



**BETTER NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES FUND (PHASE 1)
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION
Board Meeting - 18 May 2005**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to the Board for information a summary of the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund (BNSF) Phase 1 Independent Evaluation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Scottish Executive launched the BNSF programme in 2001 to improve services in some of the most deprived areas of Scotland. Within East Ayrshire, the Council co-ordinated the £6.9 million received from the BNSF (Phase 1) programme for delivery through partnership projects. The projects targeted the pathfinder communities of Shortlees/Riccarton and North West Kilmarnock, which the Council had identified as being in greatest need.
- 2.2 The East Ayrshire BNSF programme targeted a better quality of life for pathfinder residents by 2005, with the aims of reducing crime and increasing detection, environmental improvements and improved access to facilities and services. These are the 'safe', 'attractive' and 'active' themes identified within the Local Outcome Agreement (LOA).
- 2.3 Services were to be delivered based on the LOA, focusing on results rather than inputs, and local authorities were required to:
- deliver measurable outputs;
 - concentrate resources at a level where they could make a difference;
 - involve Community Planning Partners in identifying neighbourhoods to target;
 - involve communities in selecting services and monitoring outcomes; and
 - monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Fund.
- 2.4 East Ayrshire Council and its Community Planning Partners commissioned Hall Aitken consultants to independently evaluate the BNSF (Phase 1) programme in September 2004.
- 2.5 The research study was completed by 31 March 2005 and the independent Evaluation report was subsequently submitted to the Scottish Executive on 4 April 2005. East Ayrshire's report will inform the national evaluation as well as support the development of services in East Ayrshire. A copy of the BNSF (Phase 1) Independent Evaluation will be available for inspection at the Board meeting.

3. BNSF (PHASE 1) INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SUMMARY

3.1 The East Ayrshire BNSF (Phase 1) Independent Evaluation details progress in meeting the overall outcomes as set out in the original LOA against individual projects and tracks the impact that BNSF is having in the pathfinder area.

3.2 The evaluation follows the broad format set out by the Scottish Executive in its guidance to ensure that it can contribute to the programme level evaluation nationally, and to ensure that approaches and outcomes in different pathfinders can be compared. The Partners required the evaluation to address a range of issues, including:

- progress against LOA outputs;
- programme impact;
- value for money;
- partnership working
- role of communities; and
- sustainability and mainstreaming.

Progress against LOA outputs

3.3 The consultants identified that the programme has made excellent progress against the outputs listed in the LOA. Overall, 83% of the 70 outputs are fully achieved and the remainder were either progressed and likely to be achieved by the end of the programme. Examples of the LOA outputs that have been achieved via the 21 projects funded by the BNSF (Phase 1) programme include:

- 2 neighbourhood facilities consulted on, designed and awaiting build;
- 2 teenage recreation areas, consulted on, designed and built;
- Youth/Learning Centre building consulted on, designed with the input of young people and built;
- 10 extra cuts to open grass areas provided;
- 300 new street lamps installed;
- 4 CCTV cameras installed and 2 monitoring staff employed;
- a range of road traffic calming measures completed;
- 3 lifestyle clinics established;
- 30 full time equivalent childcare places for vulnerable families provided; and
- every individual aged over 70 years in the pathfinder contacted and 16% received follow up visits.

Programme impact

3.4 A total of 11 outcomes, baselines and targets were set in the LOA against which progress would be measured. Seven of the 11 outcomes have been achieved as follows:

- detection rates increased;

- road safety improved and the overall number of road traffic accidents reduced;
 - estate management improved;
 - annual grass cuts of open and public spaces increased from 16 to 26;
 - total number of housing voids reduced by 10%;
 - home contact and involvement with older people increased, with contact made with all pathfinder residents aged over 70 years; and
 - childcare places increased to 30 full-time equivalent places in nursery schools.
- 3.5 The rise in detection rates is a particular success, as is the progress and achievement in respect of road safety, with both exceeding the targets set in 2001. The improvements to open spaces have been well received by the local community, as have reductions in and improvements to the appearance of void housing.
- 3.6 Issues that affect outcome achievement levels include delays to the two neighbourhood facilities, staff recruitment and retention difficulties, particularly in respect of Youth Outreach, and changes in crime reporting.
- 3.7 The BNSF programme committed itself to measuring its success largely through community consultation, which has been highlighted by independent consultants Tribal HCH as an example of good practice.
- 3.8 The residents of the pathfinder were generally positive about the overall programme and individual project beneficiaries indicated their satisfaction with the services provided.

Value for money

- 3.9 The evaluation report indicates that the BNSF programme has delivered substantial value, and illustrates every £1,000,000 of BNSF funding has had significant impact and has delivered among other things:
- 358 contacts with older people;
 - 58 visits to older people;
 - 13 children of vulnerable families receiving childcare and their families receiving link worker support;
 - 7 additional grass cuts;
 - 5 less housing voids;
 - 355 street contacts with young people;
 - 1389 additional police hours;
 - 218 tonnes of waste removed by the Hit Squad;
 - community managed and directed environmental improvement schemes;
 - 85 sharps removed by the Hit Squad;
 - 13 older people attending weekly activity sessions;
 - 75 new and improved street lights; and
 - 1 CCTV camera installed and monitored.

- 3.10 The programme fits with both local and national strategies and there was no evidence from the research conducted by the consultants of mainstream services being substituted by BNSF spend in East Ayrshire.
- 3.11 However, there appears to be some crime displacement due to BNSF activity and Strathclyde Police indicated some dispersal of disorder from the pathfinder area into neighbouring Bellfield.

Partnership working and role of communities

- 3.12 The evaluation highlights that the level of partner influence on the development of the BNSF programme is substantial, with significant partnership involvement, including the delivery of projects and services, from Strathclyde Police and NHS Ayrshire and Arran. It is also recognised that BNSF provided the first opportunity for Community Planning Partners in East Ayrshire to focus on working in partnership.
- 3.13 It is highlighted that the community has significantly influenced the BNSF programme design and from the start of the programme, community views were sought in respect of progress in the pathfinder area. The process of annually seeking community views about the standard of services has been described by Tribal HCH as 'noteworthy' and the community has been involved at programme level as follows:
- annual community consultation questionnaires;
 - consultation seminars;
 - BNSF newsletters;
 - Citizens' Panel meetings; and
 - open evenings/action days.

Sustainability and mainstreaming

- 3.14 East Ayrshire Council's Housing Division has mainstreamed the Supported Tenancies project and it has been identified that capital works with ongoing maintenance costs will be subsumed into mainstream budgets. Good practice has been identified in respect of youth outreach approaches and community consultation, which have been adopted across Council departments.
- 3.15 An average annual revenue cost of sustaining BNSF services has been estimated at approximately £1.5 - £1.6 million.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 3.16 Conclusions in relation to the BNSF programme in East Ayrshire can be summarised as follows:
- the BNSF programme was designed and delivered with an emphasis on community involvement and partnership working;
 - the projects appear well managed and effectively co-ordinated, and are achieving the LOA outputs;
 - the impacts of the programme, particularly in respect of environmental improvements, have been well received in the community;

- achievements have been significant, including reduced crime, increased crime detection rates, environmental improvements and improved contact of agency services with older and young people.

3.17 Recommendations presented by the consultants for consideration focus on the need to build on the success of BNSF in respect of consultation and partnership, including:

- involving the Partners in greater depth in consultation and dissemination events;
- ensuring that projects and service managers adopt successful consultation practices and mechanisms, including Citizens' Panels;
- ensuring that proposed programme outcomes are measured and monitored in ways that maintain community involvement; and
- developing ways of measuring the benefits of some services and activities that will have an impact beyond the BNSF funding period.

In addition, future funding or initiatives targeting community safety should recognise the issues associated with targeting disorder and criminal activity on a narrowly defined area basis. Future interventions should address these on a much wider area or thematic basis.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- i) notes the positive evaluation of BNSF activity and its impact in the pathfinder communities of North West Kilmarnock and Shortlees/Riccarton; and
- ii) otherwise, notes the content of the report.

Gwen Barker
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10 May 2005