



Exemplars of Neighbourhood Governance

Main Report



Exemplars of Neighbourhood Governance

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The promotion of localism and neighbourhood working is a Government priority as reflected most recently and prominently in *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*,¹ where the Government identified two central and closely interconnected challenges for the Neighbourhoods Agenda:
 - to secure sustainable improvements in public services; and
 - to re-engage citizens with the institutions of government.
2. This report provides the findings from a study of neighbourhood governance for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

The benefits, barriers and critical success factors in neighbourhood working

3. The conclusion of the study is that neighbourhood working has 'struck a chord' with many of the practitioners, residents, service providers and wider partners that have experienced or witnessed it. The approach seems to have the hallmarks of a sustainable approach to citizen re-engagement, service improvement and neighbourhood renewal, especially with regard to generating cleaner and safer neighbourhoods.
4. The benefits of neighbourhood working include: increased awareness amongst service providers of neighbourhood and residents' needs and, in deprived areas, the joined-up nature of the problems and the potential for joined-up solutions; a source of new thinking and a challenge to professional and political conventions; enhancement of the motivation of frontline staff and innovation in service delivery; pooling of resources and budgets between service providers; increased ease of access to services and improvement in the responsiveness and flexibility of services; and the encouragement of participation in the local political process.
5. However, there are also barriers to the introduction and effectiveness of neighbourhood working. Probably most significant amongst these are the constraints imposed by the resources and capacities available to the residents, their communities and the service providers. The costs of neighbourhood working to the latter are often treated as additional to existing costs and the benefits are usually not seen in terms of cost reductions. Moreover, it can often prove difficult to gear up supplier capacity for the changes in operational method that neighbourhood working requires, particularly where there is organisational inertia to change and/or what are seen as more important priorities set by government targets.

¹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Office (2005) *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

6. As far as residents are concerned, their effective engagement at neighbourhood level is most likely where there is a tradition of community group activity. Clearly this tradition is not present in every neighbourhood or indeed in every community within the neighbourhood. Where it is not, resources need to be geared initially to capacity building in order to develop these strong foundations. This adds to the resource commitment required to make for effective neighbourhood working.
7. Moreover, where there is a mismatch between the expectation generated about the benefits of neighbourhood working and the capacities of the parties concerned to deliver it, then this can simply be counter-productive and disillusioning. This can happen through consultation 'fatigue', over-estimation of people's willingness and capacity to engage, a lack of genuine commitment to change amongst service providers, overloading of neighbourhood working with more tasks than can be handled effectively or efficiently and/or lack of legitimacy for the arrangements in the eyes of local stakeholders and communities.
8. The critical success factors for effective neighbourhood working reflect the above mix of benefits from and constraints on its introduction and sustained delivery. The evidence from the case studies reviewed during the study is that it requires five broad characteristics to be effective and sustainable – leadership, management and championing at neighbourhood level, provision of a variety of opportunities for resident engagement, investment in community capacity for engagement, service provider capacity and commitment in the wider governance arrangements to build neighbourhood engagement into their decision-making.

Neighbourhood arrangements, LSPs and LAAs

9. The study found that there are many different forms of neighbourhood arrangements carrying out different functions and tackling different issues. The forms, functions and issues in a particular area change over time, as the local situation changes and the political environment in which they operate evolves. In the current context, most neighbourhood arrangements have to engage Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), if they are to influence key mainstream service providers. They will also have to engage with Local Area Agreements (LAAs).
10. The evidence suggests that the existence of effective links between neighbourhood arrangements and LSPs is patchy, given the multi-tiered nature of local government in England. It also indicates that, where arrangements appear to be strong, this is often due to the experience with local regeneration and renewal, mainly in urban areas.
11. The limited evidence on the relationship between neighbourhoods and LAAs points to challenges related to neighbourhoods' role in:
 - negotiating LAAs, e.g., their voice and choice will tend to be limited, as tight deadlines restrict the time for consultation and discussion and the neighbourhoods are often more concerned with their local rather than authority-wide issues;
 - the commissioning process, e.g., the extent to which LSPs can develop neighbourhood related criteria for commissioning activity to deliver the LAA; and the provision of resources to support neighbourhoods' participation in commissioning activity in ways that ensure the effective representation of different neighbourhoods' interests;

- monitoring and reviewing the impact of the LAA's targets on neighbourhoods; and
 - revising the targets on an annual basis.
12. This poses challenges for governance at both the neighbourhood and local authority level.

Engaging all groups

13. Good governance is founded on good engagement. The study suggests that opportunities for citizens to engage in policy making and delivery have increased considerably over recent years. But it also suggests that, while there are numerous examples of good practice, many communities remain marginalised and frustrated by these opportunities and there is still a long way to go to engage the diversity of communities at neighbourhood level. It argues that even with good foundations particular resources and levers will be required if the disengaged are to be engaged effectively, as follows:
- clear community engagement and equalities strategies for reaching the most disengaged and marginalised groups with appropriate resources;
 - links between neighbourhood structures and city- or district-wide groups representing the most marginalised voices;
 - access to mediation and conflict resolution resources (through neighbourhood renewal advisors or a similar facility);
 - opportunities for jobs for local people and for paraprofessionals to act as an informal link between services and residents;
 - someone at LSP level with a responsibility for and overview of engagement and dedicated officers at neighbourhood level to promote engagement;
 - a community governance strategy at local authority and/or regional level to build skills and learning opportunities among all partners, and provide joint training opportunities;
 - high profile capacity building programmes targeted at councillors and officers; and
 - the skills, authority and sanctions at government office level to ensure that engagement is a priority in LAAs and Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPAs).

The role of councillors in neighbourhood working

14. Effective links between elected representatives and neighbourhood arrangements are essential for re-engaging citizens with the institutions of government. The study looked at the role of councillors in neighbourhood arrangements and found evidence of success in involving ward councillors in neighbourhood arrangements across a broad area of activity, but with tensions in some areas. There has been successful horizontal integration with councillors forming parts of interlinked local networks,

and there has been successful vertical integration with councillors providing effective bottom-up and top-down links between neighbourhoods and the corporate centres of local authorities. The evidence indicates the following factors to be helpful in the success of ward councillor involvement in neighbourhood working:

- councillors are not too wedded to the previous ‘way of doing things’;
- partners from all sectors, officers and councillors are clear about councillors’ role in the neighbourhood, and councillors are willing to take a backseat if necessary;
- there are no local rivalries about which institutions represent the neighbourhood;
- councillors and partnerships have officer support to improve services at the neighbourhood level;
- there is a clear delivery mechanism for delivering action plans;
- there is proactive, widespread and creative community engagement; and
- councillors have been supported by training and development programmes.

Neighbourhood engagement and service improvement

15. The study suggests that the ‘neighbourhood’, in general an area with a population of around 5,000-15/20,000 people, may well be the appropriate spatial scale for improving particular types of services through user and community involvement especially in deprived areas, and particularly with regard to:
 - Community Safety;
 - Housing;
 - Environmental Management; and
 - Some aspects of health, education and youth services.
16. For other services, the business case still has to be made. More concerted work will be required to address the concerns which are likely to be economic (*we can't afford it*), skills and capacity (*we can't do business this way*) and structural (*we're not allowed to do it like that*).
17. Thus, the evidence explored as part of this project indicates that there are a significant range of benefits to be had from neighbourhood working both in terms of service improvement and engaging citizens. The case studies show that local areas do need the space to develop their own arrangements and that one size does not and cannot fit all areas. However, the analysis shows that, provided all parties are clear about the functions to be carried out in an area, appropriate forms can be developed to take the agenda forward. It also shows that there is more to be done to change institutional arrangements, among LSPs and LAAs, if the second stage of double devolution is to be achieved. This will involve interventions to change traditional approaches and the development of the business case for neighbourhood working across a range of services.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report summarises the findings from a study of neighbourhood governance that informed policy development and identified good practice in neighbourhood governance for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).
- 1.2 The study informed DCLG's work on the second of the five broad tasks and outputs sought from the Neighbourhoods Project. The five tasks are:
 - To develop a national neighbourhoods framework;
 - To identify exemplars of good practice and piloting new ideas;
 - To develop and implement the menu of options in the 'Why Neighbourhoods Matter' Agenda;
 - To deliver the 'revitalise neighbourhoods' strand of the 'Together We Can' Action Plan, led by the Home Office; and
 - To join up the neighbourhood agenda with Neighbourhood Policing.
- 1.3 The aim of the research was to take forward exemplars of the DCLG's good practice work stream, by:
 - Providing timely and robust evidence on how local authorities and other public service providers interact with the public, as service users and as citizens, in the context of neighbourhoods and work to promote neighbourhood level working;
 - Providing 'how to' information for practitioners; and
 - Providing evidence of what has been or can be achieved through neighbourhood level working for policy makers – using the spectrum of participation outlined in *Why Neighbourhoods Matter*.²

Audience for the report

- 1.4 This report serves both policy-makers and practitioners (including councillors) operating at the neighbourhood level. It does this by providing evidence on current practice in terms of the structures and the content of neighbourhood governance, citizen engagement and service improvement through neighbourhood working. The evidence is presented on the basis of the important themes facing policy-makers and practitioners:

² Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Office (2005) *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

- The scope of neighbourhood working, in other words, what is the evidence on the range of issues being addressed by neighbourhood arrangements?
- The different forms that neighbourhood arrangements take given the issues that they address;
- Links between neighbourhoods and wider county, district, city-wide or area arrangements;
- The role of neighbourhoods in Local Area Agreements (LAAs);
- The ward councillor role in neighbourhoods;
- Evidence on the role of neighbourhood working on citizen engagement, in particular how neighbourhood working engages the disengaged and how to address issues of diversity and ‘representation’;
- Evidence of impact on services; and
- Evidence on critical success factors and barriers to successful neighbourhood working.

Methodology and parameters of the research

1.5 The project’s brief was to add value to the policy development process by building on existing research and evaluation commissioned both by government and others (see for example, the ODPM, Home Office and Cabinet Office (2005) report *Improving Delivery of Mainstream Services in Deprived Areas: The role of community involvement*³ and the Young Foundation’s (2005) *Seeing the Wood for the Trees*⁴).

1.6 It was to do this by:

- Applying the existing knowledge base to answer new questions on neighbourhood governance and neighbourhood arrangements; and
- Capturing new knowledge and learning, which may be held as tacit information by key stakeholders and may not yet be formalised (for example, through developing new case studies).

1.7 The first stage of the project consisted of a literature review to identify examples of good (and bad) practice of neighbourhood working from both domestic and international sources. The initial literature review ‘cut’ the evidence on the basis of six themes:

- Cohesion and engagement;
- Partnership, governance and capacity building; and

3 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office and Cabinet Office (2005) *Improving Delivery of Mainstream Services in Deprived Areas: The role of community involvement* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

4 Hilder, Paul (2005) *Seeing the Wood for the Trees: The evolving landscape for neighbourhood arrangements* The Young Foundation.

- The four ‘blocks’ of LAAs (children and young people; safer and stronger communities; healthier communities; and economic development and enterprise).
- 1.8 The review of literature on ‘domestic’ practice produced a long list of around 50 potential case studies that could be used to address some or all of the research questions. This long list was narrowed down to a shorter list of 12 case studies (Annex 1). The review of literature on international practice sought to identify examples of neighbourhood arrangements that would inform the general approach to neighbourhoods. A separate paper on international experience was also produced (Annex 3).
- 1.9 In terms of the four LAA blocks, the bulk of the evidence on neighbourhood arrangements was on safer and stronger communities with less evidence on children and young people. There was limited evidence of neighbourhood arrangements for economic development and healthier communities.⁵ It should be noted that this project did not look in detail at the work of parish and town councils as this formed the subject of a complementary Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs-commissioned research undertaken by the Local Government Information Unit.⁶
- 1.10 The second stage of the work was to carry out five new case studies in order to explore new ways of working and to fill in some of the gaps in the existing literature (Annex 2). They cover the mix of urban and rural areas, counties and districts and single tier authorities, and areas with ethnically diverse and quite homogenous populations. The team wishes to thank all participating areas for their support and co-operation.
- 1.11 In addition to this work, the project was also informed by a series of papers and discussions with (then) ODPM colleagues working on different aspects of the neighbourhoods agenda (Box 1.1). The team wishes to thank ODPM/DCLG colleagues for their time and engagement in the process.

Box 1.1: Questions for thematic papers

- How effective is neighbourhood working for service improvement?
- What is the member role in neighbourhood working?
- What is a viable neighbourhood in terms of governance arrangements?
- How are neighbourhood outcomes and priorities, both at a strategic level and for individual neighbourhoods, identified in order to feed in to LAAs?
- What are the typologies of governance arrangements at the neighbourhood and local authority level?
- What does neighbourhood working offer in terms of engaging the disengaged?

⁵ There are two reasons for this: first, the scale at which the problems and interventions occur in these policy areas; and second, the nature of the focus of previous evaluations of neighbourhood working.

⁶ Jones, Andrew, Jasmine Burnley, Ed Cox and Ines Newman (2005) *The Potential of Parish and Town Councils to Support Neighbourhood Arrangements* London: Local Government Information Unit

1.12 In practice, it is difficult to separate the service improvement agenda from efforts to re-engage citizens with the institutions of government, not least because community engagement is so often linked to:

- The design and planning of facilities/amenities and services;
- The commissioning of facilities or services;
- The management and maintenance of facilities/amenities,
- The delivery of services; and
- The performance management of services.

1.13 While acknowledging the fact that citizen and service improvement are two distinct objectives, the report seeks to avoid seeking distinct approaches to the two, as in order to improve services at the neighbourhood level some citizen engagement is required and often the most effective way to engage citizens in the institutions of government is to address a particular service or bundle of services and discuss how best to improve them.

Definitions and terminology

1.14 Definitions and terminology can often bring as much confusion and disagreement as clarity. For the purposes of this paper the following definitions are applied:

- *Governance* is the practices and arrangements that:
 - provide leadership;
 - develop shared values and a shared vision for an area;
 - exert influence over decisions that affect an area;
 - take decisions about an area;
 - monitor both the execution and the impact of decisions; and
 - recognise the development of local institutions and processes that are responsible for making decisions and allocating resources locally.
- *Arrangements* are the different types of formal and informal networks and organisational forms that exist to represent interests and/or deliver services;
- *Typologies*, in this context, are the different categories that neighbourhood arrangements fall into based on the attributes they share;
- *Neighbourhood* is taken to have a relatively broad definition, covering:
 - the streets and blocks of about 50-300 residents, where association, informal social control and mutual aid are key governance tools;
 - ‘home neighbourhoods’ or proximity neighbourhoods of c. 500-2,000 residents bringing together a few blocks;

- public or strategic neighbourhoods of 4,000-15,000 residents where more structured governance starts to make sense;⁷ and
- neighbourhood partnerships – for example, neighbourhood management covering a range of populations, from 5,000-20,000 people⁸
- *Neighbourhood management* is an approach to improving public services, building community capacity and promoting renewal in deprived areas. It is a neighbourhood-based approach that brings together the local community with local service providers through a partnership, supported by a Neighbourhood Manager and team, to improve local outcomes, by improving and joining up local services, and making them more responsive to local needs.
- *Local authority level governance* is defined as the partnership arrangements within an area by which a local authority engages the public and public, private, voluntary and community organisations in influencing, making and monitoring the execution and impact of decisions within a local authority district, for example, a local strategic partnership (LSP);
- *A viable neighbourhood – in terms of ensuring sustainable governance arrangements is a place that:*
 - is of sufficient size to establish and maintain governance arrangements that provide an opportunity for local people to come together to discuss issues of mutual concern and to develop ‘collective views’ that can be articulated in ways that enable service providers and politicians to respond to them;
 - enables socio-economic and service data to be collected over time, so that those involved can identify issues and track the impact of their activities;
 - operates flexible arrangements and tools of engagement to ensure wide participation; and
 - is likely to cover a population of between 5,000 and 20,000 adults.

Structure of the report

1.15 The report has seven further chapters, examining the following issues:

- **Chapter 2: Policy context** – summarises the main policy context.
- **Chapter 3: What did the case studies tell us?** – draws on the case studies in order to set out the different sorts of activities that different neighbourhood arrangements undertake and to identify critical success factors for neighbourhood working and the barriers to successful neighbourhood working.

⁷ The first three bullet points are taken from Hilder, Paul (2005) *Seeing the Wood for the Trees: The evolving landscape for neighbourhood arrangements* The Young Foundation.

⁸ In the course of the project, ‘neighbourhood arrangements’ covering a number of wards with populations greater than 35,000 people were encountered. At this scale of operation, a number of different neighbourhood arrangements can (and do) operate within the same area. While these large areas are often referred to as ‘neighbourhoods’, they are not considered part of neighbourhood arrangements in this report. Rather, they are treated as umbrella arrangements, bringing together neighbourhoods to act at a city level.

- **Chapter 4: What did we discover about neighbourhood arrangements and their relationship to wider governance arrangements?** – sets out the forms and functions of neighbourhood arrangements, their relationship to LSPs and area and thematic arrangements, and their relationship to LAAs.
- **Chapter 5: Who did we find was involved and how were they involved?** – examines who is engaged in neighbourhood working, how they are engaged, and how diversity is embraced and managed.
- **Chapter 6: What did we find out about the role of councillors in neighbourhood working?** – looks at the changing role of councillors in neighbourhood arrangements, the different roles that councillors can play in different types of neighbourhood arrangements, and the tensions in the different roles that councillors play in neighbourhoods, in wider governance arrangements and in political parties.
- **Chapter 7: What did we find out about the contribution of neighbourhood arrangements to improving public services and citizen engagement?** – sets out the evidence on the costs and benefits of neighbourhood arrangements and the impact on services and outcomes in neighbourhoods.
- **Chapter 8: Summary and conclusions** – sets out the main findings of the research.

Chapter 2: Policy context

Introduction

2.1 The previous chapter set out the background to the project. This chapter sets out some of the key features of the policy context in which the neighbourhood agenda operates. It is not a comprehensive overview. It focuses on the Neighbourhoods Agenda and its relationship to the Choice Agenda.

Why Neighbourhoods Matter

2.2 The promotion of localism and neighbourhood working is a government priority. The last few years have seen both what was the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), and is now the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and the Home Office (HO) attaching greater importance to localism and neighbourhoods. An example of the greater prominence of the issue is *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*,⁹ which states there are two central and closely interconnected challenges for the Neighbourhoods Agenda:

- To secure sustainable improvements in public services; and
- To re-engage citizens with the institutions of government.

2.3 The importance of working at the spatial level of the neighbourhood in pursuit of these two objectives was emphasised in *Why Neighbourhoods Matter*. This document acknowledged that previous experience with quite radical forms of devolved decision-making had not proved sustainable and suggested that *'unduly extensive devolution to the most local level is unlikely to be effective or efficient ... The experiences clearly illustrate the need for any future initiatives to pay heed to the principles of efficiency and proportionality'*.

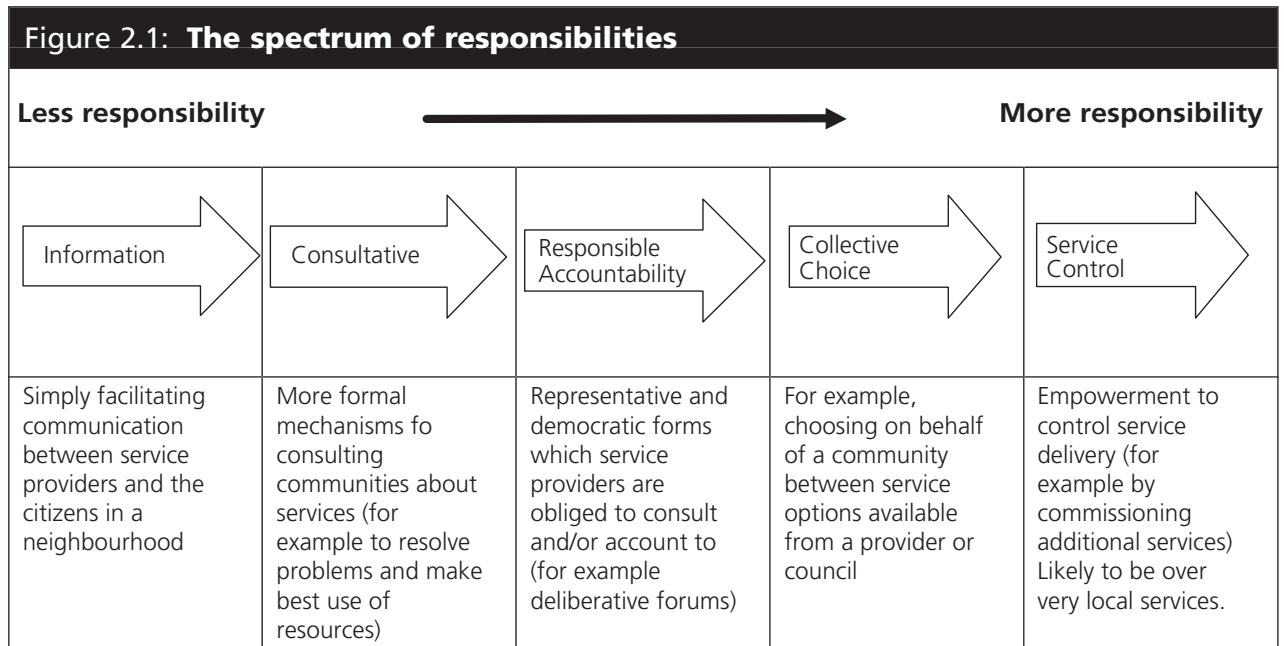
2.4 *Why Neighbourhoods Matter* sets out the following five key principles for neighbourhood arrangements:

- Councils and service providers provide opportunities and support for neighbourhood engagement;
- Neighbourhood arrangements must be capable of making a real difference to citizens' everyday lives;
- Neighbourhood arrangements must be appropriate to local circumstances, flexible to changing circumstances and responsive to local needs and the diversity of the community and its organisations;

⁹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Office (2005) *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

- Neighbourhood arrangements must be consistent with local representative democracy; and
- Neighbourhood arrangements must be balanced with the demands for efficiency and proportionality.

2.5 These principles give plenty of scope for neighbourhood arrangements along the spectrum of responsibility set out in *Why Neighbourhoods Matter* (Figure 2.1). ‘Any consideration of these principles must be in the context both of this spectrum and an understanding of what is meant by a neighbourhood.’¹⁰



Source: *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*

2.6 What is not being proposed is a single model, with one size fitting all. There would be continued variety and innovation, building on the wide range of existing arrangements, such as parishes, Neighbourhood Management initiatives, New Deal for Community (NDC) partnerships, Community Networks and Tenant Management Organisations.

The choice agenda and neighbourhoods

2.7 The Choice Agenda is also a key part of the Government’s programme to modernise public services. It operates at a range of levels:

- Individual;
- Household;
- Neighbourhood or sub-local level;

10 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Office (2005) *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (p.13)

- District-level or the city-level; and
- Groups of service users.

2.8 The Choice Agenda also offers different ‘types’ of choice:

- Choice of service provider (which could be at each of the levels outlined above);
- Choice of services from a given menu (which could be at each of the levels outlined above);
- Choice over where to live (usually at the level of the individual and household);
- Choice via various deliberative and participative forums, at neighbourhood level, district level or through communities of interest/identity etc. (i.e. collective choices); and
- The traditional democratic choice of local political leaders through local elections.

2.9 The different sets of choices may affect the neighbourhood agenda in different ways. For example, an increase in the variety of local combinations of facilities and services (and tax rates) at district and neighbourhood level will enhance the level of choice for those individuals and households able to move from place to place in order to attain the services and taxes they want. Furthermore, an increase in the opportunities for neighbourhoods to commission the providers and/or the mix of services that are delivered locally may improve local engagement with governance and management arrangements in an area, as people come together to discuss and decide on the services and standards they want and it may improve the scope of collective choices in an area, thereby building a sense of attachment.

2.10 Thus, the Neighbourhoods and Choice Agendas both seek to drive improvements in public services, and can operate in tandem. However, at some levels and for some choices there is a tension between policies that seek to promote collective choice and policies that promote individual (or household choices).

Conclusion

2.11 The report provides evidence on how local areas and neighbourhoods are managing the tensions between policies and developing governance arrangements that address local needs.

Chapter 3: What did the case studies tell us?

Introduction

3.1 The previous chapter summarised the policy context for the project. This chapter summarises some of the key findings from the case studies, which are set out in full in Annexes 1, 2 and 3. It lists the areas covered, summarises their characteristics, outlines the benefits of neighbourhood working identified in the case studies, the critical success factors and the barriers to neighbourhood working.

The case study areas

3.2 The project reviewed 12 existing English case studies (Annex 1):

- Balsall Heath Environment Team;
- Heart of Burton Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder;
- Minority Ethnic Liaison Police Officers, Norfolk;
- Ore Valley Residents Services Organisation;
- Castle Vale Housing Action Trust/Neighbourhood Management Board;
- Royds Community Association;
- Include Ltd, Liverpool;
- East Leeds Family Learning Centre;
- Norwich NDC/NELD Development Trust;
- Blackburn with Darwen Neighbourhood Co-ordination;
- Neighbourhood working Gloucester; and
- Manor Castle Development Trust.

3.3 It also developed five new case studies (Annex 2):

- West Euston Partnership;
- Teignmouth Regeneration Project;
- West Middlesbrough Youth Assembly;

- Bradford Trident NDC; and
- Blackburn with Darwen.

3.4 It also reviewed literature on a number of relevant international case studies (Annex 3):

- Empowerment Planning, East St. Louis, USA
- Community Participation, San Francisco, USA;
- Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, Toronto, Canada;
- Community Participation, Goteborg, Sweden;
- HOPE IV Programme, Northside St. Louis, USA; and
- Structured Community Participation, Hanover, Germany

3.5 The review of international practice also looked at lessons from elsewhere on capacity building and interfaces between local communities and local government, including lessons on participatory budgeting from Porto Alegre in Brazil.

Summary of the domestic case studies' characteristics

3.6 The populations of the 17 domestic case study areas ranged from nearly 8,500 to 30,000 and around 3,400 to 8,000 households. The arrangements ranged from unincorporated partnerships to companies limited by guarantee and resident service organisations (Boxes 3.1 to 3.5 summarise the governance and board arrangements for the new case studies). Membership of the partnerships and boards was determined by a mix of elected neighbourhood representatives, nominations from local bodies and open arrangements for attendance at what were essentially local networks. The partnerships' remits varied from general regeneration partnerships with significant budgets to thematic groups focusing on a particular issue or client group, for example, young people. The budgets managed by the partnerships ranged from around £20,000 a year for small scale projects and management and administration costs to Bradford Trident NDC's £280m programme over 10 years, with up to £4.5m of management and administration costs.

Box 3.1: West Euston Partnership's Board Arrangements

West Euston Partnership is a company limited by guarantee, with the LB Camden acting as the accountable body for public funds. It has a Board of directors who are nominated by local organisations and accepted by the Board. The Board is constituted as follows:

- Bengali Parents and Tenants Association (Chair), one representative;
- Crown Estate (Vice-Chair), one representative;
- University of London (Chair of Strategy Sub-committee), one representative;
- British Land Company PLC, one representative;
- West Euston Community Association, two representatives;
- Primary Care Trust, one representative;
- Golden Years Committee, (the users forum) Third Age Project, two representatives;
- Bengali Workers' Association, one representative;
- Ward councillors, three representatives (although currently only two councillors as an executive member resigned, due to perceived conflicts of interest with his role as lead member for neighbourhoods)
- Camden Itc, one representative;
- Two unnamed representatives from Met Police and Regent's Park Residents' Association; and
- Observers also attend from LB Camden Regeneration and Housing Teams District Housing Manager and patch Manager, and the Met Police (Safer Neighbourhoods initiative).

The Board has a series of sub-groups and working groups, including: Strategy sub-committee (6 board directors, plus staff); Planning working group; Charitable Status Working Group; Healthy Community Project Steering Group; Open Spaces Project Working Group; and Integrated Youth Project Working Group.

Box 3.2: Teignmouth Regeneration Partnership (TRP) Governance Arrangements

At the time of the fieldwork (February 2006), TRP as an institution, had no legal identity and was an informal partnership. Given its informal status (and lack of resources) it has no definite structure or membership. Networking on behalf of the Chair and the project officer from Kingsway Meadow Community Association (KMCA, see below) was undertaken to build the partnership membership, and partnership meetings took place that drew in number of local interests.

However, at the time of the fieldwork TRP was in the process of moving to constitute itself as a company limited by guarantee, and charity status was also to be sought. It will be known as the Teignmouth Community Development Trust. It was proposed that there will be a 12 member 'management committee' (eight men and four women), nine of whom will be TRP company trustees. Membership seemed to have been a negotiated process, which included those most committed and involved previously in TRP. It includes town councillors, and representatives for the chamber of commerce, the harbour, sports and local leisure facilities. There are no ex officio or elected posts.

Box 3.3: West Middlesbrough Youth Forum

The West Middlesbrough Youth Assembly is now the primary mechanism by which young people are involved in governance at the neighbourhood level. Its aim is to enhance young people's involvement in the governance of the West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust (WMNT) and give them a say in overall strategy. The Youth Assembly has no legal status, although WMNT is committed to work with and involve young people in the regeneration of the local area, to seek to improve the involvement of its young people and provide the services which best respond to their needs.

The Assembly was launched on 12 January 2006 with 16 members drawn from across West Middlesbrough. In coming months the Assembly members will devise their own terms of reference. The recruitment drive was undertaken by distributing information to schools and households.

A job description was produced for the role of 'WMNT Youth Assembly Representative' and an application form designed to be completed by young people, detailing their reasons for wanting to be a member and any skills/qualities they felt they could bring to the role. Application packs including promotional material, the job description and application form were distributed to schools and households (from a Connexions database and existing WMNT mailing lists), aimed at every young person in West Middlesbrough – the Young People's Development Co-ordinator estimates 90% penetration was achieved.

Box 3.4: Bradford Trident NDC Board Arrangements

The Trident area has a history of neighbourhood working before the NDC. The 10-year NDC programme started in 1999/2000. The NDC is a limited company. The local authority is the accountable body for the NDC funding.

The NDC Board is the main decision-making body that controls the strategic direction of the organisation, as well as major spending and investment decisions. There are 25 places on the Board, of which 12 are elected resident Board members, two are co-opted faith group representatives, three are business representatives, one Board member is a voluntary sector rep, and the remaining seven members are representatives of service providers, and the local authority. Three local councillors sit on the Board: two labour councillors who are both ward councillors, and one of whom is Chair of the NDC, and also leader of the Labour group and sits on the LSP Board; and one Conservative who is a councillor for a village on the outskirts of the city, but who is the lead on regeneration and a member of the Executive.

Resident Board members are elected by local residents all of whom are eligible and invited to vote, in a similar way to elections for local councillors. There are 40% turnouts for Board elections. There is a debate about how to ensure diversity in representation. The resident elections are democratic 'but some people don't see the need to put themselves forward. You could co-opt [members] but why should some [people] be forced to knock on doors and some not have to do it. We need to persuade more people to stand' (Senior Officer).

Beneath the Board the second tier of decision-making is done by four theme groups (two previous theme groups were merged for better decision-making)

There is a staff team working to the Board, grouped around the five NDC themes.

In addition, there are a range of different interest group forums that feed into the work of the NDC:

- Voluntary Sector Forum;
- Women's Forum;
- African-Caribbean Forum;
- Faith Forum;
- Business Forum; and
- Youth Forum.

Box 3.5: Blackburn with Darwen corporate and neighbourhood arrangements

The council began introducing a neighbourhood co-ordination approach in 2002, which involved the whole authority acknowledging the neighbourhood co-ordination areas and therefore bringing services together at the local level.

In doing this the council chose not to adopt an approach '*... which has been taken in some other authorities where large areas of councils have been artificially divided into area communities. This has been found to be bureaucratic, divisive and not meaningful to citizens who cannot identify such large geographical areas.*'¹¹ They were of the view that significant activity was already taking place at the 'engagement and information' and 'governance' levels as highlighted in Annex 2; but only ward councillors were involved in the 'co-ordination' of issues, priorities and initiatives between these two levels.

On this basis the council felt a borough wide approach was more appropriate to Blackburn with Darwen and in turn split the borough into five 'neighbourhood areas' – North, South, East, West and Darwen – covering its 23 wards. Each of the five neighbourhood areas represent around 30,000 people and are based on a natural neighbourhoods. This process was implemented in 2002-03 and five neighbourhood co-ordinators were recruited in 2003.

Building upon the activity undertaken with Neighbourhood Co-ordination Areas and the posts of Neighbourhood Co-ordinators, the Local Authority also restructured its Housing and Neighbourhoods Services (within the Regeneration, Housing and Neighbourhoods Department), changing the Community Development Service to Neighbourhood Engagement Services.

The priorities for the Neighbourhood Area will be decided upon by the Multi-Agency Neighbourhood Working Group in each of the five areas. This Multi-Agency Group will be chaired by a senior member of the LSP and is made up delivery managers of key services (PCT, local authority, Police, Fire and CVS). The group along with input from the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator will develop an Action Plan for the area and monitor its delivery.

3.7 The case studies provide a rich variety of different forms of neighbourhood arrangements, supplying a broad and deep source of information from which to draw conclusions about the benefits of neighbourhood working, the critical success factors for neighbourhood arrangements and barriers to neighbourhood working. The sheer variety of forms and purposes should act as a caution to an over-reliance on general conclusions; however, some general observations can be made.

Benefits of neighbourhood working identified in the domestic case studies

3.8 An analysis of the case studies reveals many benefits from neighbourhood working, for example, it:

- Provides better local knowledge about residents' needs;
- Eases access to services, in particular for disadvantaged groups;
- Increases provider awareness of the 'joined-up' nature of the problems in deprived areas and the potential of joined-up solutions;
- Provides a 'reality check' on professionals' and politicians' plans and ambitions;

¹¹ Report to the Executive Board on Neighbourhood Co-ordination, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, July 2002

- Provides a source of new thinking from outside professional boundaries;
- Enhances the motivation of frontline staff and prompts innovation in service delivery;
- Allows pooling of resources and sharing of costs among service providers;
- Improves responsiveness and flexibility of services; and
- Encourages participation in the local political process.

Critical success factors identified in the case studies

3.9 The case studies also point to a series of identifiable critical success factors for neighbourhood working:

- The existence of some community networks prior to more formal neighbourhood working which gives a base on which to build;
- A harmonious community or 'neutral space' for communities in conflict to come together to discuss shared concerns and causes of conflict in need of resolution;
- A history of successful neighbourhood working or at least no history of bad feeling among residents;
- Integrated activities, so that interventions, such as enterprise promotion, do not stand alone in a neighbourhood;
- Access to funding so that partnerships can demonstrate their added value to the area by levering in resources that it did not previously receive;
- The partnership has credibility with and the trust of the community and public service providers – in other words it does not over promise and under deliver;
- The timing of interventions has to be judged correctly for them to be effective – partners need to ask such questions as: Are key stakeholders ready and committed? Has the confidence of the community been built? Have or can 'early wins' established momentum?
- Involvement has to be at the appropriate level for the groups that are being engaged, for example, activities for young people need to focus on the concerns of young people not professionals;
- A genuine desire on the part of service providers to get communities involved in order to promote change and improvements in services;
- Strong performance management in order to make sure things get done and are seen to be done;

- A link between neighbourhood and LSP-level decisions, in order to get vertical integration in key decision-making processes where relevant;
- The commitment to address the issues that matter locally, not the issues on the LSP's or local authority's agenda;
- Having full-time staff working in as well as for the area, in order to ensure there is capacity to work in partnership at the neighbourhood level;
- A strong board with the long-term commitment of its members;
- An ability to manage the expectations of residents and service providers; and
- A good understanding of the risks involved and a strategy to manage them.

Barriers to neighbourhood working

3.10 The case studies also point to a number of barriers to neighbourhood working that will need to be addressed, if neighbourhood working is to be successful. These include:

- 'Consultation fatigue', in other words, too much time spent on surveys and meetings and not enough action to address acute and/or visible problems;
- The costs of neighbourhood working, which appear to be additional to existing costs, as neighbourhood working is treated as a 'bolt on' to existing ways of working, rather than an alternative way of operating;
- Inertia within partner organisations, which means that partners stick with what they know without sufficient external pressure to change;
- A lack of capacity to deliver local priorities once they have been identified, which either leads to a fear of neighbourhood working in the first instance or disgruntlement among residents and providers as additional demands are not met;
- The absence of a track record of delivery leads to reluctance among those procuring and/or managing services to devolve the procurement function, the delivery function and/or the performance management function;
- Over-estimating people's willingness to get involved in 'governance' issues, as opposed to involvement in specific direct actions;
- Language issues, such as the off-putting use of jargon and the need to communicate in other languages if 'hard to reach' groups are to be engaged effectively;
- Overloading a neighbourhood partnership with more tasks than it wishes to engage in, for example, consultation on a range of issues which are of concern to mainstream service providers, but may not be the focus for a neighbourhood partnership given the limited time and goodwill of volunteers;

- A culture of compliance to meet central government targets that undermines local residents' faith in local devolution and their confidence in the commitment to make local decision-making real;
- Lack of genuine commitment to change among service providers;
- Attitudes of residents in fractured communities towards working together to deal with issues in the neighbourhood;
- Lack of legitimacy for the arrangements in the eyes of local stakeholders and communities;
- Too much of a partnership's energy spent on trying to survive, for example, by chasing grants, which leaves little time for improving the area; and
- The difficulties for mainstream service providers of managing changes in neighbourhood working alongside other changes required in public service provision.

Lessons from the international case studies

3.11 The international case studies highlighted some common factors to community engagement at the neighbourhood level across a range of different national institutional arrangements and cultural contexts:

- Building appropriate skills for residents, so that they can become informed citizens able to participate effectively;
- Ensuring early involvement of local people before plans are drawn up;
- Establishing agreed structures and procedures that allow and enable a wide range of people to participate;
- Securing support for community participation from a range of stakeholders, as community participation is not a cheap option and requires funding;
- Seeking and securing 'quick wins' to build confidence and avoid disillusionment;
- Combining place and people based interventions to tackle the complexity of the issues to be faced in deprived neighbourhoods;
- Focus on assets and capacities of individuals and communities that are located in and/or operate in the neighbourhoods;
- Strong inter-government interfaces to ensure joined-up responses; and
- Secure funds and the danger of some agencies using funding to 'control' community groups.

- 3.12 The Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy in Toronto offers striking parallels with current English experience. The private sector highlighted the negative economic consequences of the extent of deprivation in some neighbourhoods. Action was taken with the production of a Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy implemented by Neighbourhood Investment Partnerships working in each neighbourhood with an Investment Board involving community, local government and service providers, supported by a Strong Neighbourhoods Unit. The City of Toronto developed the vision for the neighbourhoods that national, regional and local government signed up to deliver. Links from the bottom-up are essential elements of the governance arrangements here.
- 3.13 The participatory budgeting approach promoted in Porto Alegre, Brazil provides a cycle of activity based on an assessment of the past year's expenditure and discussions of the priorities for the future by linking neighbourhood assemblies, thematic assemblies and meetings of city-wide delegates to inform the local authority's budgeting process. The process involves different levels of discussion over priorities, establishing communities' demands and periods of reconciliation of the different demands. This provides an example of how to mix neighbourhood and city-wide issues and develop informed citizen engagement. The impact at neighbourhood level is measured and reported back in terms of hard outputs, such as kilometres of road paved, and school enrolment etc., as well as reduced corruption among public officials, as the budget process is more transparent.

Summary and conclusions

- 3.14 This chapter summarises the broad findings from the case studies carried out and examined as part of the project. It notes the wide variety of neighbourhood and area arrangements and the dangers of generalisation, but draws out general findings on the benefits of neighbourhood working, the critical success factors and the barriers to neighbourhood working. The themes and issues are picked up and analysed in more depth in subsequent chapters.
- 3.15 The next chapter looks in more detail at the different types of neighbourhood arrangements. It also examines the relationship between neighbourhood arrangements and two recent institutional innovations: LSPs and LAAs.

Chapter 4: What did we discover about neighbourhood governance and neighbourhood working?

Introduction

4.1 Chapter 2 set out the policy context and Chapter 3 set out the key findings identified in the case studies. This chapter looks in more detail at what the research found with regard to the different types of governance arrangements and neighbourhood working and the institutional environment in which they operate. Specifically, it:

- Explains the approach taken to interpreting the evidence and developing the typologies of neighbourhood arrangements;
- Sets out the forms that neighbourhood arrangements take;
- Lists the functions that different neighbourhood arrangements can and/or do perform;
- Illustrates how structures relate to functions in neighbourhood arrangements;
- Sets out the evidence including that drawn from the case studies on the relationship between neighbourhood arrangements and LSPs;
- Sets out the tentative evidence on the relationship between neighbourhoods and LAAs; and
- Summarises the policy implications with regard to LAAs.

Typologies of neighbourhood governance

4.2 The evidence in the case studies could be viewed in a number of ways. For instance, arrangements could be viewed in terms of whether they are 'bottom-up' or 'top-down'. However this approach could prove problematic for three reasons. First, arrangements evolve, so that what was once a bottom-up initiative may now be the vehicle of top-down activity. Second, the judgement on whether a set of arrangements is bottom-up or top-down requires timely and intimate knowledge of activity over time, as formal structures cannot be used as a short-hand for the nature and content of activity. For example, a company limited by guarantee can deliver top-down interventions, as well as bottom-up activity. Third, as they become established, most neighbourhood arrangements will have reached a 'balance' between bottom-up and top-down initiatives as part of their development. Therefore, the judgement is on where the balance between top-down and bottom-up activities lies, not whether the arrangements are one or the other.

4.3 The evidence could also be viewed in terms of the purpose of the arrangements, for example service improvement or community engagement in the institutions of government. In practice most neighbourhood arrangements have some practical purpose (usually related to service issues of one form or another) and aim to engage a wider constituency, which makes delineation on the basis of service focus or public engagement a false distinction. It is possible, however, to develop a range of

functions through which neighbourhood arrangements operate to achieve one or both purposes and from this to identify which arrangements are best suited to achieving service improvement, which to promoting engagement and which arrangements are suited to pursuing both purposes.

- 4.4 Given the above points, the report categorises neighbourhood arrangements in terms of their forms and their functions. In this context, functions are the range of executive, oversight, enabling, informing and consultative functions that can be carried out at the neighbourhood level and form means the combinations of legal status and types of membership used in neighbourhood arrangements.

The forms of neighbourhood arrangements

- 4.5 There are a range of neighbourhood governance forms and ways to involve neighbourhoods in the wider governance of a city or a district, including:¹²

- Companies limited by guarantee, for example companies with assets and the right to trade goods and services with board members often nominated by key stakeholders from the local authority, local businesses and community groups; New Deal for Communities and Single Regeneration Budget Boards with mixes of elected resident board members and nominated stakeholders; and community development trusts, which are usually companies limited by guarantee with a charitable arm;¹³
- Parish or town councils with elected parish councillors representing electorates ranging from just 200 people to 70,000 people.¹⁴ They have the ability to raise revenue through a local precept;
- Area or ward committees, made up of councillors for the purpose of devolved decision-making by the council, for example, small planning issues, and by co-opted members from service providers and the community for non-local authority decision-making purposes;
- Formal partnerships with no legal status that are part of wider governance arrangements, for example multi-agency teams with voluntary and community sector representation, these tend to be led by or underpinned by the local authority;
- Formal groups focusing on a particular issue or type of resident, for example, boards of school governors or children and young people, which form part of the governance arrangements of an area;

¹² The case studies did not cover Community Interest Companies as these are a relatively recent innovation. It is likely however that they will have similar characteristics to Community Development Trusts.

¹³ The Community Development Trusts Association has around 500 full or associate members.

¹⁴ There are currently around 8,500 local parish or town councils in England (148 of which were created since 1997). They cover some 16 million people (about 30% of the population). Section 11 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 allows a community at the village, neighbourhood, town or similar level beneath an English district or borough council to demand its own elected parish or town council. Any such community must collect a petition totalling 10% of the electorate.

- Consultation vehicles, for example, service user groups, focus or reference groups of short or long-term duration, to test people's views and inform decision-making; and
 - Informal groups of residents bringing together people and agencies to tackle a particular issue, for example, groups formed in response to planning issues, and constituted but unincorporated groups with a chair and treasurer and a bank account, for example, managing a particular community facility.
- 4.6 The different types of governance arrangements vary in the ways in which they are democratically accountable to residents, managerially accountable to funding providers, and practically accountable to residents and businesses and customers of service providers. For example, NDC boards, such as Bradford Trident, are made up of elected residents and appointed representatives of key stakeholders and have to report to government on the performance of their programmes.
- 4.7 The case studies illustrate that governance arrangements evolve over time, both in terms of their structures, legal status and functions. For example, the West Euston Partnership in Camden began as an informal response by local residents and councillors to racial violence, evolved into a company limited by guarantee (as part of the arrangements to deliver a Single Regeneration Budget programme) and is now developing neighbourhood management. Thus, the governance arrangements in a neighbourhood adapt to their environment and changing circumstances: flexibility is part of ensuring durability. Alternatively, they may wither and decline without an additional stimulus to keep people involved.

The functions of neighbourhood arrangements

- 4.8 The case studies revealed a number of functions of neighbourhood arrangements, including:
- Providing a space for the people of an area to come together to discuss issues of mutual concern;
 - Levering in resources to the area, for example by bidding for regeneration funds;
 - Budget management;
 - Furnishing local intelligence and advice to service providers, for example, neighbourhood forums supporting local policing;
 - Consulting the public on changes in or to the neighbourhood in order to gather local views to inform decision-making;
 - Consulting the public on wider changes in a city or district that may affect the neighbourhood, in order to gather local views and inform strategic decision-making;
 - Responding to consultations by other stakeholders;

- Oversight and provision of neighbourhood management initiatives of one kind or another, usually based on a small team located in the neighbourhood that seeks to influence mainstream providers' approach to delivering services in the area;
- Designing and planning facilities/amenities, physical changes and service delivery in the neighbourhood;
- Advising mainstream providers on the commissioning of facilities and/or services, for example, the wording of conditions in invitations to tender to take account of the diversity of languages in an area;
- Commissioning facilities and/or services for some or all of those living in the neighbourhood, for example, through the management of regeneration funds;
- Acquiring land, assets and amenities;
- Co-production of services and/or outcomes in neighbourhoods, i.e., public and service providers working together to deliver services or achieve shared outcomes, such as waste recycling targets etc.;
- Delivering services in the neighbourhood for example, repairs and maintenance services on housing estates;
- Managing and maintaining facilities/amenities located in the neighbourhood; and
- Assisting in the performance management of services delivered by others in the neighbourhood.

How do form and function relate to each other?

4.9 The case studies illustrated how these functions could be combined or ignored in a partnership and how the different functions may become more or less prominent over time, as progress is made and/or as circumstances change. This suggests there are few hard and fast rules about the functions that different arrangements may carry out at a given point in time. It is possible, however, to identify the functions that different types of arrangements have the capacity to carry out over time (Table 4.1).

4.10 Table 4.1 shows that, in terms of functions, companies limited by guarantee/ community development trusts and parish councils have the potential to carry out all of the functions that are likely to operate at the neighbourhood level. While other structures have a limited role because they:

- Do not cover all issues or all groups;
- Exist to serve only a consultative role; or
- Lack the formal structures necessary to undertake some functions, such as formal and accountable decision-making.

4.11 It should also be noted that the case studies suggest that the different functions can be performed by a number of organisations operating in the same area, in what have been termed ‘nested arrangements’. For example, plans and oversight may be located in one organisation and service delivery or project management may rest in another neighbourhood-based organisation.

Table 4.1: Functions and structures in neighbourhood typologies

Form/ Function	Companies limited by guarantee & Community Development Trusts	Parish councils	Area/ward committees	Formal partnerships with no legal status linked to wider governance arrangements	Formal partnership groups focusing on an issue or group	Consultation vehicles	Informal groups of residents to tackle an issue
Providing a space for people to come together	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	✓ Limited	Limited, as reliant on top-down	✓
Levering in resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	×	✓
Budget management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Furnishing local intelligence and advice to service providers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	✓	✓
Consulting the public on changes in or to the neighbourhood	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	✓	✓
Consulting the public on wider changes	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Responding to consultations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	✓	✓
Over-sight and provision of neighbourhood management initiatives	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×
Designing and planning facilities, area and services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	×
Advising mainstream providers on the commissioning of facilities and/or services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	✓	✓
Commissioning facilities and/or services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	×	×
Acquiring assets and facilities	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	×	✓

(continued overleaf)

Table 4.1: Functions and structures in neighbourhood typologies (continued)

Form/ Function	Companies limited by guarantee & Community Development Trusts	Parish councils	Area/ward committees	Formal partnerships with no legal status linked to wider governance arrangements	Formal partnership groups focusing on an issue or group	Consultation vehicles	Informal groups of residents to tackle an issue
Acquiring assets and facilities	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	×	✓
Co-production of services and/or outcomes in neighbourhoods	✓	✓	✓ Limited	✓	✓ Limited	×	✓
Delivering services	✓	✓	×	×	×	×	✓
Managing and maintaining facilities/amenities	✓	✓	×	×	✓ Limited	×	✓
Assisting in the performance management of services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Limited	✓	×

4.12 In terms of accountability:

- There are a number of methods of selecting members of companies limited by guarantee and community development trusts, for example, election, invitation or nomination by local organisations, and these offer different degrees of local accountability. However, it should be noted that, when a board meets its members should take decisions in the interest of the company or trust; and the interests of the company or trust may not always coincide with those of some, or even a majority of residents.
- Parish councils offer a clear line of democratic accountability to residents, but are responsible for a limited range of services; therefore other forms of accountability have to be in place for major service providers.
- Area/ward committees provide democratic accountability, but the degree of delegation of service provision varies considerably across the country, therefore, they often provide a vehicle through which the local authority executive and service providers are held to account, rather than being direct providers themselves.
- Formal partnerships of key stakeholders are less accountable to the electorate than parish councils and area committees, and formal decision-making is often less transparent to the public and to non-participants, than is the case with parish councils and area committees, as agendas and minutes may be less open to public scrutiny.
- Informal groups are by definition not formally accountable to the wider public, but act as a vehicle for participation.

- 4.13 In terms of their ability to engage the public in the institutions of government, each of the structures offers a degree of engagement and may employ a mix of engagement techniques. Parish councils and area/ward committees offer a direct link between the institutions of government and the public; however, they need to take steps to engage people in more than just standing for election or voting in elections, if they are to generate healthy and regular participation. While companies limited by guarantee and informal groups may appear to be less directly accountable to the public, as they are constituted by a relatively small number of active citizens, they can and do operate broad consultation and engagement processes, such as area plans, festivals, and postal surveys etc. which indirectly link people to the institutions of government.
- 4.14 Thus, there are many different forms of neighbourhood arrangements carrying out different functions and tackling different issues. The forms, functions and issues in a particular area change over time, as the local situation changes and the environment in which they operate alters. In the current context, most neighbourhood arrangements will have to engage with LSPs if they are to influence key mainstream service providers. They will also have to engage with LAAs. The next section looks at LSPs in the context of neighbourhood working, the subsequent section sets out the tentative findings of research on the role of LAAs in neighbourhood working and the role of neighbourhoods in LAAs.

LSPs

- 4.15 LSPs are now an established part of local governance arrangements in England. They provide the local authority level governance arrangements within which neighbourhood arrangements operate and to that extent will affect how effective neighbourhood arrangements can be in bringing about changes in their areas.
- 4.16 The *National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: Formative Evaluation and Action Research Programme 2002-2005 Final Report*¹⁵ did not seek to identify the overall scale of sub-local authority level arrangements. It did, however, find 28% of LSPs had formal links to area/ward committees/forums, a further 38% had informal links while 16% had no links (18% said it was not applicable). Thirty per cent of LSPs had formal links with parishes and 37% had informal links, 13% had no links (the question was not applicable to 21% of local authorities). Twenty-one per cent of LSPs had formal links to neighbourhood management initiatives and 21% had informal links to neighbourhood management initiatives.
- 4.17 The National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships Final Report describes a 'very differentiated picture between NRF and non-NRF LSPs'. Those LSPs in receipt of NRF 'very likely' to have links to sub-local and neighbourhood structures. The report noted that county councils were not likely to have direct links to parishes. They often worked through umbrella groups. It also noted that urban authorities were more likely to have links between the LSP and local structures. However, even then the governance arrangements between the neighbourhoods and the LSPs varied considerably. There was evidence that stakeholders were '...frequently unclear as to

¹⁵ European Institute for Urban Affairs, Office for Public Management, University of Warwick and University of West of England (2006) *National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: Formative Evaluation and Action Research Programme 2002-2005 Final Report* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

the purpose of engagement with ‘sub-localities’. The Final Report summarises the issues that need to be addressed if neighbourhoods and LSPs are to work effectively together:

- Minimise overlap and conflict between LSP and local authority structures;
- The provision of clarity over the relationship between elected members and other community leaders; and
- Resources to support the participation of ‘sub-local’ representatives and the provision of umbrella groups to bring together the different organisations operating in a neighbourhood.

4.18 Thus, the evidence suggests that the existence of effective links between neighbourhood arrangements and LSPs is patchy, in part due to the multi-tiered nature of local government in England. It also indicates that where arrangements appear to be strong this is often due to efforts at local regeneration and renewal, mainly in urban areas. This indicates the need for concerted efforts to improve links between neighbourhood and authority-wide governance arrangements. A recent tool for promoting devolution to the local level is LAAs. As part of the devolution process, this may also offer a route to devolution to the neighbourhood level. The next section looks at the limited evidence on the relationship between neighbourhoods and LAAs.

LAAs

4.19 LAAs were launched in July 2004. Their purpose was to improve central/local relations, service delivery, efficiency and partnership working and reduce the administrative burden associated with special and area-based initiatives. They also aimed to enable local authorities to provide better leadership. In practical terms, they have concentrated a range of Government funding streams going in to Local Authority Districts (LADs), as part of a three-year-long agreement that is reviewed annually. At first they covered 20 pilot areas; coverage was then extended to a further 66 in 2005, and all principal local authorities will have a LAA by 2008.

4.20 The LAA Guidance¹⁶ that applied during the lifetime of the project set out four ‘blocks’ of activity which make up the LAA and its associated outcomes, indicators and targets.¹⁷ The four blocks are:

- Children and Young People;
- Safer and Stronger Communities;
- Healthier Communities and Older People; and
- Economic Development and Enterprise.¹⁸

¹⁶ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) *Local Area Agreements Guidance* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

¹⁷ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006) *Local Area Agreements: Guidance for Round 3 and Refresh of Rounds 1 and 2* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has subsequently been issued.

¹⁸ The first round pilot LAAs did not originally have a fourth block. This was added later.

4.21 LAAs are required to address the issue of neighbourhood outcomes in relation to neighbourhood renewal.¹⁹ The LSPs covered by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) have six mandatory outcomes for their LAA (Box 4.1).

Box 4.1: The six mandatory LAA outcomes for areas in receipt of NRF

Children and young people

- Raise standards in English, maths and science in secondary education so that by 2008 at least 50% of pupils achieve level 5 or above.

Safer and stronger communities

- Reduce crime in line with local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships targets and narrow the gap between the worst performing wards/neighbourhoods and other areas across the district;
- As part of an overall housing strategy for the district, improve housing conditions within the most deprived neighbourhoods/wards, with a particular focus on ensuring all social housing is made decent by 2010; and
- Improve the quality of the local environment by reducing the gap in aspects of liveability between the worst wards/neighbourhoods and the district as a whole, with a particular focus on reducing levels of litter and detritus.

Healthier communities

- Reduce premature mortality rates and reduce inequalities in premature mortality rates between wards/neighbourhoods with particular focus on reducing the risk factors for heart, stroke and related diseases.

Economic development and enterprise

- For those living in the wards with the worst labour market position that are also located within the districts in receipt of NRF, significantly improve their overall employment rate, and reduce the difference between their employment rate and the overall employment rate in England.

4.22 The LAA Guidance does not require non-NRF areas to include neighbourhood indicators, targets and outcomes; although it does suggest LADs with pockets of deprivation could use the mandatory outcomes if they so wished. The Guidance also requires those receiving liveability funding and other neighbourhood targeted funding to include three mandatory outcomes on Safer and Stronger Communities, one of which covers deprived neighbourhoods;²⁰ and three mandatory outcomes in the Economic Development and Enterprise block for those LADs covered by Local Enterprise Growth Initiative LEGI, none of which have a neighbourhood focus.²¹ The Safer and Stronger Communities block also contains outcomes that are to be applied to all areas: to reduce crime, the harm caused by illegal drugs, and to reassure the

19 Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) is pooled as part of the LAA.

20 They are: to have cleaner, greener and safer public spaces (with a range of possible indicators); to improve the quality of life for people in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and ensure service providers are more responsive to neighbourhood needs and improve their delivery; and to increase domestic fire safety and to reduce arson.

21 They are: to increase total entrepreneurial activity amongst the local population; to support the sustainable growth and reduce the unnecessary failure of locally-owned business; and to attract appropriate inward investors, making use of local labour resources.

public, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour; and to empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision-making and the delivery of services.

4.23 The outcomes and targets in the Guidance make consistent links between neighbourhood outcomes and the fight to tackle deprivation and disadvantage. The outcomes and targets do not however require a neighbourhood-based approach to meeting targets outside those areas with a recognised problem of deprivation.

4.24 Thus, a review of the LAA Guidance shows that the starting position for neighbourhoods and neighbourhood arrangements is strong in deprived areas, but is not strong for average or affluent areas. Furthermore, there appears to be room for some misunderstandings at the local level over what role neighbourhoods are to play in:

- The governance arrangements for negotiating an LAA;
- Community consultation around the development of SCSs and LAAs; and
- The delivery of the outcomes agreed in the LAA.

4.25 This project found limited evidence on the extent and impact of neighbourhood working on the development and delivery of LAAs. Four of the five case studies carried out as part of this project had, or were, negotiating LAAs and provide some insight into the relationship between neighbourhoods and LAAs. LB Camden and Blackburn with Darwen are Round 2 LAAs; and Devon County Council and the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council are Round 1 pilots.²²

4.26 The London Borough of Camden case study shows that even where an authority is committed to involve neighbourhoods to a greater level than is indicated in national guidance, it is tough to engage neighbourhoods in a genuine dialogue about the content of the LAA. This is particularly so where local authorities and other members of the LSP are working to tight deadlines. It is practically difficult to construct commissioning and performance review processes that involve and empower neighbourhoods; and even where dedicated resources are made available to neighbourhoods, active engagement places considerable pressure on the time commitments of volunteers (Box 4.2).

²² It should be noted that both Camden and Blackburn with Darwen have a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder and Bradford has a NDC Programme, which means they already had established some of the mechanisms required for linking neighbourhood targets to LAAs. Middlesbrough is the fifth case study area, and will start its LAA in 2007.

Box 4.2: London Borough of Camden, Neighbourhoods and LAA Round 2

1. The LB Camden has a history of neighbourhood working in its deprived areas. In 2000 Camden identified the 10 most deprived areas in the Borough and it has since worked to develop neighbourhood partnerships in these areas. The partnerships have developed from the bottom-up and as a result have different legal statuses, remits and levels of resources. However, recently a comprehensive support package for all 10 neighbourhoods has been agreed using ring-fenced funding from Camden's LAA.
2. The 10 partnerships meet together with the executive member for equalities and community development and statutory partners on a quarterly basis. The Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS) has, to date, formed the basis of the 10 neighbourhoods' relationship to the LSP.
3. Work on developing a new community strategy is well underway and consultation is likely to take place in autumn 2006. The commissioning arrangements for the LAA in 2006/07 superseded those put in place for the previous years of NRF. NRF is now pooled within Camden's LAA and future development of the LAA will take place in the context of an emerging community strategy.
4. Until recently the 10 partnerships had not been represented directly on the LSP – although several LSP members are also members of neighbourhood partnerships. A formal link has been developed via the executive member for equalities and community development. Furthermore, the reorganisation of the Camden Community Empowerment Network (CCEN)²³ means that one seat on the LSP is occupied by a representative from a neighbourhood partnership.
5. Prior to the introduction of LAAs, NRF was largely allocated using a bidding process, which was informed by the priorities and targets set out in the LNRS, although some projects were directly commissioned. Project proposals were assessed against transparent selection criteria that were developed by the LB Camden's Regeneration Team. The neighbourhood partnerships were involved in the bidding and selection process.
6. Camden's LSP was signed by ministers in March 2006. The LAA budget is £17.5m for the two years 2006/07 and 2007/08 (including £12.3m NRF; £3.5m for Safer Stronger Communities Fund; £800,000 for Choosing Health; and £960k Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) pump-priming grant).
7. The LSP ring-fenced 25% of NRF funds in the LAA for the first year to support projects that were receiving NRF.²⁴
8. The LSP also agreed to ring-fence £500,000 to support the neighbourhood partnerships in each of the years 2006/07 and 2007/08 (in addition to £200,000 a year for the management and administration of neighbourhood management pathfinder pilot and on-going mainstream budget provision to some neighbourhoods, including West Euston Partnership). The funding is to be allocated on the basis of ensuring:
 - Good value for money;
 - Good governance arrangements;
 - A high level of performance management;
 - Innovation to achieve representation of all communities;
 - Strong representation linked to the four LAA blocks; and
 - A further £500,000 was ring-fenced to support innovative ideas to deliver the LAA's objectives.

(continued overleaf)

²³ Formerly known locally as the Network of Networks.

²⁴ The selection of projects for continuation funding was carried out by the NRF Management Group/Re-commissioning panel, which reported its recommendations to the LSP on 30 January 2006.

Box 4.2: London Borough of Camden, Neighbourhoods and LAA Round 2 (continued)

9. The LSP agreed to establish joint commissioning arrangements to utilise the 'uncommitted' money pooled in the LAA. It allocated the money between the four LAA 'blocks': Children and Young People, Healthier Communities and Older People, Safer and Stronger Communities; and Economic Development and Enterprise. It also agreed to establish six separate commissioning groups based on established partnerships:
 - Children and Young People – led by the C&YP's Partnership;
 - Stronger Communities – for which a group had to be formed, led by LBC;
 - Safer Communities – led by the Community Safety Partnership;
 - Economic Development and Enterprise – led by the Training and Employment Forum;
 - Health – led by the Public Health Partnership; and
 - Older People – led by Older People's Quality of Life Partnership.
10. Each block has an identified lead person who attends the LAA steering group, a sub-group of Camden's LSP, tasked with the day to day management of the LAA. The commissioning panels had a cross section of stakeholders and one representative from a neighbourhood partnership. Each of the 10 neighbourhood partnerships were asked, and submitted, a list of local priorities to each of the commissioning panels.
11. This process is over and above what is required by government guidance and demonstrates a commitment to operating at the neighbourhood level. However, there are concerns that:
 - the deadline for the LAA made it impossible for strategic partners to engage in a meaningful dialogue with neighbourhood partnerships, even where strong neighbourhood partnerships were in place;
 - volunteers in neighbourhoods were required to make a particular time commitment to engage fully in the commissioning process, for which they may not have had sufficient capacity, however many members were able to engage; and
 - the neighbourhoods were invited to nominate one representative on to the commissioning groups, but they lack an easy mechanism for selecting representatives and there is a risk that individuals will have limited knowledge of the other areas' needs.
12. Camden has commenced a review of its commissioning process with a view to implementing changes for 2007/08.

4.27 Blackburn with Darwen has a Local Public Service Board pulling together public sector partners; this complements the LSP, which has a board, an executive and seven thematic groups.²⁵ The Borough has been split in to five neighbourhood areas (with populations of around 30,000 each). The local authority has established a Neighbourhood Engagement Service and each neighbourhood has a multi-agency team to serve its needs. The LAA in Blackburn with Darwen is viewed by partners as the next iteration of the Community Plan and will take over from it for the period 2006/09. As a 'single pot' area, i.e., one not subject to the four blocks, the partners have flexibility in setting targets and allocating funds. The LAA priorities were

²⁵ The seven themes are: Neighbourhood and Environment, Community Safety, Economic Regeneration, People and Communities, Children and Young People, Learning and Health and Well-being.

established as part of the revision of the community strategy. They follow the seven themes of the community strategy and the LSP sub-groups. As part of the process the 'top-down' targets from existing LPSAs and the floor targets have been 'reconciled' with those of local partners and neighbourhoods. The targets have been disaggregated to reflect the different issues affecting each of the five neighbourhood areas. The neighbourhood multi-agency teams (which include voluntary and community sector representatives) will play a key role in the delivery, evaluation and revision of the LAA, feeding information and their views to the LSP executive.

- 4.28 The evidence from Teignmouth in Devon is that the County Council has developed governance arrangements for the LAA blocks. The arrangements draw heavily on Districts, for example, the Safer and Stronger Communities arrangements are based on the seven Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and the Drug and Alcohol Action team. Furthermore, the County's Community Strategy (adopted summer 2004) was built on district-based community strategies. The tight timescales associated with producing the agreement meant not everyone could be consulted fully. Evidence from the Teignmouth Regeneration Partnership seems to suggest that it is more concerned with local issues than dealing with the LAA, and had little impact on the LAA. However, the County Council intends to work with the partnership to get its assistance in future consultations over the LAA, so a consultative and review role can be envisaged for the future.
- 4.29 The Bradford case study shows the local authority working with partners to link the blocks to the District's priorities. It shows also the governance arrangements that will oversee the delivery of the LAA. Bradford has 10 members of its family of partnerships – not including the Community Empowerment Network, which works with the community and voluntary sector to engage local people in improving their neighbourhoods. The voluntary and community sector (VCS) was heavily involved in producing the LAA, work which built on the Voluntary Sector Compact. The partners in the District already had a commitment to neighbourhood-based work: 60 neighbourhood/area regeneration plans, seven urban village/parish/town council plans; with five constituency level plans to be developed. However, the case study also found duplication and rivalry in local consultation frameworks with the local authority maintaining structures that pre-date those of the LSP.
- 4.30 Thus, the LAA process offers opportunities for LSPs and local authorities to:
- Set neighbourhood-level targets and outcomes;
 - Channel resources to support and establish neighbourhood arrangements;
 - Focus on deprived areas where required;
 - Engage with neighbourhood partnerships and neighbourhood representatives (including councillors); and
 - Engage service providers and neighbourhood partnerships in a dialogue about how to deliver the LAA at the neighbourhood level.
- 4.31 However, there is some way to go if neighbourhoods are to be fully engaged in the negotiation, delivery and evaluation of LAAs.

Summary and conclusions

4.32 There are many different forms of neighbourhood arrangements carrying out different functions and tackling different issues. The forms, functions and issues in a particular area change over time, as the local situation changes, and the environment in which they operate evolves. In the current context, most neighbourhood arrangements will have to engage with LSPs if they are to influence key mainstream service providers. They will also have to engage with LAAs. The evidence suggests that the existence of effective links between neighbourhood arrangements and LSPs is patchy, in part due to the multi-tiered nature of local government in England. It also indicates that where arrangements appear to be strong this is often due to efforts at local regeneration and renewal, which mainly in urban areas. This suggests the need for concerted efforts to improve links between neighbourhood and authority-wide governance arrangements.

4.33 The limited evidence from the case studies points to challenges related to neighbourhoods' role in:

- Negotiating LAAs, for example, their voice and choice on the local themes, priorities, indicators and targets is limited, as tight deadlines restrict the time for consultation and discussion and the neighbourhoods are often more concerned with local issues than what appear to be esoteric discussions around indicators and targets;
- The commissioning process, for example, the extent to which LSPs can develop neighbourhood related criteria for commissioning activity to deliver the LAA; and the provision of resources to support neighbourhoods' participation in commissioning activity in ways that ensure the effective representation of different neighbourhoods' interests;
- Monitoring and reviewing the impact of the LAA's targets on neighbourhoods; and
- Revising the targets on an annual basis.

Chapter 5: Who did we find was involved and how were they involved?

Introduction

5.1 The previous chapter reviewed the different types of neighbourhood arrangements and the relationship between neighbourhoods and LSPs and LAAs. This chapter reviews evidence on engagement in the neighbourhood arrangements themselves. It looks at:

- Who is and isn't involved and reasons for lack of involvement;
- What helps and what hinders engagement in terms of 'rules of engagement', partner capacity and community capacity, particularly with regard to diversity; and
- The building blocks of successful engagement and the requirements that governance arrangements have to meet if engagement of diverse groups is to be effective.

Who is and who isn't involved?

5.2 This section gives a general overview of statistics on engagement, highlights the importance of and difficulties in engaging all groups in local activity and illustrates the importance of flexibility in local arrangements so that they can take account of changes in the make up of the local population. It then looks at some of the reasons why some people do not engage in neighbourhood arrangements and notes the need for different interventions to address the different causes.

5.3 Statistics on citizen engagement suggest that, while membership of mass organisations (including political parties) is falling, interest in single issue action is rising. Similarly, despite a steep decline in voting at elections, research suggests that, even among those who do not vote in general elections, 37% are members of or active in a charity, community group, public body or campaigning organisations.²⁶ The Home Office Citizenship Survey found that half the population have volunteered formally or informally at least once a month and 43% of socially excluded groups have done so. Eight per cent have been involved in local decision-making by being a member of a group and 2% take on a more formal role (as a local councillor, school governor, special police constable or magistrate).²⁷ By these measures, concerns about increasing apathy appear to be unfounded. According to the General Household Survey,²⁸ although less likely to engage in local organisations than in other areas, 7% of people in disadvantaged areas have been actively engaged with a local organisation (compared with 13% cent overall).

²⁶ The Power Inquiry (2006) *Power to the People: The Report of Power, an independent inquiry into Britain's democracy* York: The Power Inquiry.

²⁷ Murphy, Rachel, Elaine Wedlock and Jenny King (2005) *Early Findings from the Home Office Citizenship Survey* London: Home Office.

²⁸ Coulthard, M., A. Walker A. and Morgan (2002) *People's Perceptions of their Neighbourhood and Community Involvement: Results from the social capital module of the General Household Survey 2000* London: The Stationery Office.

5.4 Patterns of participation for different ethnic groups are complex. The 2005 Citizenship Survey found:

Participation in informal and formal volunteering was lower among people from minority ethnic groups, with 44 per cent undertaking either informal or formal volunteering at least once a month, compared with half (50%) of White people. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups participating in voluntary activities was unchanged from 2003. The difference in participation between minority ethnic groups and White people was slightly larger for formal voluntary activities (24% of people from minority ethnic groups participating compared with 29% of White people) than for informal volunteering (34% compared with 37%). These differences were due to lower participation among Asian and Chinese groups.²⁹

5.5 It also found that:

Differences in participation in voluntary activities by ethnic group were largely due to lower rates of participation among people born outside the UK ... There were no statistically significant differences in rates of participation in formal voluntary activities between White, Asian or Black people born in the UK. However, Black people born in the UK were more likely than White or Asian people born in the UK to regularly undertake informal volunteering (45% of Black people compared with 37% of White people and 38% of Asian people).³⁰

5.6 The new case studies carried out as part of this project covered a diverse range of areas with diverse populations. The groups utilised many different forms of engagement – from boards, to surveys, and from fun days to planning for real exercises (Box 5.1).

Box 5.1: How case study areas identified members of the board

West Euston Partnership in Camden has a board made up of third party nominations and uses a diverse range of tools to engage different groups on local issues.

Teignmouth Regeneration Board draws its board members from a cross-section of local organisations and community engagement occurred through the development of a regeneration plan, with local residents chairing thematic groups.

West Middlesbrough Youth Assembly has 16 members from across the area, volunteers were sought with the aim of having five from each of the three neighbourhoods that constitute the area – however, only 16 volunteers came forward. The group had one member from the BME community, one visually impaired member and one member with learning difficulties.

Bradford Trident has a Board of 25: 12 are elected residents, two are co-opted faith group leaders, three are local councillors and the rest are representatives from service providers.

(See Annex 2 for further details).

29 Kitchen, Sarah, Juliet Michaelson, Natasha Wood and Peter John (2006) *2005 Citizenship Survey: Active communities topic report* London: Department for Communities and Local Government (p.4).

30 Kitchen, Sarah, Juliet Michaelson, Natasha Wood and Peter John (2006) *2005 Citizenship Survey: Active communities topic report* London: Department for Communities and Local Government (p.9).

- 5.7 If neighbourhood working is to be effective, it must reach the range of communities that exist locally. Different communities require different things from their neighbourhood. Patterns of diversity also differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, according to the population mix, the history of local engagement and local attitudes – communities which are marginalised in one may not be in another. The make-up of an area will also change over time – for example, with the advent of new immigrant groups (Box 5.2).

Box 5.2: How case studies dealt with changing populations

In *Norfolk's Minority Ethnic Liaison Officer* policing scheme, the most difficult groups to reach were Iraqi asylum seekers for whom the uniform was a major barrier, Chinese migrant workers who had no official documents and were frightened of being arrested, and other groups whose status was uncertain. Minority Ethnic Liaison Officers undertook outreach work to make contact with the hard to reach groups (Annex 1).

The *West Euston Partnership* found that it has to evolve in order to take account of new immigrant communities, such as the Somali community (Annex 2).

- 5.8 The term 'hard-to-reach' is commonly used to describe groups that local agencies and politicians wish to engage; but it is problematic, as it begs the question of 'hard for whom'.³¹ The New Deal for Communities evaluation, while recognising this, identifies refugees and asylum seekers, young people, people in their 30s and 40s, and single parents in their programmes as the most difficult to reach. Other groups who often miss out on public initiatives and mainstream services include homeless people, people with mental health problems, gypsies and travellers, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, people with disabilities and young people. Some groups may be particularly isolated at neighbourhood level or will be difficult to engage because they have low status within their communities.
- 5.9 There are many different reasons why people may be disengaged and it is important that neighbourhood working can distinguish between and respond to these different reasons. It is particularly important not to assume that lack of engagement is down to apathy or to place the responsibility for engagement solely on citizens. There are many other reasons why citizens may not engage. These include:
- *Satisfaction*: Some may not wish to engage or see any need to, because they are broadly satisfied or because they have other ways of making their views known.
 - *Lack of interest*: People may not engage because they have other priorities at the time. The particular issue on which their views are sought may not be one that interests them or the service may not be one they use.
 - *Lack of identity with the neighbourhood*: People may not engage because they do not identify with the neighbourhood under scrutiny. Forrest and Kearns³² demonstrated that BME residents in the neighbourhoods they studied sometimes

³¹ Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University (2005) *New Deal for Communities 2001-2005: An interim evaluation* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

³² Forrest, Ray and Ade Kearns (1999) *Joined Up Places? Social Cohesion and Neighbourhood Regeneration* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

had their strongest ties in other parts of the city or even internationally. This may also be true of faith and other communities of interest.

- *Lack of time and resources:* Engagement requires time and resources that many people do not have to spare. This is as true of busy executives as it is of single mothers on low incomes. Even those who are interested in principle may not engage because opportunities clash with other activities.
- *Lack of appeal:* People may be put off by the idea of having to attend meetings or not see the relevance of attempts to engage them. They may not engage because the structures used are off-putting and or the opportunities are not very attractive to them.
- *Disillusion:* Others may not see the point of engaging, because they mistrust government, because they do not believe their participation makes any difference. The lack of feedback from many consultations in the past has led to disillusionment on the part of many citizens who have engaged. This is not apathy but a rational response to past experience. Some people therefore may need evidence of change before they will engage again.
- *Fear:* In some neighbourhoods it is very risky for people to ‘raise their heads above the parapet’. This may be because they are subject to discrimination and fear becoming too visible – this includes asylum seekers and travellers who have experienced racism from communities who feel threatened by their presence. Or it may be because the circumstances in the neighbourhood are dangerous – in areas with high crime levels or drug dealing, for example, speaking out may incur very heavy penalties.
- *Exclusion:* Some people may not engage because of mechanisms for participation that are inaccessible or inconvenient: meetings held at times they can’t make; inability to get to venues because of transport, fear of crime or disability; language and processes that they can’t understand. Inadequate publicity may mean they don’t even know about the opportunity to engage. They may not have the confidence or know-how to engage. Traditional meeting structures can be very inhibiting. They may be excluded or inhibited by the dominance of other groups in the neighbourhood. Newcomers may find it particularly difficult to break in.
- *Invisibility:* Populations that are widely dispersed or atypical of their surroundings may simply be invisible – and hence ignored – by their surrounding community (for example, the rural poor, transient populations, private tenants); disabled people, BME groups, gay and lesbian people may be isolated in their neighbourhoods; in some communities, women and young people have low status and are not allowed to be spokespeople for their community.
- *Transience:* Some populations may simply not be around long enough to put down roots in a neighbourhood. This makes it particularly difficult to reach people or sustain engagement.

5.10 Each of these different reasons for lack of engagement will require a different response. And the reasons will vary from issue to issue and between neighbourhoods. Where disengagement is because people are broadly satisfied, mechanisms may still be needed to trigger action if this changes; where lack of interest or appeal is the issue, more imaginative ways of engaging people may be needed; where fear or invisibility is an issue, intensive work may be needed to give groups confidence and to mediate between them and the wider neighbourhood; where people are excluded, mechanisms need to be developed that are more accessible to them. It is also important not to take a blanket or stereotyped approach to groups defined as 'hard to reach'. Measures to engage BME groups, for example, need to recognise and cater for the diversity within BME communities themselves.

What helps and what hinders engagement?

5.11 Opportunities for engagement have increased significantly over recent years. Lessons learnt from past initiatives have also improved the design of more recent initiatives (for example building in lead times, investing in capacity building, longer timescales and so on). The issues can be summarised under three headings:

- The rules of engagement;
- Partner capacity; and
- Community capacity.

The rules of engagement

5.12 Formal structures with a track record of delivery provide a source of pressure to bring about changes in mainstream services, and a reference point for local residents. However, formal structures are not the only means and may well not be the most effective means of engaging some groups. Effective engagement requires a number of 'routes in'. Box 5.3 provides some tried and tested methods of engaging different groups for different purposes.

Box 5.3: Some mechanisms for engagement³³

- Citizens' panels that are regularly surveyed (sometimes these are selected to reflect the make-up of the neighbourhood; sometimes they rely on volunteers; sometimes this is done through IT networks)
- Citizen's juries, where a small number of people are brought together over two or three days to deliberate on a particular issue with the opportunity to call witnesses
- Similar one-off exercises which are less intensive but still encourage residents to work at a particular issue with professionals 'on tap' to advise them
- A partnership bus which goes round the neighbourhood making contact with people in their own settings
- A 'talk back' scheme where volunteers take on the task of talking to a set number of residents and feeding their views back
- A system of street representatives or similar schemes where individuals are given the task of being the eyes and ears of the partnership, feeding information out and feeding information back
- Participatory appraisal and research using a wealth of creative approaches developed in the South for involving people in discussions about the neighbourhood and for encouraging dialogue between residents and professionals
- Employing local people to carry out research
- Employing residents in local services
- More conventional surveys which can provide a valuable overview of the range of local views, but are dependent on the questions asked and how they are analysed – these are more likely to be valid if residents are involved in setting the questions
- Focus groups and other group discussions

5.13 Case studies in this and other studies have emphasised the importance of theme and working groups as a route for spreading engagement in formal partnership structures and bringing more residents into face to face contact with service providers. These more focused groups can be a particularly effective way of engaging more marginalised groups (Box 5.4). Independent facilitation and different approaches to running meetings have also been useful tools in ensuring that less confident voices are heard, including ensuring that language barriers are overcome.

Box 5.4: Targeted area-based engagement

The *West Middlesbrough Youth Forum* encourages young people to engage on an area basis as part of an area-wide governance structure that aims to engage young people in the improvement of their area (Annex 2).

³³ Taylor, M., H. Sullivan, and D. Wilkinson (2003) *Communities First: New Models for Neighbourhood Governance*, Discussion paper prepared for the Communities First Support.

- 5.14 Some partnerships have experimented with reserving places on boards for particular communities or setting up specific forums (for BME groups, young people, women, disabled people, for example) to feed into governance structures. However, the most marginalised groups may not have a significant enough presence at neighbourhood level to make their voices heard. Linking into organisations at city or district level can be critical to ensuring that their voices are heard in the neighbourhood and that they gain the confidence to engage. It is important too that the infrastructure exists to bring separate forums together.
- 5.15 The evidence suggests that, in the past, the complexity of government programmes has discouraged widespread engagement. They have been: too complex; too centrally-controlled and ill-aligned to specific local issues; too bureaucratic, not sufficiently holistic and interconnected.³⁴ This discourages many smaller and less experienced community groups from engaging. While devolution has the potential to reduce this direct control from the centre, a risk-averse culture in local public services, coupled with a continued emphasis on targets, is likely to persist and replicate these regulation regimes. Engaging the disengaged involves risk, imagination and flexibility and ways have to be found of managing this creatively. The provision of small funds with few strings attached but with support has proved particularly effective in engaging new and usually excluded groups at neighbourhood level (Box 5.5).³⁵

Box 5.5: Provision of small funds helps

The Community Chests and Community Learning Chests funded as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's Single Community Programme provided small sums of money to small local organisations many of which were new and/or worked with marginalised populations. Groups were supported in applying for funds, which often included support to become properly constituted. In some areas, beneficiaries were recruited onto grants panels which gave them both recognition and an opportunity to find out what else was going on in and beyond their neighbourhoods. The vast majority of the grants were found by the National Audit Office to contribute directly to neighbourhood renewal objectives.

- 5.16 Engaging with the diversity of communities requires political will and capacity. There is wide variation between authorities in this respect. Equipping communities with the mechanisms to bring those that are not performing to account will be important, but risks increasing mistrust and also depends on the capacity of communities themselves to deploy them. Other levers need to be found to break down barriers and encourage engagement. Providing for community involvement targets in both LAAs and Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPAs) of local authorities is one route to achieve this, but this needs to reflect the diversity of local populations.

³⁴ Farnell, Richard, Robert Furbey, Stephen Shams al Haqq Hills, Marie Macey and Greg Smith (2003) *'Faith' in urban regeneration? Engaging faith communities in urban regeneration* Bristol: The Policy Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

³⁵ Taylor, Marilyn, Derrick Purdue, Nancy Carlton, Ralph Mackridge, Alia Syed, Rose Ardron, Mandy Wilson, Richard Meegan and Hilary Russell (2005) *Making Connections: An evaluation of the Community Participation Programme* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; National Audit Office (2004) *Getting Citizens Involved: Community Participation in Neighbourhood Renewal* London: The Stationery Office.

Partner capacity

- 5.17 A number of studies have highlighted mistrust between communities and local public bodies as a major barrier to engagement, especially with more marginalised groups. In communities this may be due to negative experiences in the past with official bodies. Successive studies report resistance to change in parts of the public sector and mistrust of the current government emphasis on community engagement, with some politicians and professionals seeing this as a threat or as undermining their power rather than as an opportunity. Face to face contact through formal and informal contacts can help to overcome stereotypes on both sides and increase mutual understanding. As well as a local presence in neighbourhood offices and structures which encourage contact at different levels, joint training opportunities, shadowing, and secondments all have to role to play in breaking down this mistrust and should be built into neighbourhood working as well as encouraged through career and councillor development programmes.
- 5.18 Mistrust is also fed both by publicity about new initiatives which raise unrealistic expectations and by consultation exercises which have consistently failed to yield results or even to provide feedback. Building quick wins – for example, local events such as fun days and open days, and the re-shaping of street cleaning and housing services to improve the public realm – into initiatives has been an important step forward in demonstrating to citizens that their participation can make a difference.³⁶
- 5.19 An LGA survey 2004³⁷ concluded that providing opportunities for involvement is not enough. It is also necessary to develop the capacity of both councils and communities to use them effectively. For councils and other public service organisations, there was a need to develop skills in communicating with and involving service users, citizens and communities, especially those in communities least likely to participate in traditional public meeting and committee-based models. Ensuring elected members are equipped to be actively engaged with constituents from diverse backgrounds and to encourage constituents to work together to find their own solutions is also critical to the effective functioning of devolved governance.
- 5.20 Our case studies and the evaluation of Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders suggest that the presence in the neighbourhood of dedicated officers with an informal approach is critical to reaching the most marginalised groups. But the evidence also suggests that it is crucial to neighbourhood working that dedicated officers have authority back in their home department/service, and that commitment to engagement is not just vested in the few but built in throughout the department/service, running through all levels. This in turn requires capacity building work, incentives through performance management and career progression, strong leadership from the top and synergy with other targets and incentives. Continuity of personnel is also important if trust is to be established but has been difficult to

³⁶ Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme National Evaluation Team (2003) *Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme National Evaluation: Annual Review 2002/03 Research Report* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

³⁷ Local Government Association (2004) *Making Decisions Locally* London: Local Government Association.

achieve in times of radical policy change – lack of continuity emerges as a frequent problem in research evidence.³⁸

Community capacity

- 5.21 The evidence suggests that successful engagement will depend on the degree of existing community capacity; the nature of previous experience of engagement; and the mix of methods through which people are engaged.
- 5.22 The evidence from current neighbourhood renewal initiatives and our own case studies suggests that engagement is more likely in relation to some issues (environmental, community safety and other liveability issues) than in others because of the immediate and visible impact these have on people's lives. As these programmes mature it will be possible to assess how far and in what way communities are likely to engage with the health, education and worklessness issues that tend to come further down the line. Nonetheless, there are examples of successful community engagement in these fields.³⁹
- 5.23 Effective representation of the diversity of communities is most likely to be built where there is a long and varied tradition of community group activity which gives expression to this diversity. This not only builds the trust that is crucial to effective neighbourhood working; it makes it more likely that representatives will be both mandated and called to account by an informed public. It also increases the pool from which future community leaders and representatives can be drawn.
- 5.24 Clearly this tradition is not present in every neighbourhood or indeed in every community within the neighbourhood. Where it is not, resources need to be geared initially to capacity building in order to develop these strong foundations (perhaps along the lines of the Tenant Empowerment Grants).⁴⁰ This applies not only to neighbourhoods without a history of engagement but also marginalised communities within them. Structures need also to take this into account, being flexible enough to bring new communities in, to 'grow' with local communities and perhaps also to retreat and regroup when necessary.
- 5.25 Equally important is improving residents' access to jobs in local services through local training and recruitment practices. This benefits the individuals concerned and the local economy. It also has the potential to link services more closely to the neighbourhood, as the success of neighbourhood warden schemes – where one in four are local residents – demonstrates.

38 Craig, Gary, Marilyn Taylor and Mick Wilkinson with Kate Bloor, Surya Munro, and Alia Syed (2002) *Contract or Trust: The role of compacts in local governance* Bristol: The Policy Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium (2004) *Community Policing in Chicago Year Ten: An evaluation of Chicago's community policing strategy* Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

39 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office and Cabinet Office (2005) *Improving Delivery of Mainstream Services in Deprived Areas: The role of community involvement* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; Stuteley, Hazel (2002) 'The Beacon Project: A community-based health improvement project' *British Journal of General Practice* 52(1): 44-46

40 Administered by the Housing Corporation, these grants give tenants access to information and advice, support them in developing different ways of involving tenants in the management of their homes and can fund options studies and pre-feasibility studies for tenants who want to explore options for Right to Manage or for greater involvement in the management of their homes.

- 5.26 For all the reasons suggested earlier, however, it may be particularly difficult to engage people from marginalised and low income groups, many of whom are struggling to survive. While there has long been debate about the relative values of separate and integrated forms of organising amongst BME groups, for example, experience has shown the value of working separately with the most disadvantaged and least confident in order to build up the confidence to engage across community boundaries. A mix of universal and targeted approaches is therefore likely to be most successful. The same would apply to other types of exclusion – working with mental health, for example. Links to the relevant umbrella groups beyond the neighbourhood are also likely to be crucial to understanding the needs of the most isolated communities locally and to gaining their confidence.
- 5.27 Opportunities for these groups to provide their own services and develop their own enterprises can also be important. With support, even the most marginalised groups can fill important niches in service delivery, such as providing advocacy services and access to public services and helping agencies to make contact with and understand the needs of these constituencies.
- 5.28 With the emphasis increasingly on mixed communities, however, it will be equally important to consider how to bring different voices together. While handing over budgets to communities has much to recommend it, money can also be a trigger for competition and conflict. It is unwise to romanticise communities. Resources for mediation and brokerage and the time to build bridges between fractured communities are essential resources if new initiatives are to engage the disengaged.
- 5.29 Representation is a crucial and difficult issue. In the Minority Ethnic Liaison Officers case study for this research, the police felt that some community leaders used their contact with the police manipulatively (Annex 1). Another of the case study organisations spoke of the difficulties of ‘being held hostage by established community activists’, which is by no means an unfamiliar story for organisations wishing to develop in new directions. Even where communities are ‘in control’ the evidence suggests that this control may be confined to the few.
- 5.30 Representation is difficult and demanding. It was clear from the case studies in this research that, even where community-based organisations have strong community support and a commitment to ensuring their local legitimacy, the energy and time that goes into setting up and running a development trust or providing services on contract from the local or health authority can distance them from their constituencies. Where places are reserved on boards and partnerships for representatives of minority populations, the evidence also warns against the dangers of tokenism and expecting one person to reflect the interests of a diverse population. BME and disability organisations face the same challenges in relating to their wider constituency that other groups do, although some faith communities can claim closer links.⁴¹

41 Farnell, Richard, Robert Furbey, Stephen Shams al Haqq Hills, Marie Macey and Greg Smith (2003) *'Faith' in urban regeneration? Engaging faith communities in urban regeneration* Bristol: The Policy Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Box 5.6: Volunteers need support and resources

The Castle Vale Neighbourhood Management Board pays for the time of its resident representatives. The Board, which has six full meetings and three seminars a year, calculates that members need to put in half a day a week (Annex 1).

5.31 It is therefore essential to ensure that representatives have the necessary support to be effective and accountable (Box 5.6). Investments in a variety of channels for engagement coupled with resources for developing a range of local activities provide an important basis for legitimacy.

Summary and conclusions

5.32 The evidence suggests that opportunities for citizens to engage in policy making and delivery have increased considerably over recent years. But it also suggests that, while there are numerous examples of good practice, many communities are marginalised and frustrated by these opportunities and there is still a long way to go to engage the diversity of communities at neighbourhood level. The evidence indicates a number of factors that are likely to assist neighbourhood working to engage this diversity (Table 5.1). They can be considered necessary but not sufficient conditions for effective neighbourhood working.

Table 5.1: The building blocks of engagement

Issue	Response
Basic needs to be addressed	Credit unions, fuel and food poverty projects etc, childcare
Local delivery of services	One stop shops etc; local residents working in local services
Places for communities to gather and meet each other	Community buildings; websites; extended schools; projects
A variety of activities to engage people from the range of local communities	Community development resources; Small scale seedcorn funding (chests) with few strings attached Neighbourhood Empowerment Grants (similar to Tenant Empowerment Grants) Time banking (which has been particularly effective in the health field) Festivals, sport, cultural activities, etc.
Infrastructure to bring voices together	Mediation; brokerage; infrastructure support
Links with organisations representing communities of interest at city, district or, if necessary, national level	Links between communities of identity and interest across neighbourhoods and with umbrella groups
Resources and skilled support for community leaders (representatives, Board members of CDTs etc.) to ensure accountability	Funding for participation; skill development and learning opportunities; shadowing and mentoring; effective communication tools

5.33 The evidence also suggests that in order for governance arrangements to be effective, they should be:

- Flexible to allow for:
 - new groups to come on board;
 - an increase in powers to reflect growth and improved capacity; and
 - cycles of engagement, for dips in capacity or the departure of key leaders.
- ‘Nested’, separating democratic voice, accountability and service delivery roles;
- Based in a variety of mechanisms for engagement – to provide a variety of ways in and levels of involvement;
- Clear about the respective but mutually reinforcing roles of community representatives and ward councillors and ensure that there are checks and balances to prevent ward councillors – or particular community interests – from having sole power over budgets or a sole power of veto;⁴²
- Develop clear systems of accountability with effective communication strategies to reach the range of local populations; and
- Be linked into power structures beyond the neighbourhood at city, regional and national level, providing routes for residents to influence these structures.

5.34 In order to be effective these characteristics need to be backed up by the resources and levers to engage the disengaged, which requires:

- Clear community engagement and equalities strategies for reaching the most disengaged and marginalised groups with appropriate resources;
- Links between neighbourhood structures and city- or district-wide groups representing the most marginalised voices;
- Access to mediation and conflict resolution resources (through neighbourhood renewal advisors or a similar facility);
- Opportunities for jobs for local people and for paraprofessionals to act as an informal link between services and residents;
- Someone at LSP level with a responsibility for and overview of engagement with dedicated officers at neighbourhood level to promote engagement;
- A community governance strategy at local authority and/or regional level to build skills and learning opportunities among all partners,⁴³ and provide joint training opportunities;

42 Hilder, Paul (2005) *Seeing the Wood for the Trees: The evolving landscape for neighbourhood arrangements* The Young Foundation.

43 Taylor, Marilyn and Mandy Wilson (2006) *The Importance of the Neighbourhood: Tackling the implementation gap* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

- High profile capacity building programmes targeted at councillors and officers;
and
- The skills, authority and sanctions at government office level to ensure that engagement is a priority in LAAs and CPAs.

Chapter 6: What did we find out about the role of councillors in neighbourhood working?

Introduction

6.1 The previous chapter looked at who was involved in neighbourhood arrangements and what affected levels of engagement. This chapter looks in particular at the role of the ward councillor. Specifically, it:

- Draws on work by the IDeA to set out the councillor role and put it in some context;
- Looks at evidence of progress in developing the ward councillor role;
- Outlines some of the difficulties associated with developing the role of the ward councillor in neighbourhood working; and
- Summarises the implications of the evidence for policy-making and delivery of an enhanced role for councillors in the future.

What is the role of the ward councillor and in what context does it operate?

6.2 Ward councillors to have two key roles:

- A community advocate who encourages resident participation and advocates for the area to the council and service providers in order to effect neighbourhood improvement; and
- A community leader who not only advocates for local concerns but who is also a local broker. In their local broker role councillors mediate and try to conciliate between different interests and organisations at neighbourhood and strategic levels.

6.3 There are many tasks to be carried out within those two broad roles, including:

- Engaging with, and on behalf of, their communities, including community development, mediation, consultation and promoting cohesion;
- Influencing and communication;
- Service management, scrutiny and evaluation at the design, delivery and impact stages;
- Strategic and service planning to achieve outcomes;
- Negotiating and brokering;

- Partnership working;
- Monitoring and enforcement; and
- Representation and casework.⁴⁴

6.4 There are different sets of circumstances within which ward councillors carry out their roles. These include:

- The nature of their mandate(s), i.e., the level or levels at which they were elected: parish, district county council etc.;
- The institutional and geographic context in which they operate, for example, rural or urban, district, county, unitary, metropolitan or London borough etc.;
- Whether or not the ward is a multi-member ward or not, which affects clarity of personal leadership and rivalry;
- The party make-up of their ward, which determines the existence or absence of party rivalry;
- Whether they are in the controlling group or not, which may affect how much influence they have over executive decisions;
- What their role is within the council, for example, executive members may have conflicts and coincidences of interest to manage;
- The nature of the neighbourhood arrangements in the ward, which affects whether they are directors of a company limited by guarantee, and whether there are other local leaders with different kinds of legitimacy operating in the area;
- The nature of the arrangements for working with neighbourhoods across the authority/district, which affects the degree of horizontal activity and vertical integration within the area; and
- The nature of their other local and neighbourhood activities. For example, in 2004⁴⁵ 48% of councillors were school governors, 30% involved with other public bodies, and 50% involved in voluntary work.⁴⁶

44 Foot, Jane and Ines Newman (2006) *The Neighbourhood Agenda and the Role of the Elected Member* London: IDeA.

45 However we acknowledge that the percentage of councillors involved in neighbourhood bodies as volunteers has fallen between 1997 and 2004. For example, councillors involved in public boards dropped from 41% in 1997 to 30% in 2004, as school governors dropped from 58% in 1997 to 48% in 2004, other voluntary activities from 57% in 1997 to 50% in 2004. See Local Government Association (2001) *Role of Councillors in Neighbourhood Management* London: LGA; IDeA and Employers Organisation (2005) *National census of local authority councillors in England 2004* London: Employers Organisation.

46 IDeA and Employers Organisation (2005) *National census of local authority councillors in England 2004* London: Employers Organisation.

Progress on the member role in neighbourhoods

- 6.5 Local authority-led neighbourhood structures are progressing, but opinions on this progress are mixed. For example, research by the LGA shows that local authority officers' perceptions of area committees are extremely positive.⁴⁷ Of those authorities with area committees: 88% of authorities felt that devolving decision-making to area committees had been successful; 90% believed they had made good use of non-executive members; and 83% believed area committees had been successful in involving local people.⁴⁸ However, views on local authority area-based decision-making vary quite a lot depending on whose opinions are asked. Another survey, conducted as part of the ongoing evaluation of the new council constitutions in 2005 found that although only 7% of respondents (officers and councillors) felt that area-based decision-making was 'ineffective', only 10% felt it had come into its own as fully 'effective'. Another 34% felt area-based decision-making was 'partially effective', showing there is still some way to go.⁴⁹
- 6.6 From a councillor perspective, area-based decision-making has improved over the last few years. In 2003 the ongoing evaluation of the new council constitutions⁵⁰ found that 11% of councillors felt area working in their authority was effective (16% in 2005), another 27% felt it was 'partially effective' (35% in 2005), and 14% felt it was ineffective (down to 12% in 2005).⁵¹
- 6.7 Many non-executive councillors⁵² are enjoying their enhanced role because:
- It gives better information on the needs of constituents, stops members from getting a 'jaundiced' view which comes from only seeing the most troubled, and offers a more balanced picture of neighbourhood needs and priorities;
 - Where councillors are open to engagement they have used it to strengthen their legitimacy;
 - They feel better able to make a difference and thereby fulfil the aims they had when getting into politics;⁵³ and

47 Although, it should be noted that the structures do not always operate at a 'natural' or 'home' neighbourhood level.

48 Local Government Association (2004) *Making Decisions Locally* London: Local Government Association.

49 Stoker, Gerry, Francesca Gains, Stephen Greasley, Peter John and Nirmala Rao (2006) *Councillors, Officers and Stakeholders in the New Council Constitutions: findings from the 2005 ELG Sample Survey* London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

50 Rao, Nirmala (2005) *Councillors and the New Council Constitutions* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

51 It should also be noted that more respondents expressed opinions on these issues in the 2005 survey than in the 2003 survey (i.e. there were fewer 'don't know' responses) and more authorities had introduced the new arrangements at the time of the 2005 survey (i.e. there were fewer authorities where the question was not applicable).

52 New councillors tend to be more positive about arrangements than long standing councillors (see Rao, Nirmala (2005) *Councillors and the New Council Constitutions* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).

53 Examples of this can be drawn from, among others, ward working in Brent Council and area committees in Oxford.

- The new arrangements have freed up non-executive members to spend more time on external activities out in their constituencies, meeting stakeholders and attending area committees.^{54, 55}

6.8 There are examples of good horizontal integration between local structures, and of better working relationships between community groups and councillors within those structures.⁵⁶ For example, there is some evidence from New Deal for Communities (NDCs) that councillors are supporting partnership working locally, partly based on the unique links that members have to decision-making structures which are of benefit to neighbourhood partnerships. There are also examples of good vertical integration i.e. strategic links between the corporate centre and area structures using a variety of methods appropriate for those authorities⁵⁷ (for example in Brent, Barnsley, Kirklees, and Manchester). Furthermore, there is starting to be more skills development and training for councillors in their new roles, for example IDEa Local Leadership programme, and training offered by local authorities to members.⁵⁸ However, it should be noted that many of the successful 'neighbourhood governance structures' that offer a central role for ward councillors operate at a relatively strategic spatial scale, below the local authority but at or above ward level, for example, Coventry, Brent, Newham and Liverpool.

6.9 The success of non-executive ward members appears to be based partly on:

- The quality of relationships that members are able to build to achieve consensus;
- Seeing other partners as equals;
- A focus on action planning and delivering on plans, particularly quick wins;
- Members doing proactive community outreach work, seen by them as enhancing their engagement with the local community, enhancing their local understanding and legitimacy, giving them transparent information about local preferences;
- Members using their engagement with communities as a resource to take back strategically;
- Members having good knowledge and understanding of local authority strategy, plans etc;

54 Rao, Nirmala (2005) *Councillors and the New Council Constitutions* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

55 However, it should be noted that new research (Gains 2006) shows that the bulk of non-executive councillor time is taken up with internal council business (see Gains, Francesca (2006) *New Council Constitutions: A summary of the ELG Research Findings* London: Department for Communities and Local Government).

56 For example Ipswich, Manchester and Rochdale Civic Pioneers (see Gaffney, Marie (2005) *Civic Pioneers: Local people, local government, working together to make life better* London: Home Office).

57 Wilkinson, Mick (2005) *Devolving Governance: Area committees and neighbourhood management* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

58 For example, LB Newham's partnership with CDF, North West Employers member development charter and Bracknell Forest BC.

- Members using their strategic knowledge and connections to identify resources and resolve problems for their neighbourhoods; and
- Non-executive members being open to being a community representative on the partnership rather than as a council representative.^{59, 60}

Difficulties with the member role in neighbourhoods

- 6.10 This section looks at the tensions between the roles of community advocate and community leader; conflicts of interest between neighbourhood roles and executive roles; rivalry between councillors and other community leaders; concerns over the politicisation of local structures; different views on the role of the councillor as conduit of local information to service providers; the role of political parties; and the resource implications of enhanced neighbourhood working for councillors.
- 6.11 *Tensions exist between the community advocate and community leadership roles*, as members have to balance what is best for the local authority area as a whole, with advocating the needs of the neighbourhood. Having more skilled and effective councillors may go some way to resolving these tensions. However, there are many possible and actual examples of controversial neighbourhood decisions where there are conflicts of interest between the neighbourhood and the wider area that are difficult to resolve equitably, for example the current debates about housing market renewal and school mergers. In these cases, councillors may find themselves forced to choose between their community advocate role and their community leadership role. Councillors may be disciplined or deselected by their political parties as a result of performing their community advocacy role, particularly where as a member of the controlling group their community position was at odds with administration policy. Equally, where councillors do not promote or win arguments for their neighbourhoods, there is a danger of public cynicism about the power of neighbourhood structures and ward councillors.
- 6.12 *All councillors are ward councillors*, and there are particular challenges for councillors who are also members of the executive. In some places things have worked well, and an executive position has positively strengthened those councillors' ability to draw in support for their neighbourhood, engage service providers, and resolve problems. In other places, members have withdrawn from neighbourhood governance structures feeling this was at odds with their positions on the executive, for example wanting to avoid accusations of favouritism to their own patch as portfolio holder for regeneration. Furthermore, non-executive members sitting on overview and scrutiny and planning committees have similarly withdrawn from some aspects of neighbourhood structures, in order to avoid accusations of a conflict of interests, for example, where developers or property owners are on neighbourhood boards.
- 6.13 *Tension exists within the community leadership role*; in that the community leadership role is premised on the democratic legitimacy of ward councillors, but the terrain is contested. The public is often unclear about what councillors' roles are and they can

59 IDeA (2005) *Neighbourhood Renewal and Social Inclusion: A councillor's guide* London: IDeA.

60 Foot, Jane and Ines Newman (2006) *The Neighbourhood Agenda and the Role of the Elected Member* London: IDeA.

feel mistrustful of councillors. Furthermore, the majority of people do not contact councillors and the public does not always see councillors as 'representative', especially where turnouts at local elections are low.⁶¹ In addition structures that have elections for community representatives, such as NDCs, potentially put elected community representatives in competition with ward councillors. In the case studies this was resolved through the particular skills, connections, contacts and influence members had to offer.

- 6.14 *The 'politicisation' of local structures is contested.* It has been shown that residents and also mainstream service providers can be put off from engaging with neighbourhood structures if they are seen as 'political'. Much of the good practice evidence pointing to successful member-led area working does not indicate what the service providers feel about the arrangements, and what degree of buy-in there is from services to member-led structures. As seen in the case studies carried out as part of this project, some partners at neighbourhood-level feel that local authority leadership of neighbourhood governance and management structures can slow down implementation, and they have described clashes of organisational cultures in terms of the 'getting on and doing it' approach relative to the way local authority decision-making works. Again, some councillors have deliberately taken a backseat role in some neighbourhood structures for this reason.⁶² This implies a potential 'backroom role' for councillors in service improvement, rather than a central one, for example helping to lobby behind the scenes for neighbourhood priorities, but not taking a lead role in the neighbourhood structure itself.
- 6.15 *The role for members as conduits between the community and agencies is also contested.* All parties working at a neighbourhood level are to some extent protective of their own relationships with each other. Each will have good reasons not to relinquish their existing direct relationships for example between service users and service providers, between constituents and elected members, between council officers and residents. Therefore, there will be some resistance to attempts to replace or duplicate those relationships, or to mediate them via the third party of the local member.
- 6.16 *Political parties, council and neighbourhood functions produce tensions and trade-offs for councillors.* The role of party politics (and internal political party systems) is vital to a ward councillor's role, but it is often difficult for public servants and national policy-makers to offer guidance on how to marry work for the party and work for the neighbourhood/ward. Research has shown one-half of all councillors thought that political parties dominate decision-making,⁶³ which can work against open and transparent debate in neighbourhoods, and could therefore undermine the public's faith in neighbourhood arrangements. The other side of this coin is that

61 There is a large stock of evidence on this. See for example: Electoral Commission (2004) *An Audit of Political Engagement* London: Electoral Commission; Local Government Association (2002) *Want to know what I think? A telephone survey of knowledge and views about local democracy and local government in 2002* London: LGA; Hayward, Bruce, Ed Mortimer and Tim Brunwin (2004) *Survey of Public Attitudes Towards Conduct in Public Life* London: Committee on Standards in Public Life; Green, Hazel, Helen Connolly and Christine Farmer (2004) *2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, families and communities* London: Home Office.

62 This is evidenced in the case studies undertaken for this research and in other case study research. See for example the Great Lever Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder case study on the IDeA website (<http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=1289660>)

63 Rao, Nirmala (2005) *Councillors and the New Council Constitutions* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

neighbourhood issues and decisions are often not raised within a party's group meetings. This can mean there are poor links between executive members, leaders and backbenchers, who are not supported and empowered in their neighbourhood role by their parties.

- 6.17 Area structures are made up of the councillors in a particular area; they therefore are not guaranteed to reflect the overall political balance of a council. The attitude of political parties to area-based working may differ according to whether they form part of the controlling group or not. Many have suggested that the controlling group will be wary of devolving power to opposition parties. However, it is equally true that opposition parties are in some cases reluctant to support neighbourhood arrangements, as they do not wish to be the face of other parties' policies. Some areas have also found it difficult to promote the benefits of neighbourhood working to minority parties as they are seen as a vehicle for someone else's re-election strategy.
- 6.18 The enhanced neighbourhood role of councillors has staffing, support and resource implications, as well as implications for the level of commitment required from councillors. Evidence indicates that neighbourhood working needs to be adequately resourced and supported if it is to be effective, which raises several practical issues, in particular who organises the neighbourhood structures and councillors' involvement in them? And is it automatically the local authority's role to resource this? Evidence indicates that some area teams feel understaffed and under-resourced in the face of increased demands.⁶⁴ There is also a big contrast between models of neighbourhood working funded by special central government initiatives, and 'mainstream' models resourced at a much lower level.
- 6.19 As ward councillors are now spending more time than before on their council duties, particularly in their constituencies, some have voiced concern that the increased time demanded of councillors, without a corresponding increase in training, benefits, and pensions, may mean that the role is only viable for those who can afford not to work full time, with consequences on the types of people who become councillors. There are thus broader implications for the representativeness of councillors.

Summary and conclusions

6.20 There is evidence that points to successes in involving ward councillors in neighbourhood arrangements across a broad area of activity. There has been successful horizontal integration with councillors forming parts of interlinked local networks, and there has been successful vertical integration with councillors providing effective bottom-up and top-down links between neighbourhoods and the corporate centres of local authorities. The evidence indicates some factors that are likely to assist the success of ward councillor involvement in neighbourhood working. These are:

- The councillors are not too wedded to the previous 'way of doing things';
- Partners from all sectors, officers and councillors are clear about councillors' role in the neighbourhood, and councillors are willing to take a backseat if necessary;

⁶⁴ Wilkinson, Mick (2005) *Devolving Governance: Area committees and neighbourhood management* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

- There are no local rivalries about which institutions represent the neighbourhood;
- Councillors and partnerships have officer support to improve services at the neighbourhood level;
- There is a clear delivery mechanism for delivering action plans;
- There is proactive, widespread and creative community engagement; and
- Councillors have been supported by training and development programmes.

Chapter 7: What evidence is there about the contribution of neighbourhood arrangements to improving public services and citizen engagement?

Introduction

7.1 The previous chapters have looked at the policy context, the findings from the case studies; the different types of neighbourhood arrangements and the different functions that they carry out; who is involved in neighbourhood working and what stops people from getting involved; and the role of councillors in engaging citizens and representing neighbourhoods. This chapter builds on these findings to outline the contribution that neighbourhood arrangements have made to improving public services and citizen engagement (which was discussed in detail in Chapter 5). It also reviews the limited but growing evidence on the costs of neighbourhood working, so that the costs can be set against the benefits (outlined in Chapter 3).⁶⁵

7.2 This chapter looks at:

- The scope of neighbourhood arrangements for citizen engagement and service improvement i.e. the spatial and other dimensions associated with engaging communities effectively;
- The evidence on the benefits and costs of neighbourhood arrangements for engaging citizens more effectively and improving service design and delivery; and
- The policy implications that flow from the available evidence.

The scope of neighbourhood arrangements

7.3 If neighbourhood working is to be effective in securing sustainable improvements in public services and re-engaging citizens with the institutions of government, it must reach the range of communities that exist locally and engage with them in ways that recognise their different needs, capacities and interests. There are at least three aspects that need to be considered when thinking about the appropriate scope for neighbourhood working:

- *Spatial scale*: The Young Foundation⁶⁶ suggest three categories of neighbourhood scale – streets and blocks of about 50-300 people, ‘home neighbourhoods’ of 500-2,000 and public or strategic neighbourhoods of 4,000-15,000 – large enough to have locally focused facilities such as parks, surgeries and leisure centres and to

⁶⁵ For example Burton, Paul, Robina Goodlad, Jo Abbott, Annette Hastings, Geraldine Macdonald, Jacqui Croft and Tom Slater (2004) *What Works in Community Involvement in Area-Based Initiatives: a systematic review of the literature* Home Office Online Report 53/04; Rogers, Ben and Emily Robinson (2004) *The Benefits of Community Engagement: A review of the evidence* London, Active Citizenship Centre, Home Office; Wilson, Richard (2005) *The True Costs of Public Participation* London: Home Office, Involve.

⁶⁶ Hilder, Paul (2005) *Seeing the Wood for the Trees: The evolving landscape for neighbourhood arrangements* The Young Foundation.

warrant neighbourhood management. It distinguished this from ‘area working’ in which service providers engage strategically with their localities, covering populations of 20,000 to 100,000 people, depending on the size of the local authority and the type of area (for example its rurality). Planning guidance also provides an indication of the scale at which facilities and services operate and, therefore an indication of the scale at which governance might be required (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Facilities and the number of households they serve⁶⁷

Facilities	Number of households
Primary school	1,000-5,000
Doctor's surgery	1,000-1,200
Corner shop	800-2,000
Group of shops	2,000-4,000
Post Office	2,000-4,000
Small local park	2,000-5,000
Community centre	2,800-6,000
Frequent bus services	4,000-6,000
Health centre	3,600-4,800
Library	4,800-12,000
Public sports facilities	15,000-25,000

- Diversity or heterogeneity of the area:* Different communities require different things from their neighbourhood. Patterns of diversity also differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, according to the population mix, the history of local engagement and local attitudes – communities which are marginalised in one way may not be in another. There will be a wide range of reasons why people may be disengaged even within a single neighbourhood and they are not all to do with the degree of disadvantage. It is important that neighbourhood working can distinguish between and respond to these different reasons and not assume that they are either to do with deprivation or apathy. An adaptation of Arnstein's ladder of participation illustrates the relationship between role and degree of engagement for community and provider (Table 7.2).

⁶⁷ Power, Anne, Liz Richardson, Kelly Seshimo, Kathryn Firth with Philipp Rode, Christine Whitehead and Tony Travers (2004) *A Framework for Housing in the London Thames Gateway Vol. II* London: LSE.

Table 7.2: Engagement and roles⁶⁸			
Degree of engagement	Process	Partner role	Community role
Information	Public provided with information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and solutions	One-way communication: mainstream provider/council set the agenda	Passive recipient: needs no prior knowledge
Consultation	Information sought on needs and preferences, feedback is obtained and analysed, alternatives developed and decisions taken	Agenda set by mainstream provider/council and no obligation to take views in to account	Respondent/reactive prior knowledge useful but not assumed
Deliberation	Partners work directly with the public to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	Agenda set by mainstream provider/council – views exchanged, but still no obligation to take views on board	Contributor of ideas and alternative solutions, becoming progressively informed
Partnership	Partners work alongside the public in the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	Responsibility for all stages of the process shared, including setting the agenda – a genuine dialogue	Partner who is informed and learning
Community control	Final decision-making powers are given/taken by the public	Resource	Provider and decision-maker and expert

- *Purpose or function:* As well as serving the purposes of service improvement and citizen engagement, community involvement at the neighbourhood level can be valued for building the human and social capital associated with improved health, reduced crime in a range of studies.⁶⁹ People may therefore be engaged in neighbourhood working in different capacities:
 - *Consumers* in planning and commissioning services provided by others;
 - *Communities* in building social capital and social cohesion;
 - *Citizens* in policy making and scrutiny; and
 - *Co-producers* in managing their own assets and delivering their own services.

68 Adapted from Involve (2005) *People and Participation: How to put citizens at the heart of decision-making* London: Involve (citing International Association for Public Participation (2004) *Public Participation Toolbox* Denver: International Association for Public Participation. Available at <http://www.iap2.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=5>); Jackson, L.S. (2001) 'Contemporary Public Involvement: Toward a strategic approach' *Local Environment* 6(2): 135-47; Hashagen, Stuart (2002) *Models of Community Engagement* Scottish Community Development Centre; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office and Cabinet Office (2005) *Improving Delivery of Mainstream Services in Deprived Areas: The role of community involvement* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

69 Aldridge, Stephen and David Halpern with Sarah Fitzpatrick (2002) *Social Capital: A discussion paper* London: Cabinet Office, Performance and Innovation Unit; Halpern, David (2005) *Social Capital* UK: Polity Press.

- They may be involved at different stages in the process:
 - Information and intelligence gathering;
 - Setting priorities and agendas;
 - Defining solutions;
 - Delivering projects and activities; and
 - Monitoring and assessing their effects.
- And they will be involved at different levels of intensity, from sporadic involvement in consultations to participation in governance and management structures.

7.4 Recent research⁷⁰ shows that one-third of people agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area, two-thirds don't think they can influence decisions, with nearly two-fifths reporting their council gave them an opportunity to express their views on local services. The preferred methods of involvement were surveys (46%), a letter or e-mail came (34%), signing a petition (33%) and around a fifth mentioning public meetings (22%), meetings with councillor (22%), telephone calls to the council (22%) and meetings with council staff (18%). When asked to express satisfaction levels with their participation over one in five say they are satisfied, while one-third says they are dissatisfied. Around one-third expressed an interest in getting more involved in local decision-making.

The benefits and costs of neighbourhood arrangements

7.5 The evidence on the cost effectiveness of neighbourhood working is getting stronger all the time, albeit from a relatively weak base. A review published by the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit in 2004 suggested that, while there is a lot of useful information on lessons learned and 'good practice', there is little systematic and comparative evidence on the impact of community engagement, or on what works and what does not work in terms of effective and cost-effective community engagement.⁷¹ A more recent review of the costs and benefits of public participation concluded that 'there is a severe lack of data on the actual costs and benefits of public participation'.⁷² Moreover, the evidence tends to be more concerned with the role of community engagement rather than neighbourhood working as such.⁷³ Circumstantial evidence from the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder evaluation indicates some consistency in the services that do and don't engage at the neighbourhood level, and their direction of travel (Table 7.3).

70 Williams, Bridget and Lys Coleman (2006) *Local Government Service Provision: A national survey* London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

71 Burton, Paul, Robina Goodlad, Jo Abbott, Annette Hastings, Geraldine Macdonald, Jacqui Croft and Tom Slater (2004) *What Works in Community Involvement in Area-Based Initiatives: A systematic review of the literature* Home Office Online Report 53/04; Rogers, Ben and Emily Robinson (2004) *The Benefits of Community Engagement: A review of the evidence* London: Active Citizenship Centre, Home Office; Wilson, Richard (2005) *The True Costs of Public Participation* London: Home Office, Involve.

72 Wilson, Richard (2005) *The True Costs of Public Participation* London: Home Office, Involve.

73 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office and Cabinet Office (2005) *Improving Delivery of Mainstream Services in Deprived Areas: The role of community involvement* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Table 7.3: Assessment of service provider involvement in Round 1 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders in 2005

Level of Involvement	Service Provider	Change since 2004 (18 months)
Strong involvement 'core supporters' – 70% or more of Pathfinders with 'strong' involvement from the provider	• Police	No change
	• Primary Care Trust	Stronger
	• Local schools	Stronger
	• Local authority housing services	Stronger
	• Local authority environmental services	No change
Good involvement 'friends, but not always close' – 'Strong' involvement in a few areas, and at least 'some' involvement in most other areas)	• JobCentre Plus	Stronger
	• Local authority youth service	Stronger
	• RSL/Housing Associations	Stronger
	• Local authority leisure services	No change

Benefits

- 7.6 Research generally yields positive findings on the benefits of community engagement on particular services and policy areas. A recent study commissioned by the Civil Renewal Unit suggested that community engagement could make a significant difference to the way services were designed and run and achieve valued service outcomes by encouraging the internalisation of co-operative standards (socialisation), encouraging neighbours to look out for each other (guardianship) and providing services with information about how they might work better.⁷⁴ While the 2004 Civil Renewal Unit review reports mixed findings from the studies it covered and had some reservations about the robustness of the data, it concluded that the weight of evidence showed positive effects on social cohesion, public policy and service delivery, as well as on individual and collective self-respect and self-esteem.
- 7.7 There is also evidence that resident input can improve the take-up of services, both generally and among disadvantaged groups, and there are many examples of good practice in engaging residents in solving neighbourhood problems. For example, research commissioned by ODPM (now DCLG) found that, insofar as it was possible to determine costs in relation to community involvement, these were modest and generally outweighed by the benefits, especially in specific services.⁷⁵ It found that involvement enhanced provider knowledge and awareness, eased access to services among disadvantaged groups, enhanced the motivation of frontline staff and prompted innovation. It could also improve job prospects for local people, environmental and housing conditions and health outcomes – although these might take time to emerge.
- 7.8 The evidence on the impact of engagement on service improvement is more robust for some services than others – especially in the area of housing management. Research on the operation of Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)⁷⁶ in England,

⁷⁴ Rogers, Ben and Emily Robinson (2004) *The Benefits of Community Engagement: A review of the evidence* London, Active Citizenship Centre, Home Office.

⁷⁵ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office and Cabinet Office (2005) *Improving Delivery of Mainstream Services in Deprived Areas: The role of community involvement* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

⁷⁶ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002) *Tenants Managing: An evaluation of tenant management organisations in England* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

i.e. tenant controlled organisations covering an average of 400 properties, demonstrated that most of the reviewed TMOs performed better than their host local authorities and compared favourably with the top 25% of local authorities on a number of performance indicators. Moreover, most of the TMOs were able to generate surpluses through good financial management and voluntary effort.

- 7.9 As well as housing management, other services that appear to operate effectively through neighbourhood level working arrangements (see for example, the evaluation of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme⁷⁷ and a study by the LSE⁷⁸) are: community safety and crime reduction, management of the public realm (including street scene, open space, graffiti cleaning and neighbourhood wardens), youth and family support services, pre- and primary school facilities, neighbourhood planning (including traffic management) and local health/well-being centres.
- 7.10 It will be evident that this mix of services lends itself potentially to some degree of 'service bundling'. In deprived areas, suffering from crime and anti-social behaviour and post code discrimination, neighbourhood-working has started to deliver both some bundling of service provision (especially in community safety and environmental services) and improved outcomes across a range of services. There is some evidence this is coming about by challenging traditional top-down, 'one size fits all' service delivery arrangements with alternative mechanisms based on more joint-working, sharing of costs between providers and appreciation of the longer term benefits that this can generate.

Costs

- 7.11 Service providers do not generally identify the costs of community engagement and they do not generally collect and analyse service performance and costs at a neighbourhood level. Therefore, hard evidence on the direct costs and savings associated with neighbourhood working is scarce. However, some service providers do collect data on engagement in specific areas, for example, housing associations and estates and some area-based initiatives, such as neighbourhood management, are beginning to provide hard data on the administrative costs associated with their activities (i.e. not project funding).
- 7.12 These emerging findings suggest that, for areas of between 5,000 and 15,000 residents, the average cost of neighbourhood management and community engagement tends to be about £20 per head per annum.
- The Audit Commission/Housing Corporation⁷⁹ quote a housing association case study where the cost of resident and community involvement activities was about £50 per property in the area per annum or some £20 per head of resident population per annum.

77 Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2006) *Neighbourhood Management – At the turning point? Programme Review 2005/06* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

78 Power, Anne, Liz Richardson, Kelly Seshimo, Kathryn Firth with Philipp Rode, Christine Whitehead and Tony Travers (2004) *A Framework for Housing in the London Thames Gateway Vol. II* London: LSE.

79 Audit Commission and Housing Corporation (2004) *Housing: Improving services through resident involvement* London: Audit Commission/Housing Corporation.

- This order of magnitude of cost was confirmed by two housing related case studies carried out for the study on the role of community involvement in improving service delivery for the ODPM (now DCLG).⁸⁰
- The annual management and administrative costs associated with the Round 1 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders increased from about £10 per head of resident population for neighbourhoods with populations of 15,000 plus to £40 per head for smaller neighbourhoods of about 5,000 people.⁸¹
- Examples from the experience of non-Pathfinder neighbourhood managers suggest the same ball-park average figure of about £20-25 per head of neighbourhood residents per annum (with the average resident population being about 10,000); the figure was very much lower for larger resident populations.

7.13 There is clearly a simple arithmetic rule that costs per head will fall as fixed costs are shared across a larger population, but there is another possible behavioural explanation for the lower unit costs experienced by 'larger neighbourhoods'. In such neighbourhoods, there is a greater likelihood of existing networks, groups and community activity. These provide access to 'social capital' and neighbourhood arrangements that allow the costs of activity to be shared among a wider network of groups.

Is there an efficient spatial scale for neighbourhood working?

7.14 The evidence is not yet sufficiently robust to provide conclusions on this question. The experience of the relatively more intensive form of neighbourhood working in deprived areas (for example through neighbourhood management) suggests that, for services such as community safety, environmental services and housing management, the costs of neighbourhood working and community engagement may be over £40 per annum per head of resident population below the level of 5,000 residents. Given that, there do appear to be economies above that population threshold, however, these peter out for neighbourhoods in excess of 15,000-20,000 people. Even if they don't, it is likely that for neighbourhoods significantly above that spatial scale the nature of community engagement will change significantly and it may not be as easy to achieve the connection between service providers and local people.

7.15 Moreover, as already noted spatial scale is not the only determinant of the effectiveness of neighbourhood arrangements for service improvement and enhanced citizen engagement. A substantial degree of diversity within the neighbourhood in terms, for example, of the extent and nature of deprivation may justify neighbourhood working arrangements at smaller spatial scales (for example 5,000 residents or lower) despite higher unit costs because there are no other mechanisms available to pick up and reflect this degree of diversity to service providers and the existing political and governance agencies.

⁸⁰ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office and Cabinet Office (2005) *Improving Delivery of Mainstream Services in Deprived Areas: The role of community involvement* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

⁸¹ Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2006) *Neighbourhood Management – At the turning point? Programme Review 2005/06* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Factors that hinder and help neighbourhood working

Hindering factors

7.16 There are three broad categories of barriers to neighbourhood working amongst service providers, as follows:

- *Economic factors ('we can't afford it')*: The costs and risks of working at neighbourhood level to engage service users and the wider community tend to be short term and are seen by service providers as significant, whereas the benefits are perceived as longer in coming, uncertain and not easily quantified. As the evaluation of the Best Value regime⁸² demonstrated, change often takes a lot of time and money – even though 'reform isn't rocket science', it has often been implemented cautiously in an incremental fashion through pilot studies. The costs of community engagement may also fall on those providers who do not necessarily receive all of the benefit – or, at least, not transparently in ways that can ease budgetary pressures elsewhere. For example, improvements in housing management services through community involvement could have its most significant effect on reduced requirements and costs of providing police services.
- *Skills and capacity constraints ('we can't do business this way')*: Lack of skills, experience, and culture of neighbourhood working could lead to lack of confidence to get started unless there are incentives to do so. The evaluation of the NM Pathfinder Programme found that performance was not tracked at neighbourhood level even for services like housing management and waste collection and street cleaning where loss of scale economies might not be a barrier to working at this level. The evidence from a recent MORI study⁸³ for the ODPM suggests that the practice of user empowerment at local level has proved difficult to embed in the decision-making processes of the providers. A recent literature review for the Home Office found that 'all major evaluations of community policing in the US have recognised some degree of implementation failure. The ability of police agencies to implement effective, sustained engagement at an organisational level remains unproven.'⁸⁴
- *Structural factors ('we just can't do it that way')*: Some service providers (for example social services, Connexions) are more traditionally focused on client groups rather than spatial areas and some (such as GPs and JobCentre Plus) may operate with incentive structures that make a neighbourhood focus difficult to manage. The issue may not just be the geography of the service provider operations but the permeability of their 'silo' walls to the neighbourhoods where they operate. A particular dimension of this is that local authorities with a mix of 'well-off' and deprived neighbourhoods may find it difficult to strike the balance between treating neighbourhoods equally in process terms, and treating their different needs equally. However, neighbourhood working in some service areas and engagement with local residents should equip authorities with the evidence on need that would justify apparent differential service provision between areas.

82 Entwistle, Tom, Lynne Dowson and Jennifer Law (2003) *Changing to Improve: Ten Case Studies from the Evaluation of the Best Value Regime* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

83 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006) *User Empowerment in Local Authority Service Delivery: Phase 1 overview report* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

84 Myhill, Andy (2006) *Community Engagement in Policing: Lessons from the literature* London: Home Office.

Helping factors

- 7.17 The evidence gathered as part of this project suggests that formal neighbourhood structures can keep the momentum of engagement and service improvement going and – along with the availability of resources – attract public agencies on board, it also suggests, along with other studies, that structures are not enough.⁸⁵ Formal structures are not the route to engagement for the majority of people and the body of research on partnerships suggests that engaging communities successfully is most likely if underpinned and held accountable by a variety of local groups and activities as well as strong informal networks.⁸⁶
- 7.18 The evidence also suggests that there are some basic building blocks for successful engagement (see Table 5.1) and if governance arrangements are to be effective vehicles for improving neighbourhoods they need to be flexible so that they can develop new roles and responsibilities over time, but adaptable, so that they can respond to changes in personnel and changes in their operating environment. They also need to work with councillors to provide a link to decision-makers and service providers where appropriate and maintain effective two-way communication with residents, so that they don't become divorced from their issues, as they become more involved in organisational concerns, i.e., as the move in to the bottom left hand corner of Table 7.2.
- 7.19 There are also a range of policy and regulatory interventions, such as CPA in local government, inspections and performance indicators applying external pressure to local authorities and their partners to engage local people in the design and delivery of local services.

Summary and conclusions

- 7.20 The evidence suggests that the 'neighbourhood' may well be the appropriate spatial scale for improving particular types of services through user and community involvement especially in deprived areas. It does not indicate that scale economies should inhibit neighbourhood working for a range of services to do with community safety, housing and environmental management and some aspects of health and education and youth services.
- 7.21 Even in those service areas where there are apparent scale economies and resistance to neighbourhood working, it may well be that organisational inertia gets in the way of examining alternative options for service planning, commissioning/delivery and monitoring at smaller spatial scales than traditionally has been the case. What can be inferred from the evidence is that previously prevailing management and performance measurement systems and incentives have tended to constrain – or, at least, not to encourage – the emergence of neighbourhood level arrangements for engaging service users and their communities in the design and delivery of public

⁸⁵ See for example Burton, Paul, Robina Goodlad, Jo Abbott, Annette Hastings, Geraldine Macdonald, Jacqui Croft and Tom Slater (2004) *What Works in Community Involvement in Area-Based Initiatives: a systematic review of the literature* Home Office Online Report 53/04.

⁸⁶ Rogers, Ben and Emily Robinson (2004) *The Benefits of Community Engagement: A review of the evidence* London, Active Citizenship Centre, Home Office.

services. This seems to be the case even for some of those services where neighbourhood solutions might offer benefits. The constraints fall in to a number of categories, such as:

- The existence of (internal) economies of scale for service providers, pushing them to produce standardised services across relatively large populations, rather than tailored services to individual neighbourhoods;
- The existence of external benefits, i.e., where benefits accrue to people/ organisations other than those making the decisions, which may lead to an under-investment in neighbourhood working, as decision-makers don't see all the benefits of their activities;
- The difficulties associated with achieving 'economies of scope', for example, the spreading of management, market research, local management, planning and monitoring of a bundle of services delivered at the neighbourhood level by different providers; and
- The legacy of administrative boundaries and data collection and collation, which have built in ways of doing things that are expensive to reconstruct.

7.22 These constraints suggest the need to reinforce current policy initiatives and 'incentivise' joined-up working. The potential steps are covered in the next chapter, which sets out this report's conclusions.

Chapter 8: Summary and conclusions

8.1 The promotion of localism and neighbourhood working is a government priority. The last few years have seen both the ODPM (now DCLG) and the Home Office attaching greater importance to localism and neighbourhoods. The most recent and prominent expression of this commitment was in *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*,⁸⁷ where the Government identified two central and closely interconnected challenges for the Neighbourhoods Agenda:

- To secure sustainable improvements in public services; and
- To re-engage citizens with the institutions of government.

8.2 This report summarised the findings from a study of neighbourhood governance which is part of a broader project called the Neighbourhoods Project led by DCLG. The project's brief was to add value to the policy development process by building on existing research and evaluation commissioned both by Government and others. It was to do this by:

- Applying the existing knowledge base to answer new questions on neighbourhood governance and neighbourhood arrangements; and
- By capturing new knowledge and learning, which may be held as tacit information by key stakeholders and may not yet be formalised, for example, through developing new case studies.

8.3 The earlier chapters of this report set out various aspects of neighbourhood working and governance that would need to be taken into account in the design and delivery of policy interventions and practices to meet these challenges. Findings were based on a review of the literature, new case studies and a series of policy papers for and discussions with colleagues in DCLG.

8.4 Chapter 3 set out the findings from the case studies. These are summarised in Boxes 8.1-8.3. The main findings from each chapter then follow. The report concludes with the view that with many services the business case for neighbourhood working has still to be made, but that there is growing evidence of what can and does work at the neighbourhood level.

⁸⁷ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Office (2005) *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Box 8.1: Benefits of neighbourhood working identified in the case studies

- Provides better local knowledge about residents' needs;
- Eases access to services, in particular for disadvantaged groups;
- Increases provider awareness of the 'joined-up' nature of the problems in deprived areas and the potential of joined-up solutions;
- Provides a 'reality check' on professionals' and politicians' plans and ambitions;
- Provides a source of new thinking from outside professional boundaries;
- Enhances the motivation of frontline staff and prompts innovation in service delivery;
- Allows pooling of resources and sharing of costs among service providers;
- Improves responsiveness and flexibility of services; and
- Encourages participation in the local political process.

Box 8.2: Critical success factors identified in the case studies

- The existence of some community networks prior to more formal neighbourhood working which gives a base on which to build;
- A harmonious community or 'neutral space' for communities in conflict to come together to discuss shared concerns and causes of conflict in need of resolution;
- A history of successful neighbourhood working or at least no history of bad feeling among residents;
- Integrated activities, so that interventions, such as enterprise promotion, do not stand alone in a neighbourhood;
- Access to funding so that neighbourhood arrangements can demonstrate their added value to the area by leveraging in resources that it did not previously receive;
- The partnership has credibility with and the trust of the community and public service providers – in other words it does not over promise and under deliver;
- The timing of interventions has to be judged correctly for them to be effective – partners need to ask such questions as: Are key stakeholders ready and committed? Has the confidence of the community been built? Have or can 'early wins' establish momentum?
- Involvement has to be at the appropriate level for the groups that are being engaged, for example, activities for young people need to focus on the concerns of young people not professionals;
- A genuine desire on the part of service providers to get communities involved in order to promote change and improvements in services;
- Strong performance management in order to make sure things get done and are seen to be done;
- A link between neighbourhood and LSP-level decisions, in order to get vertical integration in key decision-making processes where relevant;
- The commitment to address the issues that matter locally, not the issues on the LSP's or local authority's agenda;

(continued overleaf)

Box 8.2: Critical success factors identified in the case studies (continued)

- Having full-time staff working in as well as for the area, in order to ensure there is capacity to work in partnership at the neighbourhood level;
- A strong board with the long term commitment of its members;
- An ability to manage the expectations of residents and service providers; and
- A good understanding of the risks involved and a strategy to manage them.

Box 8.3: Barriers to neighbourhood working

- ‘Consultation fatigue’, in other words, too much time spent on surveys and meetings and not enough action to address acute and/or visible problems;
- The costs of neighbourhood working, which appear to be additional to existing costs, as neighbourhood working is treated as a ‘bolt on’ to existing ways of working, rather than an alternative way of operating;
- Inertia within partner organisations, which means that partners stick with what they know without sufficient external pressure to change;
- A lack of capacity to deliver local priorities once they have been identified, which either leads to a fear of neighbourhood working in the first instance or disgruntlement among residents and providers as neighbourhood demands are not met;
- The absence of a track record leads to reluctance among those procuring and/or managing services to devolve the procurement function, the delivery function and/or the performance management function;
- Over-estimating people’s willingness to get involved in ‘governance’ issues, as opposed to involvement in specific direct actions;
- Language issues, such as the off-putting use of jargon and the need to communicate in other languages if ‘hard to reach’ groups are to be engaged effectively;
- Overloading a neighbourhood partnership with more tasks than it wishes to engage in, for example, consultation on a range of issues which are of concern to mainstream service providers, but may not be the focus for a neighbourhood partnership given the limited time and goodwill of volunteers;
- A culture of compliance to meet central government targets that undermines local residents’ faith in local devolution and their confidence in the commitment to make local decision-making real;
- Lack of genuine commitment to change among service providers;
- Attitudes of residents in fractured communities towards working together to deal with issues in the neighbourhood;
- Lack of legitimacy for the arrangements in the eyes of local stakeholders and communities;
- Too much of a partnership’s energy spent on trying to survive, for example, by chasing grants, which leaves little time for improving the area; and
- The difficulties for mainstream service providers of managing changes in neighbourhood working alongside other changes required in public service provision.

Neighbourhood arrangements, LSPs and LAAs

- 8.5 The report noted that there are many different forms of neighbourhood arrangements carrying out different functions and tackling different issues. The forms, functions and issues in a particular area change over time, as the local situation changes and the environment in which they operate evolves.
- 8.6 It argued that in the current context, most neighbourhood arrangements have to engage LSPs, if they are to influence key mainstream service providers. They will also have to engage with LAAs.
- 8.7 The evidence suggests that the existence of effective links between neighbourhood arrangements and LSPs is patchy, in part due to the multi-tiered nature of local government in England. It also indicates that where arrangements appear to be strong this is often due to efforts at local regeneration and renewal, mainly in urban areas. This suggests the need for concerted efforts to improve links between neighbourhood and authority-wide governance arrangements.
- 8.8 The limited evidence on the relationship between neighbourhoods and LAAs points to challenges related to neighbourhoods' role in:
- Negotiating LAAs, for example, their voice and choice on the local themes, priorities, indicators and targets is limited, as tight deadlines restrict the time for consultation and discussion and the neighbourhoods are often more concerned with local issues than what appear to be esoteric discussions around indicators and targets;
 - The commissioning process, for example, the extent to which LSPs can develop neighbourhood related criteria for commissioning activity to deliver the LAA; and the provision of resources to support neighbourhoods' participation in commissioning activity in ways that ensure the effective representation of different neighbourhoods' interests;
 - Monitoring and reviewing the impact of the LAA targets on neighbourhoods; and
 - Revising the targets on an annual basis.
- 8.9 This poses challenges for governance at both the neighbourhood and authority level. Guidance may be required if the first aspect of double devolution is not to act as a restraint on the second aspect of the double devolution.

Engaging all groups

- 8.10 Good governance is founded on good engagement. The Report suggested that opportunities for citizens to engage in policy making and delivery have increased considerably over recent years. But it also suggests that, while there are numerous examples of good practice, many communities are marginalised and frustrated by these opportunities and there is still a long way to go to engage the diversity of communities at neighbourhood level. It argues that even with good foundations particular resources and levers will be required if the disengaged are to be engaged effectively (Box 8.4).

Box 8.4: Levers and resources for engaging the disengaged

- clear community engagement and equalities strategies for reaching the most disengaged and marginalised groups with appropriate resources;
- links between neighbourhood structures and city- or district-wide groups representing the most marginalised voices;
- access to mediation and conflict resolution resources (through neighbourhood renewal advisors or a similar facility);
- opportunities for jobs for local people and for paraprofessionals to act as an informal link between services and residents;
- someone at LSP level with a responsibility for and overview of engagement with dedicated officers at neighbourhood level to promote engagement;
- a community governance strategy at local authority and/or regional level to build skills and learning opportunities among all partners,⁸⁸ and provide joint training opportunities;
- high profile capacity building programmes targeted at councillors and officers; and
- skills, authority and sanctions at government office level to ensure that engagement is a priority in LAAs and CPAs.

The role of councillors in neighbourhood working

8.11 Effective links between elected representatives and neighbourhood arrangements are essential for re-engaging citizens with the institutions of government. The report looked at the role of councillors in neighbourhood arrangements and argued that there is evidence that points to successes in involving ward councillors in neighbourhood arrangements across a broad area of activity. There has been successful horizontal integration with councillors forming parts of interlinked local networks, and there has been successful vertical integration with councillors providing effective bottom-up and top-down links between neighbourhoods and the corporate centres of local authorities. The evidence indicates some factors that are likely to assist the success of ward councillor involvement in neighbourhood working (Box 8.5).

⁸⁸ Taylor, Marilyn and Mandy Wilson (2006) *The Importance of the Neighbourhood: Tackling the implementation gap* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Box 8.5: Factors affecting the success of ward councillors in effective neighbourhood working

- Councillors are not too wedded to the previous 'way of doing things';
- Partners from all sectors, officers and councillors are clear about councillors' role in the neighbourhood, and councillors are willing to take a backseat if necessary;
- There are no local rivalries about which institutions represent the neighbourhood;
- Councillors and partnerships have officer support to improve services at the neighbourhood level;
- There is a clear delivery mechanism for delivering action plans;
- There is proactive, widespread and creative community engagement; and
- Councillors have been supported by training and development programmes.

Neighbourhood engagement and service improvement

8.12 The report suggested that the 'neighbourhood', in general an area with a population of around 5,000-15/20,000 people may well be the appropriate spatial scale for improving particular types of services through user and community involvement especially in deprived areas:

- Community safety;
- Housing;
- Environmental management; and
- Some aspects of health, education and youth services.

8.13 For other services, the business case still has to be made to councillors, directors and service heads. In order to make that case, more concerted work will be required to address their concerns, which are likely to be economic (*we can't afford it*), skills and capacity and (*we can't do business this way*) and structural (*we just can't do it that way*).

8.14 Thus, the evidence explored as part of this project indicates that there are a significant range of benefits to be had from neighbourhood working both in terms of service improvement and engaging citizens. The case studies show that local areas do need the space to develop their own arrangements and that one size does not and cannot fit all areas. However, the analysis shows that, provided all parties are clear about the functions to be carried out in an area, appropriate forms can be developed to take the agenda forward. It also shows that there is more to be done to change institutional arrangements, among LSPs and LAAs, if the second stage of double devolution is to be achieved. This will involve interventions to change traditional approaches and the development of the business case for neighbourhood working across a range of services.