



Neighbourhood Partnership

St George Neighbourhood Partnership Launch report

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1- Introduction.

St George Neighbourhood Partnership was officially launched on Wednesday 14th November 2007. The aim of the event was to promote St George Neighbourhood Partnership, learn from different local community/voluntary organisations activities in St George, identify local issues, to prioritise them, and to provide an opportunity for people to network.

Over 40 people participated in the event including representatives from local residents, local community/voluntary organisations and other key stakeholders.

Cllr Ron Stone, councillor for St George West and current chair of The St George Neighbourhood Partnership, chaired the event.

Andrew McGrath, manager of the Community Engagement team and responsible for the delivery of Neighbourhood Partnerships (NPs) across the city gave a presentation on local governance and what it means for Bristol.

Three speakers representing three different community/voluntary organisations in St George showcased their activities. These were Susan Acton-Campbell, from Friends of Troopers Hill, Kate Hunt from St George Community Association and Ann Radnedge from Meadow Vale Community Centre.

2- Local Governance.

The intention in introducing Neighbourhood Partnerships (NPs) across Bristol is to provide an enhanced opportunity for local communities to have a greater say in the way services, and responses to local issues, are managed by Bristol City Council, and other service providers. The role local councillors can play in providing this greater say is one of the core elements of the NP structure.

NP boundaries are based on clusters of two or three wards. Eventually there will be 14 NPs covering every part of Bristol. Membership of the NPs is likely to include residents, representatives from voluntary/community organisations, and service providers (Police, Primary Care Trust (PCT), etc). Each NP is likely to develop its membership in ways that are reflective of local priorities and aspirations. However, it is the intention that local councillors will be at the heart of each NP.

Action plans will be developed for each NP. These action plans will be very target and outcome driven, rather than merely being documents that set out communities' aspirations but with no 'teeth'.

In their early stages of development, NPs will be mechanisms for influencing and scrutinising service delivery and service providers. As well as there being regular opportunities for local people to meet with councillors and service providers, it is also intended that other ways of communicating with residents need to be developed as it is recognised that not everyone wishes to attend big public meetings.

Bristol City Council (BCC) is currently in the process of promoting the role of NPs across council departments. The importance of the council fully adopting and supporting NPs will be vital to its long-term success. This will require a significant 'culture change' across the organisation. The work on enabling this has already begun. Up-coming legislation will support the work of councils and councillors in supporting the work of NPs. Councillors will be provided with enhanced rights to act on behalf of their constituents. These rights are likely to be most effectively provided through the NPs.

3- Showcasing local community activities.

Three community groups were randomly selected to prepare a short presentation to talk about their group and the kind of issues they had faced.

3.1- Friends of Troopers Hill

Friends of Troopers Hill was set-up during 2003. The group was set-up by local resident who feel passionate about a local Nature Reserve. Troopers Hill is a unique site with rare grassland and heathland; it has large deposits of acidic soil and supports a wide range of wildlife species.

The group works very closely with Bristol City Council, Parks Department, in particular with Sally Oldfield Local Nature Reserve Officer.

The group has gone from strength to strength and has achieved so much. With the help of the City Council, Troopers Hill was awarded a Green Flag status. The group secured some funding from "Awards for All" to finance publicity and newsletter, Installed benches and contributed to wheel chair access. The group also managed to develop 5 years management plan agreement with BCC's Parks Department. The group has a successful online discussion Forum where people with an interest engage in discussions.

3.2- St George Community Association

St George Community Centre was opened in 1996. This put an end to a 9-years long campaign by local residents to get a community centre built for the area. It has grown from the beginning from a coffee morning group in the Library to a centre that is currently used by approximately 1400 people a year.

The centre is self-funding and receives no financial support from the council. The group raises most of its finances from their service users with the exception of a small nominal grant received from Quartet Community Foundation.

St George Community Centre is located off Church Road, bordering with the park and the Sikh Centre.

Groups that use the centre are:

Senior Citizen's Coffee Morning
Yoga
Yoga & Pilates
Toddler playgroup
Twins & multiples group
Toddler Singing
Dance & Drama School
Church
Co-Operative Housing Group
Blood Donors

The centre is also available for private hire at a competitive rate.

The centre is currently struggling due to lack of funding, and is just treading water. The management would love to open the centre full time, but can only afford to employ one person for 5-7 hours a week. The group tried to engage with local community projects (for example improvements to the local park) but are considerably hampered by the small committee and lack of resources.

3.3- Meadow Vale Community Centre

Meadow Vale Community Centre is located in the heart of Speedwell. One of the biggest issues for the centre is lack of resources. Most of the little money the group raises goes on maintenance cost. The centre has limited facilities and therefore limits the number of activities that the group can host or monies that could come from lettings.

In general speedwell has a high level of antisocial behaviour and lack of youth provision. There are more and more housing developments taking place in the area with no community facilities.

4- Prioritising community needs in the area

In the hope of avoiding consultation fatigue, "Issues" that were previously identified by local councillors and some community groups were displayed on the walls at the launch event. An opportunity was also given to people who are not necessarily linked to community groups or people who were present at the event to add to the issues listed by writing on a blank sheet under the banner of **Any Other Issues**.

Second part of the event was about networking and prioritising what participants considered being local issues. Each delegate was given 5 red spot stickers to use to stick on to the issues that were displayed on the walls, which they felt was a priority in the area.

Following are summary of the top 5 local issues/ priorities.

NO	Description	Number of points	Percentage
1	Extend Meadow Vale Community Centre Capacity in Speedwell area	25	13.6%
2	Involve young people in Troopers Hill.	14	7.6%
3	Develop Partnership Newsletter	13	7.1%
3	Tackle Litter and rubbish dumping in footpath in Kensington Area	13	7.1%
4	Help with Meadow Vale Community Centre with their running costs	12	6.5%
4	Reinstate trees back in Kensington Road	12	6.5%
5	Tackle the lack of Youth Provision in the area	7	3.8%
5	Develop directory of groups and services in St George	7	3.8%

It was noted that these priorities are not necessarily reflective of people living in St George. Younger people were not represented at all at the launch event and there were very few in number of BME residents.

5- One to one interviews

10 people were randomly selected to take part in one to one interviews. Questions asked were based on the Quality of Life Survey Questionnaires. It is hoped that the out come of these interviews would inform the evaluation process of the partnership.

Summary findings.

How satisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?	Number of responses	Percentage
Satisfied	4	40%
Fairly satisfied	5	50%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	0	0%
Fairly dissatisfied	1	10%
Very dissatisfied	0	0%

Notes:

- 4 out of the 10 people questioned said that they were satisfied with the area they lived as a place to live and further 5 said that they were fairly satisfied in the area as a place to live.
- 1 person said they were dissatisfied.

Questions	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree/disagree	Strongly disagree
I can influence decisions that affect my local area	1	7	2	0
By working together people in my neighbourhood I can influence decisions that affect my neighbourhood	8	1	1	0
I can influence decisions that affect the public services I personally use	1	4	4	0

7 out of the 10 people interviewed felt they could influence decisions that affect their local area none of the interviewed people felt unable to influence decisions.

8 out of the 10 people interviewed felt by working together in groups they could influence decisions that affect them. This could be because large numbers of the attendees were one way or another linked to an active group or church group.

When asked about influencing decisions that affect public services, people were less confident in expressing their ability to influence them. 4 people neither agree/disagreed with the notion and 4 tended to agree and only 1 person strongly agreeing with the notion.

6- What next?

It is recognised that the priorities identified on Wednesday 14th November 2007 were not necessarily reflective of all the community needs in St George. It was also noted that the launch event would not be the beginning and end of identifying issues that affect people living and working in St George.

The aim of St George Neighbourhood Partnership is to continue to engage with local residents about any concerning issues that affect their lives. Hence there would be plenty of opportunities in the future for people to raise their issues or concerns.

The outcome of the St George Neighbourhood Partnership launch would go to the St George Neighbourhood Partnership members who will begin working on some of the priorities that have been identified.

Membership of the St George Neighbourhood Partnership is envisaged to be representatives from community/voluntary organisations based in St George, St George East and West Councillors and other key stakeholders as and when identified by them.