoring, equity across city**

- In particular, providing equal budgets across areas, topping up where necessary with outside funding

## **Local forums and decision making**

### **Representation/inclusivity**

- Good if council structures/functions will become closer in whatever way to communities
- Some people feel forum areas are not strategic or local enough – not parishes, not small enough for true local structures – an unsatisfactory “halfway house”?
- Considerable debate about numbers of forum areas; many people feel that 10 is not right, but disagreement as to how many there should be; how would true community based decision making feed in? How do people define community?
- Need for additional “micro-“ structures at community level?
- Will the larger areas decrease or increase tensions between communities?
- Risk of activism, "usual suspects" as replacement for representativeness. Need to maximise participation, including vulnerable and socially excluded groups (BME groups, young people) – how would this happen?
- Need to "reach out" to people to participate – actively seek participation (particularly from certain groups, e.g. young people)
- Need for best practice guidelines, checks and balances before services and decisions are devolved
- Political or community representation? Council structures or communities as starting points?

### **Accountabilities**

- Differences between a forum and a committee – which is desirable? For example, should it be wholly elected just elected members or other elected representatives; how should elections be run; should experts/community members be co-opted, etc. Some feeling that this debate has not been had – decision to establish forums already made?
- Partners clear that LCC should not "own" fora
- How should existing fora be reconstituted – it will depend on what local groups want; need for consultation and involvement around this

- Clear constitution required, terms of reference, centrally-owned protocols; mechanism for petition and appeal; distinguish between consultation and decision making
- Chairs elected or nominated? Political or community representatives? Problems of "maverick" chairs
- Clarity needed for elected members between their geographical representation, service and policy scrutiny roles and the role of cabinet
- Negotiation of local priorities vs. central priorities – how would this work? How would council/partner strategies "feed down" to local level? Importance of strategic city-wide planning

### **Starting point**

- Where are neighbourhoods at? Different areas have different structures – forums, tenants' associations, residents' associations, active, inactive schools etc. – and need to start at different levels
- What are the requirements of different areas, what do they want?
- Caution needed around "whole system" change; pilots or big bang? What level, speed of transfer of responsibility? Should existing fora work/develop at different levels/stages?
- Need for a staged roll-out
- Consistency on principles that different (existing) fora and groups work to
- Need checklist for effective working – it may be that existing fora do not work effectively...

### **Motivation/incentives to participate/support**

- What will people be interested in deciding?
- This links to level of delegation at local level
- Need to "widen the net" to catch/involve more people than are involved at moment, but still engage those involved in existing schemes
- Making attendance attractive: timing of meetings, design of meetings, getting away from "chair and floor" towards participative approaches

### **Delegation/influence/power**

- Real power and influence required for fora – activities at local level should make a difference to people and their communities
- Good that area plans will be able to deliver quick wins
- Important that council is seen as receptive and listening; ways of involving on different subjects – e.g. discussions over single (service/policy) issues, wider community priority setting – decisions taken, scale of involvement going to be different for different subjects
- Importance of support for area structures – managing money, clerking, capacity building for chairs and office holders, support for schools, other stakeholders to be involved and so on

### **Equity**

- Equality needed across all areas of city – particularly in allocation of resources. Care needs to be taken not to favour some wards over others (e.g. wards of cabinet members)

## **Client, contractor and consultant issues**

**Generally, review thought to be needed and overdue**

**However, some disagreement from trades unions over rationale, effect on staff of (too?) regular review of some areas**

### **Service review and improvement must be primary focus**

- Is this process more important than senior management reforms?
- Across the board (white as well as blue collar)
- Best value and service process mapping links – what is the difference? Which will come first? Is this the best process to use?

### **Question over resource savings**

- Will the level of savings required be delivered? Is the analysis conducted so far simplistic? Need to consider other funding sources (central service contracts, sale of council housing?)

### **Importance of changing attitudes to contracting as well as processes**

- Links generally to softer culture change

### **Importance of ICT**

- In developing new service processes
- As a mechanism for increased community involvement locally; savings will occur in long run after initial resource outlay
- Some detail over ICT implications lacking (e.g. practicalities of service delivery of e.g. housing benefit services)

### **Concerns over job security; redundancies**

## **Senior management reforms**

### **Generally, area where proposals meet most opposition**

#### **Rationale**

- Rationale questioned for proposals as whole, for organisation internally, particularly from culture department perspective; where is the necessary link between service re-alignment and internal re-organisation?
- Question mark over management reforms' relation to area devolution – is the reform an excuse for a "carve-up" between directors for certain areas?
- Power and main structures remain the same – no real change
- Fear that service process mapping and other reviews not allowed to run course before re-organisation
- Restructure as add-on – "reflecting directors' fear at giving away control over decision making"
- Changes will cause instability and difficulties in recruitment
- Where would areas, co-ordinators feed in? Directors' responsibility for areas questioned by many

#### **Scope**

- Too radical or not enough? "Changes seem to reflect current structures". Could instead be themed around community plan, or have people-centred themes such as young people, older people...
- Step away from services to strategy realistic? Directors would/should still have day-to-day responsibilities; particularly mentioned in regard to Education
- Do we need restructuring at all? "(directors) don't have to have responsibilities written down to be able to influence"
- Instead the possibility of a dynamic portfolio of objectives, directors taking rolling responsibility?
- What would change? "Lip service" to change rather than real change being effected? Cultural, behavioural barriers still to be addressed
- Good (and important) that partners would be able to influence at this level

- New portfolio/role needed for customer focus/access/involvement? (Proxy for local relations?)

### **Accountabilities, member relationships**

- Less transparency in new structures around responsibilities
- Greater need for clarity and probity around member/officer relationships and roles; need for member training on this
- Need a focus on capacity, skills as 2nd, 3rd tier officers will now relate much more with elected members
- Could the reorganisation be more creative - for example, could directors report to scrutiny, heads of service to cabinet?
- Need more clarity around political direction (consensus on direction of change important; focus on sustainable reorganisation rather than short term political aims)

### **Portfolio balance**

- Fear that education is too big, joint resources/HR function for education and culture thought problematic where Education by itself is huge
- Portfolios do not balance at moment, work areas very different; justification for “equalising” salaries questioned where workloads and responsibilities will differ widely
- Mixed views on portfolio “contents” – some feel they don't relate sufficiently to political portfolios, others that there is not enough of a split? "(this structure) further entrenches silo mentality"
- Numbers of portfolios – will fewer directors necessarily equal better strategy?

### **(Cross) organisational reforms**

- Need change across organisation and softer culture change work, not just “hard” restructuring
- Importance of partnership working needs to be emphasised
- Also need collaboration across departments and areas at every level: frank dialogue, increased levels of trust



**Location of co-ordination**

- Most feel that "housing not best placed to offer overall co-ordination"; better located in central/more neutral department
- Corporate focus needed for links to regeneration funding etc.
- Need a visible conduit for fora issues: responsibility of all directors or one? Board level responsibility?
- Location of area responsibilities politically – could there be cabinet leads for this?

**Wait and see?**

- Area focus changes may result in more radical or fewer senior management reforms – would it be sensible to wait to see how this develops?

## **Resource issues**

### **Realism, sufficient review?**

- Achievability of savings? Accuracy of sums?
- Will £400,000 be sufficient to make these changes happen? "Not a budget but an expression of hope."
- Issue of corporate/local split for funding – how will it be divided up?
- Can NRF be applied citywide? Council has limited control over this
- Appendix R processes take time: in time for 2003?
- Mechanisms/processes for delivery – achieve savings first or kick start with reserves
- Phased changes needed – or not bold enough?

### **Support for “surplus” managers will be important – need for positive redeployment**

#### **“Training” or “development”?**

- Need more focus on culture change, new responsibilities internally and externally; underplayed in proposals
- Skilling for neighbourhood focus across all departments – changing attitudes among officers and staff – also training re protocols.
- "Area for freedom requires political and top management trust" and “letting go” from day to day issues
- Need to consult and build consensus