



Lewisham

Mayor's Commission Empowering Communities and Neighbourhoods

Final Recommendations

May 2007

Executive Summary

The Mayor's Commission on empowering communities and neighbourhoods was established in September 2006 to consider how best to empower local people and facilitate their engagement in their local area. The Commissioners, comprising cross-party representatives, resident and community activists and relevant council officers, were asked to explore the potential for establishing new means to empower Lewisham's local communities, examine existing and new models of governance and recommend how Lewisham might progress these ideas in future policy arrangements. This paper presents these recommendations.

The Mayor's Commission on empowering communities and neighbourhoods recommends that the London Borough of Lewisham introduce local ward assemblies for each of the borough's 18 wards. The Commission believes that these localised bodies, defined by the active involvement of the ward councillors, will enable people living and working in each area to have a stronger and more direct influence in shaping their local community. The Commission believes that these ward assemblies represent the most effective and pragmatic vehicle for local empowerment, establishing a structured environment in each ward that will support an ongoing process for identifying and resolving local concerns and implementing local solutions.

This report should be read as a whole document, setting out the overarching conclusions reached by the Commission. The following specific points are highlighted within the main document as recommendations endorsed by the Commission:

MC1: Ward assemblies will be established within each of the borough's 18 wards, replacing existing Area Forums

MC2: Each assembly will have the support of a ward co-ordinator, based in the council's Community Services directorate, with direct links to the wider strategic aims and executive functions of the council and its partners

MC3: Each assembly will have a web-based presence to provide an established means of communication and information sharing

MC4: Each assembly will adopt a 'Charter' setting out what the assembly can expect in terms of the Council's response to issues raised, information about local services and events, the role of local councillors and the administrative support that will be provided. The Charter will also describe the Council's expectations in relation to the extent to which the assembly is representative of the local community.

MC5: The ward assembly should be open to all members of the public with a core steering group expected to include:

- Three ward councillors (with, ideally, one nominated as chair)
- Local residents
- Community and voluntary sector representatives
- A representative from the safer neighbourhood team
- Representatives from the local business / commercial sector
- A community representative from a tenant management organisation, if applicable
- A ward co-ordinator

MC6: Detailed ward arrangements, including the frequency and format of meetings will be decided on a ward-to-ward basis.

MC7: Ward councillors will have a central role in providing leadership for ward assemblies, providing impetus and direction and promoting an inclusive and positive approach.

MC8: One councillor will normally chair meetings.

MC9: There will be a need for training to enable councillors to fulfil this role. This will need to be reviewed as part of the implementation of the ward assemblies.

MC10: The ward co-ordinator, as part of the Community Services Directorate, would be expected to provide the link to wider plans and engagement strategies.

MC11: Ward assemblies will link into the Local Strategic Partnership, influencing strategic decisions by providing evidence of community priorities.

MC12: The ward assembly model will identify and prioritise local concerns and may develop an annual 'Priority Plan.' This annual plan could set out the key issues identified by the assembly and the priorities for addressing these issues. The annual plan could then be considered by the appropriate decision-making body within the council.

The ward assembly may use other mechanisms to interact with the Council and other public agencies including:

- Putting items for discussion at Council select committees
- A specific role in making recommendations on use of the locality fund
- Action initiated by council officers as a result of feedback from the ward co-ordinator, progressed through the Community Services directorate
- Action initiated by elected members through casework
- Use of the new opportunities outlined in the White Paper for example the Community Call for Action.
- Providing evidence based analysis and proposals to the Stronger Communities Partnership

MC13: The model should be flexible enough to allow ward assemblies to align themselves to and complement existing neighbourhood arrangements.

MC14: The model should be flexible enough to respond to the various ways in which other public service providers have defined different sets of neighbourhoods.

MC15: There should be a regular borough-wide review of devolution to ward assemblies. Further devolution of power should be incremental and subject to independent assessment of the role and performance of Assemblies

Background and context

Over the course of the last century, Government has *'repeatedly "re-discovered" the power and importance of the community and neighbourhood idiom'* (Grace & Groot, 2006, p.4) This recurrence is understandable. Neighbourhoods and communities are held to be a universal phenomenon, where people interact and where the experience of the local environment and local services is shared.

Communities and neighbourhoods occupy a prominent position within current government thinking. Sustainable communities, characterised by an active and interdependent citizenry, sit at the core of many flagship national policies. Both the Respect and Social Exclusion agendas are built on the notion of communities solving their own problems and the participation of people who would otherwise be excluded from involvement or representation.

In 2005, the Government set out its vision for local democracy based on the premise that local action, undertaken by empowered residents and local councillors, would not only substantially improve the quality of local services but also provide the foundation for strong, sustainable communities.

These intentions were reiterated in the Local Government White Paper – *'Strong and Prosperous Communities'*. In his foreword, the Prime Minister established that this paper:

'proposes a new approach to local partnership to give local authorities more opportunity to lead their area, work with other services and better meet the public's needs...It will give more power to citizens and communities to have a bigger say in the services they receive and the places where they live. And it will strengthen the role of thousands of local councillors who are at the front line of local democracy and community engagement.'

Over the last twenty years, the London Borough of Lewisham has developed various approaches to neighbourhood governance, civic engagement and localised service delivery. In *'The Place we Call Home'* published in 2004, the

Mayor reiterated why he believes empowering communities to be so important and why traditional forms of authority needed to embrace a change in focus:

“...those who have power...need to do more than merely exercise it wisely. They need to use it to create the conditions that allow others to exercise power too. They should strive both to release the untapped potential that exists in every community, and to identify and remove those obstacles that stand in the way of groups and individuals finding their voices and taking responsibility...The reason we must share power is because the scale and nature of the challenges we face can only be addressed if we are all involved.”

This commitment to partnership working and community empowerment is encapsulated in the council’s vision, *‘together, we will make Lewisham the best place in London to live, work and learn’*. The commitment is also reflected within the Community Strategy priorities and the council’s corporate priorities.

Community Strategy Priority 8: Engage local communities: help local communities to develop their own capacity for mutual support and independent action and ensure the centrality of community involvement in public service decision-making processes.

Corporate Priority 1: Developing opportunities for the active participation and engagement of people in the life of the community.

Summary of Commission discussions

Over the course of its first four meetings the Commission was presented with a number of different examples of neighbourhood empowerment and citizen engagement. At its first meeting in September 2006, the Commission discussed the extent, definition and parameters of empowering communities and neighbourhoods. From these presentations and subsequent discussions the following key points were raised:

- Effective neighbourhood arrangements deliver real value to residents through increased influence over the decisions that affect their lives; they benefit councillors in the form enhanced local advocacy; and they result in services that are more likely to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes.
- The term 'community' can describe a range of collectives, from those who share similar work patterns (e.g. an academic community) to those brought together through shared belief (e.g. a faith community). It would be important that any arrangements respond to, and reflect, the different kinds of communities that exist across Lewisham, but the basis for empowering the communities of Lewisham would, first and foremost, be based on distinctions of geography and space.
- Communities define themselves in a variety of ways. Often a sense of identity within a place is strengthened by the physical environment, for example a building or park, or by successful area-based services. There is no single way of constructing a set of 'communities' in Lewisham, and despite their administrative origins existing ward boundaries provide a pragmatic basis for defining area and focussing local activity.
- The involvement of elected representatives would be essential in ensuring the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of any arrangements.

The second meeting of the Commission heard of the successes and challenges of existing arrangements both within and outside the borough's boundaries. The Commission observed how:

- Well-managed neighbourhood activity could achieve significant change with relatively small sums of money.

- Dedicated, passionate individuals can make a substantial difference to the quality of life in a local area. Successful and sustainable neighbourhood working involves supporting these people and mainstreaming their skills.
- Tensions can emerge from trying to align local concerns with wider strategic objectives. Skilful political and managerial handling is needed to ensure that empowerment goes hand in hand with an appreciation of wider perspectives.

The third meeting of the Commission discussed existing community and neighbourhood activity in Lewisham, both geographically and in the form of voluntary and community organisations. The Commission observed that:

- Voluntary and Community organisations play a key role in forming local networks and an attachment to the local area. Such organisations will need to play a pivotal role in any neighbourhood arrangements if they are to be successful.
- Not all areas of the borough could rely upon such capacity. Some areas will require greater efforts to promote and encourage social capital.
- There are a variety of explanations put forward for community attachment but different communities will inevitably display and feel differing levels of attachment for different reasons. Neighbourhood arrangements will need to be adaptive and flexible to local circumstances.

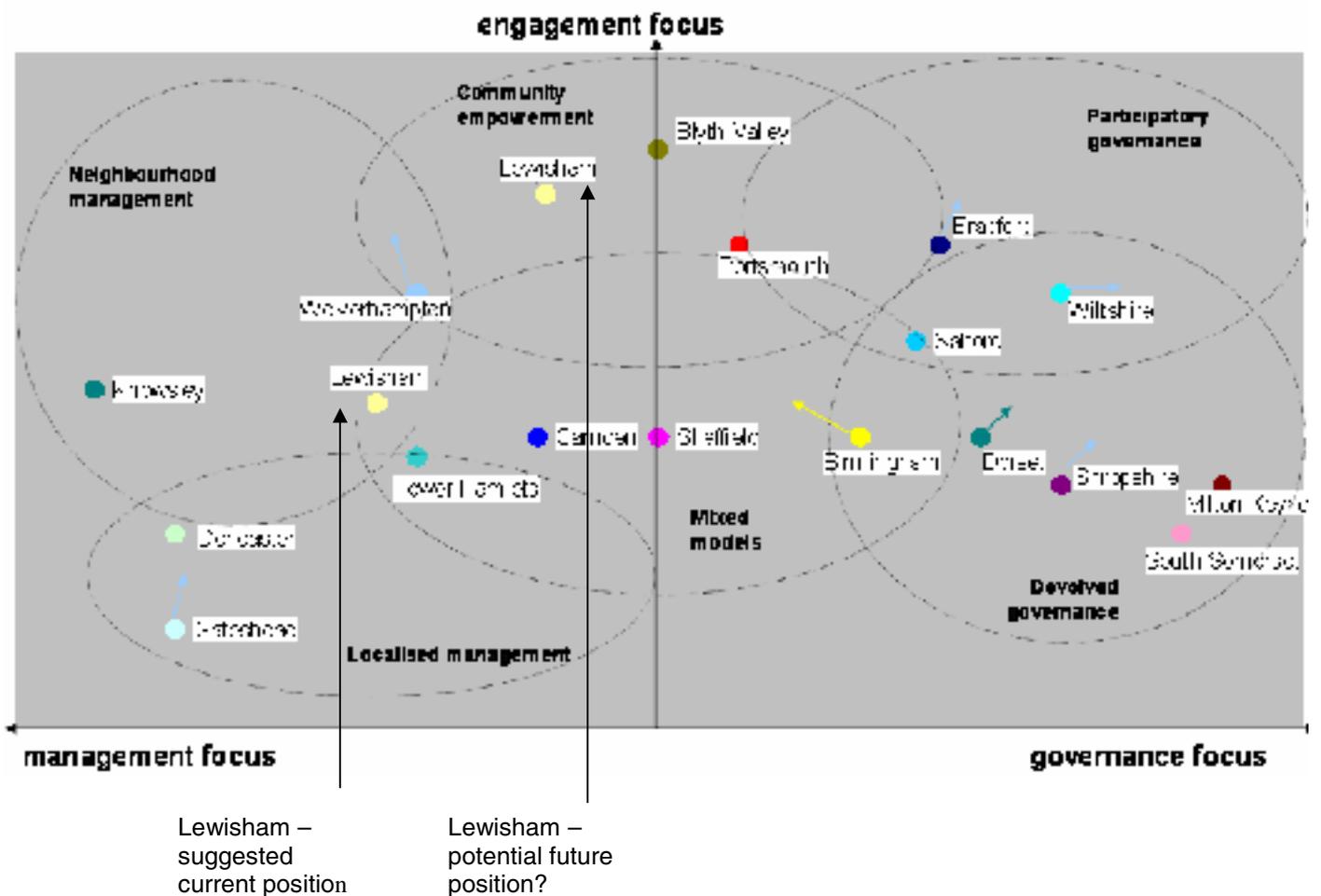
Strategic direction

The Commission was presented with three rationales that could broadly characterise existing approaches to neighbourhood working.

- A *management focus* looking to ensure more responsive services, value for money and citizen satisfaction
- An *engagement focus* which prioritises community engagement, cohesion and citizen influence
- A *governance focus* which concentrates on improving and devolving decision-making to promote trust, responsiveness and ultimately turnout in elections

In practice any neighbourhood based arrangements would contain elements of all three. The table below analyses the approach of a number of local authorities against these parameters. The Young Foundation, who designed this table, characterised Lewisham as management/engagement focussed, noting that existing neighbourhood management arrangements were originally instituted to tackle deprivation and better tailor service delivery.

As an illustration of the diagram, Birmingham, identified as having a governance led focus, had established community partnerships and community area boards and had reviewed decision-making and consultation arrangements. Portsmouth, identified as having a predominantly engagement led focus had offered residents a 'menu of options' for involvement, including neighbourhood forums, mini-LSPs and community-run facilities.



The Commission agreed that any future arrangements should look to move Lewisham from its current position to one with an increased focus on

‘engagement’ and ‘community empowerment’. An indicative position has been marked on the chart.

At its fourth meeting the Commission were presented with three potential models for neighbourhood empowerment, informed by the discussions and deliberations that had taken place.

The options were:

1. A continuation of existing neighbourhood arrangements, specifically the Area Forum programme and neighbourhood management
2. The introduction of statutory Parish Councils
3. The introduction of a universal ward based approach

The Commissioners considered each model against the following criteria:

- Increased citizen participation and enhanced resident engagement
- Degree of bureaucracy
- Role of the ward councillor
- The ‘urban’ context of Lewisham as a place
- Localised influence in decision making
- Synergy with current administrative arrangements
- Provisional of a minimum offer
- Cost
- The nature of community and localised need

Based on this discussion the Commissioners recommended option three – a universal ward-level approach. This proposal is described in more detail in the remainder of this paper.

A universal approach – Ward Assemblies

Ward assemblies will be established within each of the borough’s 18 wards, replacing existing Area Forums **(MC1)**. These assemblies will provide residents of each ward with a structured environment designed to create an ongoing process for identifying, understanding and responding to local priorities, a regular

and direct point of contact with their locally elected representatives and a recognised channel through which the Council and other public sector providers can work with local communities and neighbourhoods.

While the primary manifestation of these assemblies will be in the form of regular meetings, it is the intention of the Commission that they represent a more proactive and ongoing process, facilitating and supporting local activities and providing a means through which the local community is better able to express their concerns and develop resolutions. This broader role would be supported through the allocation of a ward co-ordinator.

Different areas of the borough experience differing levels of council and public service intervention, and as a result are more used to working on a neighbourhood or community basis than others. The model of ward assemblies guarantees a universal approach to all wards ensuring that all communities and all residents have equal opportunity to access some means of local empowerment. However, the model is designed to be flexible enough to respond to different circumstances and allow different approaches to be adopted over time.

The universal approach consists of:

- An assembly for each ward (ideally chaired by a local councillor)
- The support of a ward co-ordinator, based in the council's Community Services directorate, with direct links to the wider strategic aims and executive functions of the council and its partners **(MC2)**
- A web-based presence to provide an established means of communication and information sharing **(MC3)**
- A 'Charter' setting out what the assembly can expect in terms of the Council's response to issues raised, information about local services and events, the role of local councillors and the administrative support that will be provided. The Charter will also describe the Council's expectations in relation to the extent to which the assembly is representative of the local community. **(MC4)**

Membership and Organisation

Each ward assembly would be based on current local authority ward boundaries and would act as an umbrella neighbourhood body, co-ordinating actions to tackle local concerns and facilitating other empowerment initiatives within the area.

It would be expected that the ward assembly would be open to all members of the public with a core steering group expected to include:

- Three ward councillors (with, ideally, one nominated as chair)
- Local residents
- Community and voluntary sector representatives
- A representative from the safer neighbourhood team
- Representatives from the local business / commercial sector
- A community representative from a tenant management organisation, if applicable
- A ward co-ordinator (**MC5**)

To ensure the relevance of these assemblies, core membership should reflect the strengths and capacity of the local area. For example, where a ward contained strong voluntary and community sector capacity, this should be reflected on the steering group. Ward specific arrangements, including the frequency and format of meetings could be decided on a ward-to-ward basis. (**MC6**) This will enable ward assemblies to meet on an 'extraordinary' basis if necessary in response to specific issues, as well as joint meetings between different assemblies.

Leadership and Support

Ward councillors will have a central role in providing leadership for ward assemblies, providing impetus and direction and promoting an inclusive and positive approach (**MC7**). The expectation is that one councillor will normally chair meetings (**MC8**). There will be a need for training to enable councillors to fulfil this role, which could involve IDeA support, including the Leadership

Academy and other tailored packages of activity. This will need to be reviewed as part of the implementation of the ward assemblies (**MC9**).

Primary support for the assembly would come from the ward co-ordinator. With responsibility for three wards, the officer could co-ordinate all the administrative arrangements associated with the meetings of the assembly. This individual would be experienced in community development work and able to advise the elected members and the wider ward assembly on engaging the local community and developing its capacity for action and decision-making.

The ward co-ordinator, as part of the Community Services Directorate, would be expected to provide the link to wider plans and engagement strategies (**MC10**). The co-ordinator would also be a focus for developing capacity at the local level. Further, ward assemblies would link into the Local Strategic Partnership, influencing strategic decisions by providing evidence of community priorities (**MC11**). The primary focus for this link will be through the new Stronger Communities sub group of the LSP, and it will be important to develop these links in a way that utilises the assemblies as a resource and creates opportunities for them to exert influence.

There are a number of council and community premises within each ward that would provide appropriate meeting places, and where it is possible, the assembly would raise its profile by holding meetings in different parts of the ward.

Influence on decision-making

A key intention of the ward assembly model is to establish a means to articulate and prioritise local concerns and identify local solutions. There are a range of ways in which these can be taken forward, by the assembly itself, ward councillors, through the Local Strategic Partnership or through the council.

The ward assembly model will identify and prioritise local concerns and may develop an annual 'Priority Plan.' This annual plan could set out the key issues identified by the assembly and the priorities for addressing these issues. The

annual plan could then be considered by the appropriate decision-making body within the council.

The ward assembly may use other mechanisms to interact with the Council and other public agencies including:

- Putting items for discussion at Council select committees
- A specific role in making recommendations on use of the locality fund
- Action initiated by council officers as a result of feedback from the ward co-ordinator, progressed through the Community Services directorate
- Action initiated by elected members through casework
- Use of the new opportunities outlined in the White Paper for example the Community Call for Action.
- Providing evidence based analysis and proposals to the Stronger Communities Partnership (**MC12**)

The annual 'Priority Plan' should become a key reference document for each assembly, providing the basis for influencing local service providers as well as being a consistent ward-by-ward evidence base for the Local Strategic Partnership. The 'Charter' describing the core elements of each ward assembly (see above) will establish a consistent basis for the format and development of 'Priority Plans'.

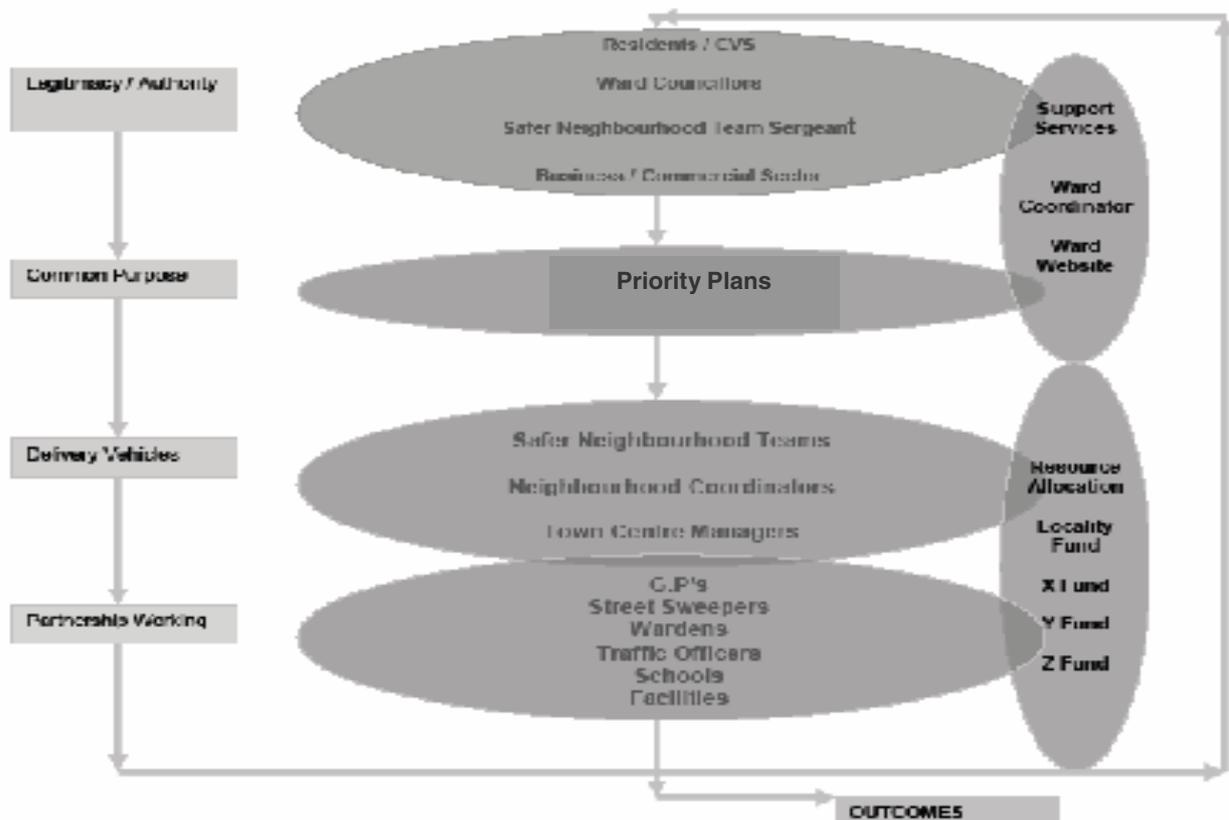
Working in parallel with existing arrangements

The model is intended to allow ward assemblies to align themselves to existing neighbourhood arrangements. This recognises the range and geographic coverage of localised bodies that already exist, from housing panels and park user forums to Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and New Deal for Communities. Any new arrangements should look to learn from, and complement the work of these existing arrangements (**MC13**).

The flexibility inherent within the ward assembly approach should also enable them to respond to the various ways in which other public service providers have defined different sets of neighbourhoods (**MC14**). For example, the Primary Care Trust divides the borough into north and south, with each subdivided into six

pockets. The Police operate with 18 Safer Neighbourhood areas, schools operate in confederations and clusters, while residents define their neighbourhood as ‘my street and neighbouring streets.’

The chart below shows a provisional structure for the ward assembly.



Communications

Annex B sets out the communications issues arising from the proposed creation of ward assemblies.

The future development of ward assemblies

Once the basic structures are in place, the existence of functioning and representative local groups will provide the foundation for future development. There should be a regular borough-wide review of devolution to ward assemblies and further devolution of power should be incremental and subject to independent assessment of the role and performance of Assemblies (MC15).

There are a range of ways in which this could happen, and Annex A includes examples of how assemblies could be developed. The main areas for further development of ward assemblies include:

Funding and participatory budgets

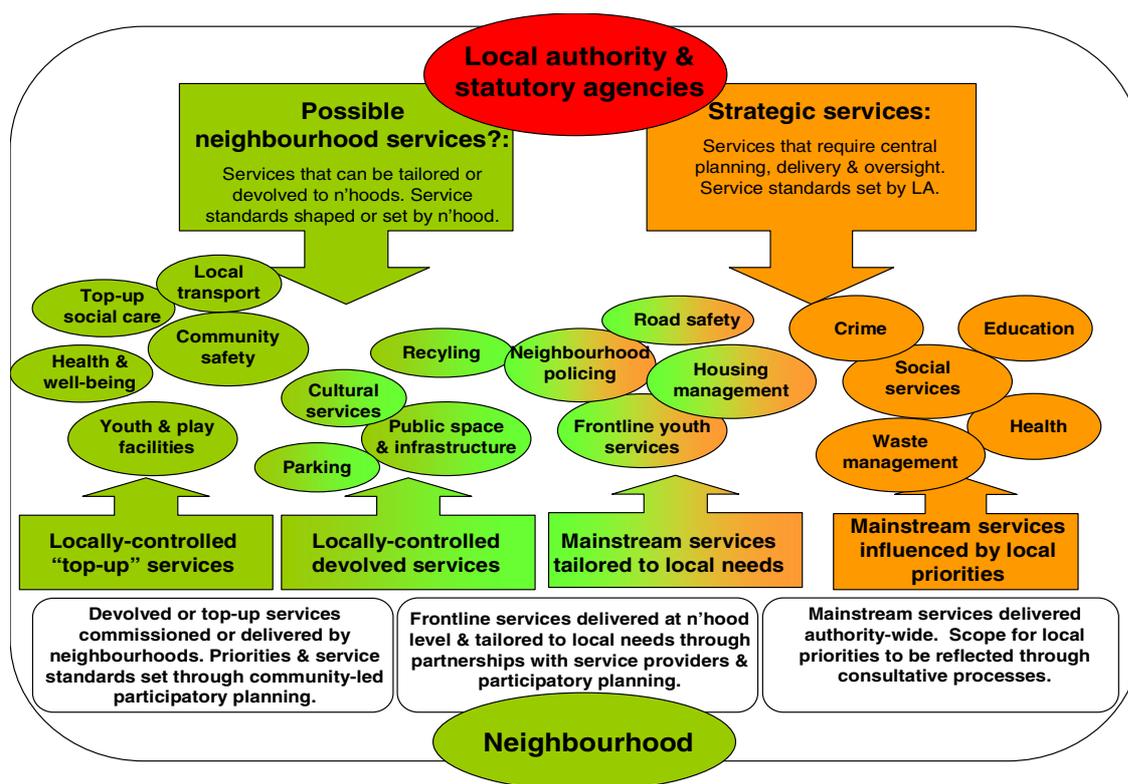
Responsibility for specific budgets could be delegated to ward assemblies, and assemblies could be used to promote participatory budgeting techniques enabling local people and groups to determine how budgets are spent.

Management of public assets

Management of local assets might offer further opportunities for localised income generation. Further work by the Council is underway to establish the basis for how this could work and it will be important that this is linked into the creation of ward assemblies.

Service devolution

The Commission noted that empowerment and engagement need not necessarily require service devolution. Indeed, while many individuals may want to be consulted on local events, it is likely that substantially fewer will have the time or interest to become deeply involved in managing and funding local services. In many cases a light touch approach is a more effective technique. The Young Foundation provided a useful analysis of existing service areas and their suitability for devolution, making a distinction between neighbourhood and strategic services.



If there was considerable local interest by the citizens in a locality then the ward assembly could initiate a dialogue with the council or other public agencies to establish the potential for taking over the management of and/or responsibility for specific neighbourhood activities or services.

Community/ Parish councils

The Local Government White Paper, *'Strong and Prosperous Communities'* included proposals to allow communities in London the same opportunity to establish a parish council as the rest of the country. Where there is evidence that suggests these arrangements have potential to add value to the ward assembly this could be taken forward using the assembly as the mechanism for putting proposals to the council.

Conclusions and next steps

The proposed model looks to bolster the role of local councillors, allowing them to fulfil their community leadership role while providing a new means of connecting

with and responding to their constituents and their local area. By establishing a universal approach at a smaller spatial level, the ward assemblies offer the potential to increase overall citizen engagement and participation in governance.

The Commission's recommendations are intended to create flexible arrangements that will link with, and build on, existing structures and provide opportunities over time to expand the range of activity and responsibilities delegated to this level of working. The recommended approach is intended to establish a greater focus at neighbourhood level that is affordable and can be implemented quickly without the need for wide ranging constitutional changes.

Ward assemblies will need to establish themselves as legitimate sources of influence over both services and policies to demonstrate their relevance. With strong political support and the help of partner organisations and public service providers, ward assemblies represent the opportunity for empowering local communities and citizens across Lewisham.

Annex A - How assemblies might develop

The model recommended by the Mayor's Commission on empowering communities and neighbourhoods is intended to be flexible enough to complement existing good practice and allow a range of different approaches that best reflect local circumstances.

Future developments are not just a question of structure, they will also depend on local capacity and the extent to which assemblies are representative and reflect local priorities.

To illustrate the potential range and variety of assembly development, outlined below are three examples of how the assemblies might look, and the role they could play. Each example represents a fictional scenario based on features and factors of relevance to wards within Lewisham.

Ward A (a structure for identifying and responding to priorities)

Distinct Ward Characteristics

- Locally recognisable civic amenities (including a park and a well used shopping parade). Higher rates of participation and engagement.
- Due to the relatively low levels of deprivation, there are no bespoke programmes or initiatives underway.

Initiatives already underway

- Safer Neighbourhoods Team

Charter commitment / Priority Plan Focus

- Provide a forum to channel locally active groups and individuals in influencing local issues

Distinct Assembly Function

- By implementing innovative consultation techniques, the assembly will identify a range of priorities for action and then exert influence over service providers in how those issues are addressed. Providing a local round-table for community influence over decision making

Scenario

The ward has notable areas of local interest, with higher levels of locally active groups than elsewhere in the borough. This is reflected by the level of public questions asked at council meetings, and representations made to councillors.

The assembly in Ward A would bring together the various resident, community, commercial and user groups, and focus the engagement with local ward councillors.

In this scenario, the use and development of a local 'priority plan' is central. The plan would set out a list of issues to be tackled in the forthcoming year. The issues themselves could result from an initial consultation with local residents, and would be followed up with regular communication with the local community.

Ward B (co-ordinating action to tackle a wide-ranging, but specific issue)

Distinct Ward Characteristic

- Contains a main arterial transport route within it – a consistent local ‘issue’

Initiatives already underway

- Neighbourhood Management (Estate Based)
- 2 x Town Centre Management areas
- Safer Neighbourhoods Team

Charter commitment / Priority Plan Focus

- To work together to make ‘Anyward Road’ a better place to live and work / Development of ‘Anyward Road Strategy’ by doing w, x, y, z in 2008/09

Distinct Assembly Function

- A strategic body, bringing other initiatives together, in order to tackle a wide ranging but specific issue in a variety of ways

Scenario

Ward B has a range of initiatives already in place that would need to be reflected in the development of the assembly, with particular links needed to the Neighbourhood Management programme.

The main road running through the ward is a focal point for a range of local issues, including crime and community safety, litter, and the quality of ‘shop fronts’. The road can be seen either as a means of unifying or bringing the community together or as a barrier running through the ward.

This road and the issues associated with it could, following agreement, provide the assembly with its focus; the basis for its local charter and the starting point for the priorities for action.

The Neighbourhood Manager’s role would involve providing an evidence based perspective on issues, and along with the Town Centre Managers (whose town centres sit at either end of the main road) support the development of a strategy for making ‘Anyward Road’ a safer and more dynamic place. A Safer

Neighbourhood Team representative would also add value to the steering group as would a representative from a local school.

This could be supported through a web-based approach to local consultation and information. If for example, a change of waste collection day was suggested as a way to improve the surrounding areas; potential alternative dates could be tested via e-voting.

Ward C (ongoing management of a long term project / objective)

Distinct Ward Characteristic

- Very low levels of community interaction, participation, local economic development / lack of facilities

Initiatives already underway

- Neighbourhood Management (Ward Based)
- Sure Start
- Local Community and Voluntary Sector initiatives
- Safer Neighbourhoods Team

Charter commitment / Priority Plan Focus

- To work to together to provide the local community with a community facility or centre

Distinct Assembly Function

- Co-ordinating local initiatives and potential management of a local asset

Scenario

Ward C has had a strong history of effective Community and Voluntary Sector leadership, recently complemented by Neighbourhood Management. However, the ward still retains high levels of non-participation and low levels of economic development, compounded by a transient local population.

The Ward C Assembly would bring together current arrangements under one umbrella with the specific aim of prioritising community interaction and economic

development through the establishment (and future management) of a community resource centre. This centre would provide a hub for community activity ranging a simple meeting place; to meetings with Local Authority representatives to discuss issues effecting local people when they arise; to ongoing support for local businesses and those seeking employment and training advice. Those involved with current arrangements (Neighbourhood Managers, local CVS workers) would continue to carry out their substantive roles and objectives.

ICT tools would support this ongoing focus. For example, Ward C's web presence might be a Community E-Centre with all the information available at the centre online.

Annex B - Communication issues

If the proposals of the Mayor's Commission on empowering communities and neighbourhoods are adopted there will be a need :

- To inform residents and other local stakeholders about the role and activities of ward assemblies.
- For ward assemblies to consult and engage residents within neighbourhoods about priorities and decisions.
- For services to inform residents and service users about variations in local services.
- To support ward assemblies and communities in fostering a sense of locality in the different parts of the borough.

As part of our current strategic approach we are developing the sense of place project which includes both:

- the promotion of particular neighbourhoods, including through:
 - the local life pages in *Lewisham Life*
 - neighbourhood sections of the lewisham.gov website
 - street banners on red route roads to facilitate place marking
- and providing local communication channels, in some areas for example:
 - locality newsletters in the main regeneration areas.

Potential additional developments

There are a range of enhancements to community level communication which could, subject to resourcing, be developed. These might include:

1. Developing localised service information materials.
2. Developing feedback materials enabling local people to alert service providers to actions required (e.g. environmental problem reporting cards).
3. Local face-to-face consultation and engagement events programmes to

support ward assembly deliberations.

4. Expanding the network of locality newsletters and website to cover all areas.
5. Expanding the provision of lamppost banner sites and running locality based promotions.

Neighbourhood based communication, consultation and engagement

Communication needs to engage the audience. Central to this is the reflection of the audience's own perceptions in the materials. As wards change they do not always reflect public perceptions of neighbourhood boundaries. For example Sydenham Police Station and Sydenham School for Girls are both in the Forest Hill Ward but most local people are likely to perceive them as being part of a wider Sydenham area. Locality based communications need to be flexible enough to take this into account.

Ward based communications might be appropriate for communicating the decisions of ward assemblies and for customer information about ward based variation to universal services. However, a more flexible approach is required for the following:

- customer service information on local services which may be accessed by a wider range of residents (e.g. parks and leisure centre)
- event and cultural promotions which engage wider audience
- issues which are geographically focused but which impact across ward boundaries (e.g. Catford Town Centre regeneration).
- place marking which is best focused on town or neighbourhood centres, rather than boundary marking.

Communication, consultation and engagement support for neighbourhoods should be facilitated on a flexible neighbourhood basis, which may include work at ward level.