

NEIGHBOURHOOD PANELS – PROGRESS REPORT

To: South Cambridgeshire In Your Patch

Date: 12 July 2010

From: Wendy Lansdown, Neighbourhood Panel Liaison Officer

1. Introduction and Update

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of current issues and developments with regard to Neighbourhood Panels as a means of community engagement.

2. Latest Panel meetings in South Cambridgeshire

- 2.1 The panel meetings in the district take place in clusters. There have only been two meetings since the last In Your Patch meeting. Therefore an overview of the full round of meetings will be provided to the next In Your Patch.

The most frequently raised issues across the district include;

- Problem parking near rail stations in South Cambridgeshire. Councillors have had initial discussions with Police and the Highways team in relation to Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton.
- Anti-social behaviour
- Highway safety issues
- Parking outside schools
- Speeding

3. Neighbourhood Panel development around the County

- 3.1 Neighbourhood Panel development continues to evolve differently in response to local needs in each of the districts. In summary, as follows:

- In East Cambridgeshire the panel process is now well established. With members of the County, District and Parish sitting on the panel and representatives from a variety of agencies attending including; the Constabulary, the Fire and Rescue Service and the local Housing Association.

The County Council, the District Council and other partner agencies are working together to continue to develop the Neighbourhood Panels within East Cambridgeshire; this includes enhancing the working with Parish Councils, seeking to provide an effective link

with community-led planning across the district and the engagement of young people in the process.

- In Huntingdonshire, five Neighbourhood Forums, which operate in a very similar way to the East Cambridgeshire Neighbourhood Panels, have been introduced; these forums include a panel comprising elected members of each of the three tiers of local government and officer representatives. This process, which begins its third round of meetings on 7 July 2010, will be subject to review, led by the District Council, following conclusion of the autumn 2010 round of meetings.

The first round of forum meetings (in the autumn of 2009) attracted a total of 196 attendees; this increased to 273 in the second round (in the spring of 2010).

- In Fenland, the second round of the six Community Fairs concluded in April 2010 – these achieved a good level of public attendance (increasing from 477 in the first round to 817 in the second). The Community Fairs (which include a Neighbourhood Forum meeting at the conclusion of each fair) have taken place at six-monthly intervals.

In addition, interim Neighbourhood Forum meetings were introduced after the first round of fairs to increase the frequency of opportunity for the public to engage with service providers and to set new neighbourhood priorities and to receive feedback on the previous priorities that had been set – these meetings achieved very low levels of attendance.

The six Community Fairs are currently “overseen” by five Neighbourhood Management Boards; these also meet at six monthly intervals.

- In Cambridge City, the Area Committees are more formal meetings which also include planning. The City members form the panel which County members are co-opted onto. The City Council has been exploring options of how to further engage and involve local people, using the existing Area Committees structure (which currently allows a 30 minutes Open Forum slot as part of the formal committee agenda).

4. The County Council’s Neighbourhood Panel review and the “Localism” agenda

- 4.1 Members were informed at the last South Cambridgeshire In Your Patch meeting that the County Council’s review of its participation in Neighbourhood Panels (or district area equivalent) had been concluded but that the conclusions and recommendations would not be reported to the Cabinet at the County Council in spring/summer of 2010 as

originally planned but be linked to work currently underway at a strategic level at the County Council focusing upon the “Localism” agenda.

- 4.2 It is, therefore, proposed to include the Neighbourhood Panel review as part of a wider report to the County Council’s Cabinet, drawing together the authority’s approach to Localism in the context of the Community Engagement Strategy. It is anticipated that this report will be presented to Cabinet in September.
- 4.3 Although no specific Localism proposals have yet been considered by members at the County Council, it is felt that Neighbourhood Panels/Forums will have a role to play in the delivery of such proposals
- 4.4 The review of the County Council’s approach to Neighbourhood Panels included reviewing the agreed aims of the panels.
- 4.5 It has been concluded that not only are the stated aims of the County Council and its partners for Neighbourhood Panels still relevant but they are very similar to the aims set out for Localism in the Green Paper.
- 4.6 Both the Localism agenda and the development of Neighbourhood Panels were discussed with the members of the Neighbourhood Panel Liaison Group – which consists of relevant officers of the County Council, the District Councils within Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire ACRE and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils – at a meeting on 13 May 2010.