

A Guide to Bristol's new Neighbourhood Partnerships

June 2008

Responding to the calls from the government for people to have more say in local decision making, Bristol City Council is introducing new forms of Neighbourhood Governance across the city. The new structures are called Neighbourhood Partnerships.

This guide has been produced to explain what Neighbourhood Partnerships are, where they are happening and how you can get involved with them.

What is a Neighbourhood Partnership?

Neighbourhood Partnerships bring together local councillors, statutory agencies (like the local police, health services and schools), and local voluntary and community groups, with local residents. Each Neighbourhood Partnership covers the areas of 2 or 3 Council wards*

Where are the Neighbourhood Partnerships?

Each Neighbourhood Partnership is made up of the geographical area of two or three Council wards. The insert enclosed with this leaflet shows which Neighbourhood Partnerships (NP) cover which areas, who the elected Councillors are in each NP and the Council officer who is supporting each NP (if there is no insert attached to your guide please call Voscur on (0117) 909 9949 or email info@voscur.org).

If you're not sure which Council ward you live in, you can visit: www.Bristol.gov.uk/wardfinder or call Bristol City Council electoral services on 0117 922 3790.

What do Neighbourhood Partnerships do?

Each partnership will identify local problems, issues that need resolving and seek solutions to those problems. They help decide what the local priorities are in their area, and there are several things that each partnership **can** do, such as:

- Draw up a local action plan that highlights areas or problems that need to be addressed locally.
- Work with local service providers to deliver the local action plan.
- Apply for funding from other sources (such as the lottery or charitable trusts) to spend on projects in the area.
- Co-ordinate campaigns or projects to improve local services.
- Hold events or consultations (such as surveys or questionnaires) to find out what sort of things local people would like to see improve.

Each Neighbourhood Partnership will hold an annual community conference where local people can find out what has been achieved in the past year, and say what the local priorities should be for the next year.

Do the Neighbourhood Partnership make decisions or have any money to spend?

The Neighbourhood Partnerships do not have formally devolved decision-making powers from the Council. The Neighbourhood Partnerships are able to ask Council staff to address issues that concern them (see Councillor Call for Action box). In the future, Neighbourhood Partnerships may have more of a role in deciding on local decisions currently made by the Council officers.

Bristol City Council has given funding for Neighbourhood Partnerships in its medium term financial plan. Most of this will pay for staff to support the partnerships and the cost of holding events to get local people and groups involved. From April 2008 there is a small amount of money available,

equal to £5,000 per ward (each Neighbourhood Partnership will be made up of 2 or 3 wards, so a 2 ward NP will have £10,000 and a 3 ward NP will have £15,000) to spend on locally agreed priorities. From April 2009 this will rise to £10,000 for each ward. The money is allocated to the Neighbourhood Partnership and can be spent on priorities across the NP area.

How will it affect my group?

If you or your group are involved in local issues then it is important to contact your local Neighbourhood Partnership to find out how you can get involved and get things done through the partnership. See separate insert for contact details for the officers supporting each Neighbourhood Partnership.

How do I get involved with my local Neighbourhood Partnership?

Members of each Neighbourhood Partnership decide how they want to operate. There are different ways to get involved, whether as a volunteer working on an issue that the Neighbourhood Partnership wants to address, attending partnership meetings and events or talking to other local people to encourage them to get involved as well. To find out more about your Neighbourhood Partnership contact your NP contact (see insert).

What support is there for the Neighbourhood Partnerships?

Development workers from the Council's Community Development team help support each partnership (see insert). To ask any general questions about Neighbourhood Partnerships call Jenny Jones or Janet Tomlin at Bristol City Council Community Engagement Team on 0117 903 6825, 0117 922 4051 or 0117 922 4059, email: jenny.jones@bristol.gov.uk or janet.tomlin@bristol.gov.uk or write to Community Engagement, Bristol City Council, 6 York Court, Wilder Street, St Pauls, Bristol, BS2 8QX

In addition to Community Development workers, the council will be developing ways to ensure that each Neighbourhood Partnership has access to strategic-level senior council officers.

Where can I find out more about local groups in my area?

Your Neighbourhood Partnership will be able to put you in touch with voluntary and community groups in your area. You can also find lists of voluntary and community groups on the Bristol City Council website at www.bristol.gov.uk/communitygroups or on the Voscur website www.voscur.org/directories

Councillor Call for Action

In October 2006 the Government published its white paper entitled 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' on the future of Local Government.

The white paper said that: "Local people will receive more information about service standards and be able to turn to their local Councillor to demand an answer to their questions through a new Community Call for Action. We will encourage local authorities to put in place standard procedures for dealing with petitions"

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health 2007 Act became law on 30 October 2007 and extends the Councillor Call for Action (previously called Community Call for Action) to all local government services, to enable more citizens to get their community concerns addressed through their Councillors.

To see the 'Strong and Prosperous Communities implementation plan – one year on www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/532485

How can I keep up to date with my Neighbourhood Partnership?

Voscur will be updating dates of meetings, contact details and other useful information on Neighbourhood Partnerships on our website at www.voscur.org/brispartnership/np

During 2008/09, Voscur will be producing a monthly Neighbourhood Partnership e-bulletin and an occasional Neighbourhood Partnerships newsletter with updates on how each partnership is getting on. If you would like to receive the e-bulletin or occasional update, then contact Voscur at The Create Centre, Smeaton Road, Bristol, BS1 6XN or phone 0117 909 9949 or email: info@voscur.org

What role will local ward Councillors play in Neighbourhood Partnerships?

As democratically elected representatives for an area, local Councillors have a very important role to play in the new Neighbourhood Partnerships. The Neighbourhood Partnerships provide a new mechanism for local people to discuss with their Councillors, issues of local concern and for these concerns to be raised with the service providers. New powers for Councillors such as 'Councillor Call for Action' introduced by the Government will help them to work with Neighbourhood Partnerships to get local concerns addressed.

Some ways to involve people in Neighbourhood Partnership

Online discussion forums

Across the city several online neighbourhood forums have begun to emerge that enable people to have discussions and share information about their area without even having to leave their own homes. Once registered as a member of an e-forum, a resident can reply to posts (messages left by others) or start their own discussion on a subject of their choice. The e-forum message board is open to anyone to read who has access to the Internet, but you can only add messages if you're a registered member. E-forums enable people who cannot get to meetings to join in discussion. They also make it easy to share experiences with other neighbourhoods across the city and the country.

E-forums in Bristol so far include:

Barton Hill, the Dings, Lawrence Hill and Redfield - <http://www.ndcbristol.co.uk/forum/>

Greater Bedminster - <http://forums.e-democracy.org/groups/bemmy-forum/>

Easton - http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/easton_bristol/

Knowle West - <http://forums.e-democracy.org/groups/kw-forum>

Brislington - <http://s8.invisionfree.com/BCP/>

St Werburghs - <http://www.stwerburghs.org/forums/>

There are also several online message boards in Bristol where people can post community notices. Message boards are different from e-forums as you're not automatically informed by email when a new message is posted.

Message boards in Bristol so far include:

Hotwells and Cliftonwood - www.hotwellscliftonwood.org.uk/forums.htm

Voscur e-forums

Members of Voscur can also join in debate and discussion on the e-forum hosted on our website.

Find out more about the Voscur e-forum at: http://www.voscur.org/ebulletin_eforum

If you'd like to find out more about how to set up an online discussion forum for your area, you can find information at:

www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Council-Democracy/Consultations/online-forums.en

Street audits

Street audits are organised walkabouts where people from the statutory agencies responsible for a range of local issues (e.g. police, street cleaning teams, transport officers etc) join with local councillors and residents to walk round local streets making a note of any local issues or problems that need addressing. At the end of the walks a list of things that need doing is created and different people are allocated a task to resolve the problems that have been identified on the walk.

Several groups across the city hold regular street audits or walkabouts and have found them a very effective way for local people to point out local problems to the agencies and get action taken to resolve them.

Who are good to involve in a local street audit/walkabout?

Local residents, police, Council workers including street cleaning staff, housing officers, transport officers.

Community Chests

Each of the Neighbourhood Partnerships has a small budget of their own and local residents will be able to influence how this is spent through their partnership. There is nothing to stop local groups from raising additional funds for a 'community chest' to spend on their own local priorities. Some groups across the city have already begun to pilot ways to generate additional money.

In Hotwells and Cliftonwood a '500 Club' has been set up. The idea is very simple. You buy a number between 1-500 for £18 per year and once a month there is a draw for a prize of £150 and 4 prizes of £25. Not only is there a chance to win prizes, but the 500 Club also supports many community activities. Individual winners are notified and the results are put up on the community notice boards around the area. Find out more about the 500 Club by emailing admin@hotwellscliftonwood.org.uk or visit www.hotwellscliftonwood.org.uk

Involving everyone in your community

In addition to belonging to a geographical community some people identify as belonging to a community of interest or sometimes called equalities groups, for example, older people, women's, Lesbian Gay or Bisexual, Young People, Disability, Users of British Sign Language or Faith. Bristol has seven separate forums, one for each of the above groups. Contacting these forums is a good way of getting in touch with people in these groups who may live in your Neighbourhood Partnership area. Each Forum has a website visit <http://www.bccforums.org.uk/> for more details or call The Bristol City Council Equalities Unit on: Telephone 0117 922 2660, Fax 0117 922 2392, Textphone 0117 922 2661.

Voscur coordinates an Equalities network for groups working with: Women, Disabled people, Black and Other Minority Ethnic Communities, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Gay Men, Children & Young people, Older people and Faith Communities. To find out more or to contact the network call Ruth Pitter on 0117 909 9949, email ruth@voscur.org or visit www.voscur.org/networks/equalitiesnet

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Supporting Voluntary & Community Action