

Hastings Borough Council

Neighbourhood Renewal Impact Assessment

Hastings, East Sussex

MAIN REPORT

Commissioned by the
Neighbourhood Renewal Team, Hastings Borough Council

Undertaken by
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This study has been commissioned by the Hastings Borough Council Neighbourhood Renewal Team to help all those involved in the Hastings Neighbourhood Renewal programme to assess progress to date, make the most of the remaining period of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) and ensure the sustainability of the initiative. It is believed to be the first such impact assessment in the country undertaken at local level and can be seen as a pioneering piece of work providing opportunities for promoting Hastings' considerable success in the neighbourhood renewal field.
- 1.2 The methodology adopted has been to create a framework for involving the key parties in assessing the programme's successes, shortcomings and suggestions for taking things forward.
- 1.3 Hastings is one of 88 areas in receipt of government Neighbourhood Renewal funding which is designed to tackle postcode deprivation and improve the way services are delivered in the country's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood Renewal funding for Hastings will amount to £5,842,000 over five years. The final year was to have been 2005/06, but this might now be extended (details are not yet available). The programme reinforces the local Community Strategy and sits alongside the physical regeneration programme of the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force and its regeneration company Sea Space.
- 1.4 The shadow Local Strategic Partnership made a commitment to a three-year funding programme, but typically the first year was driven by the need to spend rather than through a strategic or performance management approach. This was before Community Forum structures were in place and the development of Local Action Plans to customise public services to priority wards.
- 1.5 There is a considerable amount of qualitative evidence that the NR programme has had a positive impact in the priority wards through individual projects but, in line with the national picture, quantitative evidence is sparse except in relation to the amount of crime. Crime figures show that there was a reduction in the priority wards but that, overall, the reduction was less on average than in Hastings generally in three of the main crime categories.
- 1.6 Securing the sustainability of improvements is a key priority of the government's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. Mainstreaming is the most effective way in which the sustainability of the initiatives taken with neighbourhood renewal funding can be assured. There are already a few examples of mainstreaming taking place in

Hastings and there are examples from elsewhere which can be drawn on for inspiration. Overall, mainstreaming requires a mature and strategic approach to partnership, and a strong commitment from key decision-makers to effecting change.

- 1.7 A great deal of experience has been gained during the programme and it is important to look at opportunities for sharing and promoting good practice (e.g. in running local management boards and neighbourhood forums and in the consensual approach adopted).
- 1.8 The conclusions of the study are that Hastings Neighbourhood Renewal programme has built up a considerable momentum and has achieved a great deal in a relatively short period of time. But in the time remaining it is important to focus on sustainability, particularly mainstreaming, learning and partnership working, and on rectifying some perceived and actual operational deficiencies. Key recommendations to achieve this include: exploring alternative sources of funding; developing neighbourhood management and community development strategies; better measurement and communication of impact; simplifying and standardising processes where possible; clarifying roles of the parties involved.

2. Introduction

2.1 Why this work was commissioned

Regeneration is a long-term process, taking up to 20 years. The Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) programme in Hastings and St Leonards has been operating from April 2001, with funding until March 2006. During this time the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS) has been set out and NRF has been used to fund the key strands of the Strategy.

As the responsible authority, Hastings Borough Council, together with its partners, wished to examine the impact of the first three years' work in the priority wards against the floor targets, to identify emerging 'good practice', and explore sustainability beyond the NRF programme.

This is believed to be the first such impact assessment in the country undertaken at local level and can be seen as a pioneering piece of work. There are opportunities for Hastings Borough Council to capitalise on this and on the success of its neighbourhood renewal programme generally

2.2 The brief

The brief for this study was to review progress to date and to make recommendations for improvements, particularly to ensure:

- a) the maximisation of outcomes in priority wards;
- b) the sustainability of initiatives when NRF ceases;
- c) enhancement of mainstreaming opportunities;
- d) the extension of good practice.
- e) the engagement of hard to reach groups, especially BME communities.

The full brief forms Appendix C8.

2.3 About this report

This document, the main report, sets out the findings as clearly and succinctly as possible. (A glossary of abbreviations forms Appendix C7). Appendix A contains a review of current arrangements. Appendix B contains data sheets on NR funded projects completed by project leaders. Appendix C contains background material on the study and the process adopted.

3. Methodology

3.1 The task has been treated as an investigation; the piecing together of a jigsaw of facts and opinions in order to present a picture of a very complex programme which is clear and useful, both to those involved and to readers coming to it afresh. The process has been designed to secure the input of those involved in building up the picture.

3.2 There have been seven main steps:

- 1 **Establishing a reference group** to guide the project. This group comprises a spectrum of the interests involved (see Appendix C1).
- 2 **Reviewing and structuring data.** Establishing what information exists and is needed and establishing a framework for presenting it. (Essentially two main types of information are used - statistics and people's views. To measure impact, baseline data and up to date performance data is needed.)
- 3 **Circulating standard project data templates** to project managers of main NR funded projects to secure relevant data.
- 4 **Interviews and exchanges with:**
 - **Key decision makers** to examine decision-making and monitoring processes;
 - **The Neighbourhood Renewal Team** to examine performance data, monitoring data and sustainability;
 - **Key project managers** to establish missing data, test performance and challenge unsupported assertions.
- 5 **Circulation of draft findings** to key parties (see Appendix C3). Key parties were invited to comment and supply any missing data.
- 6 **Meetings and seminar** to explore reactions to the draft report, deal with specific issues and shape final recommendations.
- 7 **Report amended and distributed**

3.3 The consultants have been assisted by Mee Ling Ng of TriNova, particularly with the findings relating to black and minority ethnic (BME) and hard to reach (HTR) groups.

4 Context

National picture

- 4.1 The national strategy for neighbourhood renewal is designed to improve standards of health, education, housing and the environment, reduce crime and worklessness, and close the gap between the worst-off neighbourhoods and the rest of the country. The strategy includes a variety of new programmes, but above all seeks to improve the way mainstream public programmes and services are delivered in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Community strategy

- 4.2 Hastings' Community Strategy contains the ten-year vision for Hastings & St Leonards, which was launched by the Hastings Strategic Partnership in 2003, after extensive consultation. It identifies 21 key issues to tackle in order to deliver the vision, each with improvement targets to achieve in 2, 5 and 10 years. The first of the 21 key issues is to 'Narrow the Gap' and take the five most deprived wards out of the worst 10% nationally by 2013. The Community Strategy involves local communities and organisations working with public agencies in partnership to tackle the town's problems and deliver a better quality of life.
- 4.3 The Community Strategy seeks to provide a coordinated framework for partners' strategies and service plans, and is linked to a major physical regeneration package. By bringing all these strategies and plans together, and working in partnership, the strategy aims to revive Hastings.

Local Neighbourhood Renewal strategy

- 4.4 Hastings is the 27th most deprived local authority area in England, and suffers from disproportionate levels of educational underachievement, unemployment, crime and poor health; this in turn has led to significant issues of social cohesion. Five wards in particular, have been identified as having severe problems and are amongst the worst 10% nationally: Castle, Central St. Leonards, Gensing, Hollington and Broomgrove. (Ward boundary changes in May 2002 supported the designation of the NR area as Ore Valley which includes the newly named Baird and adjacent Tressell wards.)

- 4.5 An overview of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) allocated by the government to Hastings is shown below.

	Financial Year	NR Budget	NR Spend
Year 1	01/02	£688,000	£601,000
Year 2	02/03	£1,031,000	£1,031,000
Year 3	03/04	£1,375,000	£1,375,000
Year 4	04/05	£1,374,000	n/a
Year 5	05/06	£1,374,000 anticipated	n/a
	TOTAL	£5,842,000	n/a

- 4.6 In 2002 a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS) was drawn up to identify the problems facing the priority areas in Hastings and to provide a platform for delivering improvements. (It has recently been updated.) After the first funding allocations (some of which were for a 3-year commitment), the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) decided that NRF should be used specifically to deliver improvements for the priority areas, to underpin the LNRS.
- 4.7 Greater Hollington, which includes Hollington ward, is a national pathfinder for the neighbourhood management programme. It has a local Neighbourhood Board, as well as a forum for community representatives and an annual delivery plan which has to be agreed with the local Government Office (GOSE).
- 4.8 The other priority areas have separately established Neighbourhood Forums to involve the local community. (Gensing and Central St Leonards have joint arrangements.) Local Action Plans are drawn up annually to address key local problems and to link the priorities of public agencies with local community priorities (which are also reflected in the Community Strategy). Representatives of the Forum, key local service providers and voluntary groups are brought together to work as a Local Management Board to oversee their Local Action Plan.
- 4.9 To build capacity and sustain the renewal process, a Local Learning Plan addresses the training and communication needs of all those involved in the Neighbourhood Renewal process – from professionals to grass root community activists.

The Task Force /Sea Space

- 4.10 The physical regeneration of the area is being led by the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force (a partnership of the South East England Development Agency SEEDA, English Partnerships and three councils – Hastings, Rother, and East Sussex) which has established a regeneration company called Sea Space. The Task Force programme – which includes a multi-site Millennium Community project core-funded by English Partnerships – will have major impacts on the environment, transport infrastructure, housing mix and quality, jobs and job training and the prosperity of the town generally. Its relationship with the Neighbourhood Renewal programme is therefore important.

Latest Developments

- 4.11 The Government's spending review for 2004 has just been published (July 2004). It has extended NR funding to 2008, but it could be six months before a Government decision is made on NRF allocations to individual areas like Hastings. This decision will probably be based on calculations using Super Output Areas (SOAs), the new area deprivation indices published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).
- 4.12 Hastings Borough Council (HBC) is now starting to look at amalgamating the NRF funding with other funding streams, including SEEDA's funding. Whilst a coordinated funding approach could add value, there is no clarity about how funding will be allocated compared to the existing arrangements or whether there will be a direct link between allocating NRF and delivering the LNRS.

5 Outcomes in priority wards

- 5.1 This section looks at the impact that NR is having in the priority wards. It is based on data supplied on the main NR funded projects (see Appendix B) as well as that gathered in the review of current arrangements (Appendix A) and review of literature (see Appendix C).

Quantitative evidence of impact

- 5.2 Measurable impact in the priority wards includes the following:

- a) **Reduced crime.** Crime has reduced in three main categories – vehicle crime, domestic burglary, violence in a public place – in the priority wards between 2001/02 and 2003/04, but the reduction in the priority wards was less than in Hastings generally. Hence the disparity with the priority wards has increased. (See Appendix A16 for full details)

	Vehicle crime	Domestic burglary	Violence in a public place
Reduction 01/02 – 03/04 (Hastings - all)	15%	12%	3%
Reduction 01/02 – 03/04 (Hastings - priority wards)	8%	4%	2%

- b) **Improved educational attainment.** Attainment in secondary schools has increased significantly since the inception of Neighbourhood Renewal, particularly at Key Stage 4, where Pupil Progress Chasers have supported borderline year 11 students. No figures for students from priority wards are available and therefore the impact on priority wards cannot be guaranteed. But the figures below are for the five Hastings secondary schools where students living in the priority wards attend. (See Appendix B7 for more details)

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
GCSE 5 A* – C grades (average %)	36.4	40.0	43.8

- c) **Less truancy.** There has been significant improvement in absence figures in Hastings secondary schools since the inception of

Neighbourhood Renewal as a result of the focus of initiatives such as Inclusive Learning Tutors and Attendance Challenge rewards. Again there is no breakdown for students from priority wards and therefore the impact on priority wards cannot be guaranteed. (See Appendix B9 for more details)

	Percentage of absences (authorised and unauthorised)		
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Filsham Valley	12.00	11.90	10.25
Helenswood	9.10	7.90	3.90
Hillcrest	10.80	10.20	11.10
Grove	13.90	12.30	11.00
William Parker	11.80	8.10	n/a

- d) **Less educational disruption.** There is clear evidence of improvement in the Inclusive Learning Tutors caseload work with students at risk of their education being disrupted for behavioural issues, bullying, attendance, attainment, etc. The vast majority of the caseload live in priority wards. (See Appendix B7 for more details)

	Improvement 01/02 to 03/04
Improved attendance	89.3%
Improved Attainment	86.7%
Improved Behaviour	85.2%
Reduction in exclusions (expulsions)	71.4%
Up-take of Activities out of school	73.1%
Less vulnerable to criminal activity	80.9%
Caseload Families taking up family activities	35.7%

Qualitative evidence of impact

- 5.3 Impact which is so far unmeasured, at least in relation to priority wards, includes the following:
- a) Shift in culture so that street drinking is increasingly not tolerated by local communities. (See Appendix B1 for more details)

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- b) Increased participation of BME community in key reviews and consultations (generally, though not measurable in the priority wards). (See Appendix B2 for more details)
 - c) Increased support for community organisations by businesses. (See Appendix B3 for more details)
 - d) Increased local procurement by local businesses. (See Appendix B3 for more details)
 - e) Adults being drawn back into education and employment as a result of training of basic skills tutors. This includes those often described as 'hard to reach'. (See Appendix B4 for more details)
 - f) Families engaged in learning who would not normally be through courses organised during the holidays and family learning courses for parents with early years children. (See Appendix B4 for more details)
 - g) Improved community participation on health related issues (generally, though not measurable in the priority wards). (See Appendix B5 for more details)
 - h) New active Community Network. (See Appendix B9 for more details)
 - i) Community centre kept open providing a wide range of facilities and sustainable management arrangements established (Robsack). (See Appendix B10 for more details)
 - j) Large numbers (almost 2000) young people engaged in sporting activities with resulting improvements in timekeeping, behaviour, attendance and communication. (See Appendix B12 for more details)
 - k) Less nuisance caused by street drinkers than would otherwise be the case. (See Appendix B13 for more details)
 - l) Positive perception of the effect of street wardens.
 - m) Community centre kept operational (West Hill). (See Appendix B15 for more details)
 - n) Provision of alternative to 'risky' and antisocial behaviour for young people. (See Appendix B16 for more details)

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- o) Opportunity for public services to plan at local level through the Local Action Plans.
 - p) Linking the planning and design of major regeneration infrastructure projects at a local level e.g. Millennium Community, Housing Renewal Area and Station Plaza.
 - q) Reduced burglary in 1,419 dwellings in Houses in Multiple Occupation as a result of being accredited and having additional security measures fitted under the Secure Accommodation Scheme. (See Appendix B11)

Findings

- 5.4 There seems to be a considerable amount of qualitative evidence that the NR programme has had an impact in the priority wards through individual projects.
- 5.5 Quantitative evidence is sparse. In some cases this because it is too early to assess results and it will be easier as time goes on. This is particularly the case in health (see Appendix A14). In other cases it is because the relevant information is not available (or has not been communicated). This picture is familiar to other neighbourhood renewal areas in the country.
- 5.6 Important statistical information is sometimes not available, e.g. to track how spend affects priority wards (e.g. Education Action Zone money in schools where only a small proportion of pupils come from priority wards, so unable to track their progress; because activities are open to all (e.g. 'walks in the park')). In some cases this can be rectified by improving data collection and analysis, in others it will be virtually impossible.
- 5.7 There is a need to highlight safeguards in data analysis – (i.e. to avoid shifting problems elsewhere e.g. from Central St Leonards to Gensing).

6 Sustainability, mainstreaming, good practice

Context

- 6.1 For neighbourhood renewal, mainstreaming can be defined as “influencing ‘mainstream services’ to make them work better in deprived neighbourhoods, by shaping and resourcing them for the task, and making them focus explicitly on the places and people most in need of their support”. For effective mainstreaming to benefit neighbourhood renewal there needs to be some:
- a) Bending (re-allocation) of mainstream resources – changing spending patterns to target the most deprived areas;
 - b) Focussing policy on deprived areas, for example through legislative change or fixing challenging floor targets;
 - c) Reshaping services to reflect local needs, e.g. by removing organisational designs which prevent deprived areas receiving an increased level of support; by more effective targeting of services; by improving access;
 - d) Joining-up of services, programmes and targets, e.g. through inter-departmental action and multi-agency delivery;
 - e) Learning good practice including from pilot or pathfinder projects, including making stronger links between area-based initiatives (ABIs) and main programmes.
- 6.2 Agencies and local service providers need to take into account how mainstream policies and strategies impact on deprived neighbourhoods and look at the needs of these neighbourhoods when planning and delivering programmes and services. The Government is looking to ensure this focus is reflected in their current work on delivery plans for public service agreement (PSA) floor targets.

Ways in which mainstreaming is taking place in Hastings

- 6.3 Evidence of mainstreaming taking place in Hastings include the following:
- a) Street wardens – all priority wards covered.
 - b) Police Dedication Force in Central St Leonards.

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- c) A team of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) is being established in Ore Valley increasing the visibility of police presence and working in a co-ordinated way with the wardens.
 - d) Customising local services through LAPs, e.g. Street cleansing levels and maintaining new street lighting columns.

Although not strictly mainstreaming, the success in using NRF to 'lever in' additional funding from elsewhere for the voluntary sector should be noted. For instance, from the Commission for Public Patient Involvement to develop the Public Patient Involvement (PPI) process; from the European Social Fund for community learning activity; Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funds to add value to partnership activity in the regeneration field.

Ways in which mainstreaming takes place nationally

- 6.4 Mainstreaming is still at an early stage in its development, but is now high on many agendas. For instance the special funding programmes for neighbourhood wardens has largely ended or is about to end, and yet they have proved immensely popular. Political imperatives have meant that NRF is often being used to keep schemes afloat, but there is recognition that major agencies like councils and housing associations will have to come together to provide mainstream funding. At the same time planning the next 3-year strategy for community safety allows LSPs and CDRPs to take a strategic/commissioning approach to how they 'invest' their mainstream resources.
- 6.5 Sometimes a more joined up approach to services (e.g. removal of dumped cars), can not only dramatically improve services, but also produce efficiencies which will allow sustainable change. Also a more coordinated approach to working closely with communities means that health agencies can change the way they engage with communities, especially those typically harder to reach.
- 6.6 Experience of changes to the way schools operate, mean that separating teaching and administrative functions is sustainable financially, and the introduction of 'extended schools' allows a mix of funding to support the initiative, providing there is proper 'buy-in' from partner agencies to match an outward looking perspective from schools.
- 6.7 The engagement of communities can not only lead to better decisions, but could also lead to greater volunteering and to reductions in problems like graffiti, child protection, etc, and better achieving schools.

Accountable Body Role

- 6.8 A recent report by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the New Deal for Communities programme concluded that there had been a lack of clarity over the role of accountable bodies, which has led in some instances to unnecessary conflict and strained relationships. Any accountable body has to strike a balance between controlling decisions and helpful steering to ensure the programme progresses well.
- 6.9 For the Hastings NRF programme the accountable body is Hastings Borough Council. Fortunately, the Council has avoided the sort of problems highlighted in the NAO report whilst still achieving its NRF spend. In part this is because of the work in building partnerships and the consensual approach to the programme involving the community and other partners. This has helped build trust.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

Note: Recommendations are in boxes

7.1 Overview – Wide ranging and successful programme

Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) in Hastings has enabled a wide ranging programme of activity in the fields of health, education and community safety, targeting the priority wards, which would not have taken place otherwise.

There is a considerable amount of qualitative evidence that the Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) programme has had a positive impact in the priority wards through individual projects but, in line with the national picture, quantitative evidence is sparse.

A great deal of experience has been gained during the programme and it is important to look at opportunities for sharing and promoting good practice.

The conclusions of the study are that Hastings Neighbourhood Renewal programme has built up a considerable momentum and has achieved a great deal in a relatively short period of time. But in the time remaining it is important to focus on sustainability, particularly mainstreaming, learning and partnership working, and on rectifying some perceived and actual operational deficiencies.

The detailed conclusions and recommendations that follow reflect a learning process and should be incorporated into an action plan designed to deliver continuous improvement as well as to promote Hastings' considerable success in the neighbourhood renewal field.

7.2 New infrastructure established

Using NRF, a new and comprehensive system of neighbourhood management and administration has been put in place in a relatively short period of time. This enables local people in the priority wards to play a central role in the regeneration process and to work with service providers to shape and monitor service delivery. It also enables the engagement of the wider community and hard to reach groups in renewal processes through a continually improving range of perception surveys, events, focus groups, etc.

The main elements are neighbourhood forums, local management boards, a community network and an NR support team. There is still scope for fine-tuning but the initial development work is almost complete and the system is beginning to work well.

7.3 Focus on priority areas

There is a need to ensure the NRF focus is on priority areas. This is in part to reflect funding requirements. It also recognises that key public services and the voluntary sector have limited resources (both funding and expert staff), so they have to set, and work to, priorities which underpin the Community Strategy and the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS).

New area deprivation indices have recently been published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), based on the new Super Output Areas (SOAs). This may change the priority areas for Hastings.

Hastings Borough Council (HBC) to advise the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) on the implications of using the new SOAs to measure deprivation.
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7.4 Impact beginning to be felt

The first Local Action Plans (2002/03) progressed two-thirds of identified actions in the same year. This was despite a start part way through the year and although the actions had not been included in service plans.

The impact of the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme is beginning to become apparent. In particular, huge progress has become evident in reclaiming public space in Hastings & St Leonards over the past year – i.e. making people feel safer and more content to use the streets and public open spaces. This has been due to a subtle mix of initiatives and NRF has been the key.

7.5 Impact mostly hard to measure

In a few areas there is demonstrable evidence of the impact that NRF has had in priority wards (see paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3), but in many areas it is difficult to measure impact with any precision, either because it is too soon or because the relevant data has not been gathered.

A format is now in place that requires all NRF funded projects to meet Government and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS) targets. (Community grants are available from the Community Partnership grant fund and the criteria are in line with LNRS and Community Strategy targets.)

New systems of performance management are now being put in place and, if this is followed through effectively, more definite measurement will be possible in years to come. More robust information is needed in some areas (education for example) and information should be provided at SOA level, from 2005/06 at the latest.

The format for awarding NRF funding should include key requirements such as baseline information, effective performance measures and monitoring arrangements, relevance to priority wards, sustainability, etc. Compliance with this should be a requirement before releasing NRF for 2005/06

The decision making on Neighbourhood Renewal should be kept as localised as possible, but within a framework set strategically by the LSP, including commissioning.

Accountability for performance should complement the performance management framework (PMF) arrangements for the LSP and the Community Network, and local management board (LMB) monitoring arrangements.

Monitoring and testing of impact should become one of the main roles of the NR Team, supporting the LSP PMF arrangements. This should be linked to taking a lead on developing a commissioning approach (see below).

Use regular customer surveys (possibly annually or using electronic methods), as well as Forums and special interest groups (SIGs) to comment on performance. The surveys should try to build on existing survey programmes.

7.6 Strategic approach through commissioning

Current Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) thinking is that LSPs should take a strategic approach to allocating NRF and other special funds, which the commissioning approach encourages. A commissioning approach is based on clear strategic aims, and sets out a brief with the outcomes required, linked to specific targets. A budget is set, and agencies and other organisations are invited to submit proposals. Requirements can be built into the brief, such as working with local community organisations where that is appropriate. For NRF, the strategy is set by the LNRS, which itself is incorporated into the Community

Strategy. This approach can help change the way mainstream services work or prioritise their funding. It requires partners to agree the brief and in some instances pool resources, without which it will be very difficult to sustain most of the current NRF funded initiatives. The LSP's role is to set strategic objectives rather than manage the NRF programme itself.

The LSP should use commissioning to help prioritise initiatives, focussing in particular on those which will be funded through bending mainstream funding.

Project driven bidding should be discouraged, as this leads to short-termism and silo working. It also undermines a strategic and sustainable approach.

7.7 Future NR Funding

NR Funding has played an important role in setting up Neighbourhood Renewal arrangements. Systems are just beginning to work well but these are at risk if NRF were to end too soon. Although NRF generally will be extended, decisions about any further allocations to Hastings specifically may be six months away.

If NRF is to be amalgamated with other funding streams, including SEEDA's funding, then this should not undermine the Community Strategy and LNRS. Whilst a coordinated funding approach could add value, there is likely to be a continuing need to demonstrate that NRF is delivering on the neighbourhood renewal aims as set out in the LNRS. Decisions need to be accountable and transparent, and arrangements owned by all the stakeholders without being overly bureaucratic – this will be a challenge.

If it is decided to amalgamate NRF funding with other funding streams, then careful consideration will need to be given to how decisions will be made, how funding will be allocated and how the communities in the priority wards will be involved.

7.8 Little definite support for mainstreaming as yet

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) is emphasising the need to mainstream fund successful initiatives where there is a continuing benefit to be harvested. While most of the parties involved appear to be aware of the importance of mainstreaming, little firm commitment to it is evident as yet. Requiring the likely exit strategy to be specified before deciding funding will encourage mainstreaming.

There are tight budgetary constraints on both local authorities involved, and Hastings is not the only priority for East Sussex County Council. It is important that all the public agencies involved take on responsibility for mainstreaming.

Government Office (GOSE) support to encourage mainstreaming should be sought.

The LSP should call for a report on the sustainability of all current NR funded projects.

The LSP should ensure that the Local Action Plans should be given clear priority by public service providers.

Other than activities designed to build community capacity, all projects seeking continuing NR funding into 2005/06 should be required to:

- Identify a major agency as sponsor;
- Show equal mainstream funding (unless a fixed-term project).

The NRF saved by equal mainstream funding in 2005/06 should be allocated through a commissioning process which supports the Local Action Plans (see 7.20).

7.9 Explore alternative funding sources

There is a need to explore alternative funding sources and secure commitments from other parties.

SEEDA, English Partnerships, private developers, housing associations and Sea Space could increase capital values if people feel safer, the environment looks cleaner and good facilities are available.

Where major capital projects are occurring, funding should be made available to resource local community engagement and to support local service improvement initiatives.

7.10 Neighbourhood management strategy required

There are a number of neighbourhood management models in place (e.g. Greater Hollington and the arrangements in the other priority wards), but these

are currently dependent on short-term funding and other specific one-off initiatives. Greater Hollington is a national pathfinder and valuable experience has also been gained in the other areas.

Before the NRF ends, a vision is needed for how neighbourhood management – in the broadest sense of the term – should evolve over the coming years in Hastings & St Leonards. Unless key partners reach a consensus on possible options, sustainability will not be achieved and the benefits from the current arrangements will be dissipated. This may require prioritising some areas and services and exploring options for the size and geography of neighbourhoods.

As well as looking at some initiatives elsewhere in the country, Hastings is in a position to build on its experience to date and develop tailored neighbourhood management models which are capable of being mainstream funded. Hastings may want to focus on the five priority wards and, in particular, look at improving the effectiveness of mainstream services there.

Hastings has a two-tier local authority system, with both a borough and a county council. The split responsibility for council services means it is vital that both councils continue to work together to support neighbourhood renewal and to develop sustainable neighbourhood management.

The LSP with HBC and ESCC should develop a planned neighbourhood management strategy. Steps towards developing a strategy could include:

- Hosting a learning event based on national experience and developing ideas for sustainable neighbourhood management arrangements.
- Visits to places with relevant neighbourhood management arrangements.
- Holding a stakeholder event to determine interest and support, and explore appropriate models.

7.11 Strengthen Local Management Boards

The local management board (LMB) structure is strongly supported. LMBs are improving the way they are working, becoming more business-like. Some services like the police are strongly supportive, but some services are less engaged.

The protocol for HBC ‘champions’ has now been agreed and will further reinforce progress of Local Action Plans once they are fully operational.

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) representation is difficult to achieve successfully, whilst sometimes requests for attendance are only for minor issues.

There are still issues about the work of the LMBs which need resolving; for instance, some services are concerned about the process for producing Local Action Plans. This should develop into a joined up process involving the community, the neighbourhood renewal team and services. The process should ensure that the plans are built up from all three key strands – statistical evidence of need, community views and service targets.

Considerable frustration has been caused by the lack of common formats for reporting and monitoring progress on actions within the Local Action Plans (LAPs). This has recently improved.

It is important to secure commitment from service providers, and developing the LAPs should dovetail the budget setting process and timescales for partner organisations.

Develop better partnership working.

Clarify the process for producing the LAPs and ensure that service providers take a direct part in that process.

Incorporate the LAPs into agency service plans and their performance management targets.

Standardise the approach to documentation and reporting.

A programme for LMBs to learn from each other as part of the Learning Plan.

Ensure that the HBC champions' role is incorporated into their performance management targets.

Clarify ESCC representation on LMBs so that it is appropriate but is supplemented with effective arrangements to ensure service delivery.

Ensure that the LAP planning process is timed to take advantage of service planning by partner organisations.

7.12 **Clarify Neighbourhood Manager role for Central St Leonards**

The role and accountability to the LMB of the new Neighbourhood Manager for Central St Leonards (CStL) needs to be clearer and related to the neighbourhood management strategy (see above).

Particularly in Gensing & CStL, there is a clear opportunity for the LMB to readily develop from being a joint programme management board, to a neighbourhood management role.

The impact of this post is in danger of distorting the balance of attention paid between CStL and Gensing, although both are categorised as priority areas.

Consider developing the role of the Gensing & CStL Local Management Board so it takes on the wider neighbourhood management role.

Consider the accountability of the Neighbourhood Manager to the Local Management Board.

7.13 **Avoid marginalisation of Gensing**

Following the ending of the Southwater Renewal Area, measures are needed to avoid Gensing from feeling marginalised (due to SRB and Housing Renewal Area funding now being focussed on Central St Leonards).

Undertake a review of how Gensing's needs are being addressed to ensure they are afforded sufficient attention.

Consider expanding the remit of the CStL Neighbourhood Manager to cover Gensing.

7.14 **Community development strategy needed to support neighbourhoods**

Neighbourhood Renewal requires successful community involvement, which is increasingly recognised by agencies. Experience shows that this is often dependent on a small group of active community members, not just agencies reaching out to the broader community and to hard-to-reach groups. These people act as the interface between the wider community and agencies, and are required to have a high level of skills and, as importantly, give time voluntarily.

There is clear evidence of fatigue amongst some of these volunteers (some of who are spending 20-hours plus a week), and there is a risk that more of them will drop away.

At present councillors' role in the forums is positive and generally they have a good relationship with active community members, but there have been tensions and there is the potential for this to recur. Councillors can have a number of roles, and local councillors are a resource for community support as well as leadership.

There are also still tensions between the Forums and the Community Network and about the Forums' representation and access to funding like the Community Learning Chest.

HBC is unlikely to be able to provide adequate community development support to the Forums post-NRF. Its Community Partnership Team currently has three officers supporting communities of interest across the borough, each with a specialist remit (young people; the elderly and disabled; BME). There will be scope for this team to pick up some, but not all, of the work now being undertaken by NR funded posts. How much needs to be explored further, along with the possibility of enhancing and expanding the Team. HBC's Community Partnership Team presently only has a limited capacity to directly support the priority wards.

The community development strategy needs to be linked to broader government programmes such as CHANGEUP Capacity Building and Infrastructure for the Voluntary and Community Sector and the recent FUTUREBUILDERS initiative launched earlier in the year.

Hastings Borough Council and partners to review the current arrangements for community development, and ensure that responsibilities are clear and lead to effective interventions.

Develop a longer term strategy for supporting community involvement in priority neighbourhoods. (Key elements of the strategy should include increased support to existing active community members, and to recruiting more of them.)

Review the current demands on active community members.

In conjunction with community representatives, develop a joint work programme to support the Forums in the priority areas, involving all the relevant NR funded posts (e.g. NR Team, Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA), Hastings Trust) and HBC's Community Partnership Team, to make the most effective use of resources available.

HBC and ESCC should review the role of local councillors in engaging with the community in priority areas.

Develop the relationship between the forums and the Community Network.

Explore the future role of the HBC Community Partnership Team in priority wards and possibilities for enhancing and expanding the team.

7.15 **Review support to black and minority ethnic and hard to reach groups**

The NR Team should build on the investment made in 2002/3 in work with hard to reach (HTR) communities. It should adopt a coordinated approach with contracted providers such as HVA and the LSP partners to integrate community development work with HTR groups and the NR process.

Youth work with the young black and minority ethnic (BME) community and community development with the BME community are borough-wide activities. This is often essential to develop and support the emerging BME infrastructure. However, activities in the mainstream also need to be targeted in the priority wards. Engagement of BME communities in the priority wards is minimal and action has to be taken to rectify this.

Issues faced by the BME community in particular (e.g. race hate crime, harassment) are being dealt with separately by the Council and the Police and appear not to be considered sufficiently at a local level.

The role of local community leadership from elected members, at the neighbourhood level, is crucial in monitoring performance in this area of work and ensuring synergy and mainstreaming happens at this level. Service delivery partners should be held to account in meeting the needs of HTR groups, in particular BME communities.

The BME Project has successfully developed and supported the creation of a new BME Forum. The BME Forum needs to be part of the local action planning process and help the neighbourhood forums set specific objectives and targets which meet the needs of the BME community in the priority wards.

Review the role of the HVA and the HBC community partnership team workers in supporting BME and hard to reach (including youth), and more generally at how they might work in a complementary or unified way.

Review the agreements on NRF funded BME worker projects to show clear benefits to priority wards.

The BME Project should support the NR Team and the forums in regularly reviewing and monitoring the achievement of objectives and targets and in drawing attention to any new issues affecting the BME community.

The BME Project should carry out a NR impact assessment workshop with the BME community, particularly in the priority wards.

Clarify the role and relationship of the Community Network with the Neighbourhood Forums.

Reflect the developing LSP's Equality Plan in the Local Action Plans.

7.16 **Communicate process and impact of NRF**

The NR process and impact are difficult to understand, both to those involved and to the general public. There is a need to keep everyone up to date with the state of play but also to avoid information overload. Several recent and current initiatives are useful in this regard; e.g. the Community Network's partnership guide, the Forum induction pack for new and existing members (currently in draft).

Maintain the communication effort and incorporate into the LSP's own communications strategy.

Service providers to explore the possibility of creating a database at SOA or postcode level to assess impact on priority areas.

7.17 **Identify and share good practice**

There are now many areas where expertise and good practice in NR has been developed in Hastings which may be useful to others locally and nationally (in Greater Hollington and in other areas).

Some community reps have said that if their time could be better utilised, they would value the opportunity to learn about each other's experiences and approaches, but there is a difficult balance with their current time commitments.

Identify and share good practice (e.g. a local conference, open days, study visits, cross-Forum and -LMB learning and networking events).

7.18 Learning / improvement action plan

The Local Learning Plan is designed to promote understanding of neighbourhood renewal, and increase skills to help deliver the programme. It was first drawn up in January 2003, and needs to be updated in line with the LSP's Improvement Plan and any other feedback and evaluation.

A number of learning strands have been brought together, including the Community Learning Chest, to oversee the learning programme. Whilst this is a positive approach, the perception of some Forum representatives is that priority wards are not given access to other funding programmes.

There are four key strands to the plan, with substantial training have taken place for two of those strands (the community and councillors), but not on the other two (service providers and LSP members). As well as addressing this deficit, it is important that as many learning events as possible are designed for these groups to learn together, to promote partnership working and joint understanding. Practical tasks like the process for developing LAPs could be used as learning opportunities.

Another important improvement would be to develop events which bring together people involved in different areas, including Greater Hollington, so they can learn from each other and develop common approaches where appropriate.

Update the Local Learning Plan, in particular linking it to the LSP's Improvement Plan.

Review the existing programme arrangements so priority wards have access to the full range of training opportunities.

Address the neighbourhood renewal learning needs of service providers and LSP members.

Encourage agencies to support a joint staff training programme for core skills.

Maximise the number of learning events designed for the different interest groups to learn together, where possible using practical tasks like the process for developing LAPs.

7.19 Firm up roles of NRF funded posts

General feedback welcomed the input of some individual NR funded staff, but there was no overall sense of how all these resources were organised and co-ordinated and how this strategically supported the LNRS.

Clear job roles need to be established for all NR funded workers together with a protocol for co-ordinated working together on NR priorities.

Clear funding agreements need to be in place as a condition of NR funding continuing into 2005/06.

The NR Team's role in programme management and performance management should be enhanced and commissioning roles developed.

7.20 More strategic role for LSP

The LSP shares overall responsibility with HBC for allocating NRF and ensuring that it is used to best effect. It has a related role in encouraging public agencies to adapt the way they deliver services and prioritise resources for the priority wards. Synchronising service planning cycles between major public agencies will greatly assist joint working on the complex problems they face.

The LSP also has a critical role in joining up the Sea Space plan with the Community Strategy which incorporates the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS).

The LSP should take a more strategic/commissioning approach to NRF via the Neighbourhood Renewal Team, and use the annual Performance Management Framework (PMF) process to inform that and to test the effectiveness and plausibility of NR funded activities.

The LSP should encourage all the agencies working with it to synchronise their service planning cycles and to adopt compatible performance management arrangements for their services.

The effective use of NRF and the delivery of the LNRS should be part of the PMF process and reflected in the LSP improvement plan.

The LSP should take a longer-term view of how to sustain a neighbourhood management approach and encourage mainstream services to participate.

7.21 **Coordination of the many local plans and institutions**

In some areas coordination of the many local plans and institutions is working well. In other areas it is working less well:

- Millennium Community works well with Ore Valley Forum;
- In Central St Leonards a range of different funded programmes have been integrated into a single plan (including Police Priority Areas)
- In Castle Ward there has been little integration of the major physical development and the LAP.

Generally, successful Neighbourhood Renewal will promote sustainability and has the potential to raise land values. Good linkages are being developed over the Millennium Community project in particular, as both programmes need strong engagement with the local communities. Sea Space has improved its community engagement since its early days, and recognises this has to continue as more initiatives are developed.

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) approach to raising employment skills and increasing employment levels, need to fit closely with the Community Strategy and the LNRS. The Task Force programme itself could be a powerful driver for Neighbourhood Renewal. However there are potential tensions between the two programmes, for instance:

- One is capital project focused, the other concerned primarily with communities and public services (which produces different working cultures).
- Sea Space's focus is on physical and economic issues, and therefore needs other partners to contribute to and support social inclusion.
- Different accountability and decision-making arrangements.
- Different areas – Sea Space's remit is wider than Hastings itself, and includes part of Bexhill.
- Different local authority involvement (ESCC, HBC and Rother DC).
- The major physical developments in Castle ward are also part of Hastings town centre, and therefore need to take into account views from the wider Sea Space area as well as at ward-level.

The LSP should explore how best to coordinate the working arrangements of the different agencies and to support the LMBs.

Sea Space should work with the Officers' Support Group (OSG) to ensure a joint action plan to improve social/economic performance, with appropriate resources to deliver the plan.

There is a need to ensure that there are robust and explicit linkages between the Task Force and Neighbourhood Renewal initiatives and, wherever possible, joint approaches. These should be reflected in the Community Strategy.

Sea Space should continue to develop its consultation and engagement with the community, and review the appropriate levels for engagement over major developments.

7.22 **Next Steps**

Produce an implementation plan to effect change based on this report.

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