

**Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Neighbourhood Action Groups**  
**Review Group**

**Report**

<http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/CommitteeDetails.aspx?committeeID=2442>

**Membership of the Review Group:** Councillors Brunning (Chair), Coventry and C Williams

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# **1. Executive Summary**

**TO BE COMPLETED ONCE THE RECOMMENDATIONS HAD BEEN DRAFTED**

## **2. Introduction**

At the meeting held on 10 July 2012, the Community Safety, Crime and Policing Select Committee requested a review of how Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) operate across Milton Keynes and how they assist with the reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour. The Review would also cover the structure and effectiveness of NAGs. It was felt that the Review would be timely due to the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) which took place in November 2012. The Review would allow Members to highlight the effectiveness of a strong NAG network in Milton Keynes.

The Review Group agreed a Work Plan and the Terms of Reference, outlined below, at its first meeting in September, when Councillor Brunning was elected as its Chair.

## **3. Terms of Reference**

1. To review the roles of NAGs across Milton Keynes and identify if the structure is fit for purpose
2. To identify alternative options if deemed not fit for purpose in the current environment
3. To look at areas without NAGs and without effective NAGs and investigate the reasons why they are not effective
4. To review the partnership links including those with Parish and Town councils, Milton Keynes Council and Thames Valley Police (TVP)
5. To ensure NAGs are meeting the priorities of the community as a whole
6. To look at the process for identifying priorities
7. To review the support provided by the Council for, and to, NAGs, including co-ordination support
8. To review the link between priorities set by NAGs and the influence they have on the Council and Partner policies
9. To review how NAGs assist vulnerable members of the community

## **4. Report**

### **4.1 Neighbourhood Action Groups**

A Neighbourhood Action Group is a multi-agency, problem-solving group that consists of volunteers from the following:

1. residents
2. relevant partner agencies (e.g. schools, local businesses)
3. key stakeholders (e.g. TVP and the Council)

NAGs focus their work around the main priorities that are identified after consultation with the local community.

Milton Keynes is currently split into 29 NAG areas.

### **4.2 Legislation**

There was no current formal guidance on NAGs. Previous guidance from the Home Office was rigid and the group which set these no longer existed. There was the view that the election of the

PCC may provide guidance on how NAGs may operate in each police area but it was recognised that this could be late 2013 before any guidance was discussed and/or issued. The Review Group felt that the timing of this Review in parallel to the elections would provide a good opportunity to put steps in place to improve the effectiveness of NAGs across Milton Keynes.

### **4.3 Milton Keynes Council**

SaferMK represents organisations working with the community to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the fears people have about crime. The Partnership is made up of six key partners, including the Council and TVP, who provide strategic direction and are accountable to the public. These partners meet on a quarterly basis in the form of the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) and make decisions around the strategic direction of the Partnership.

It was raised that the NAG constitution was not easy to find on the Safer MK website. It was recognised that the website did need updating with more effective signposting. The Constitution was part of the NAG Toolkit. It was viewed that it was important to make the NAG information easily accessible and clear as possible while maintaining the balance of access to a person for support.

### **4.4 Safer Neighbourhoods Delivery Group**

Safer Neighbourhoods Delivery Group (SNDG) is a group which was initiated by SaferMK which was made up of key partners and representatives from the parish councils. The Delivery Group had set up 29 NAGs across Milton Keynes to enable local people to address local issues.

The Chair of SNDG attended a meeting of the Review Group to provide comments on his view of the current situation of NAGs in Milton Keynes of which the main points were:

1. The handover process for Chairs of NAGs was not effective.
2. TVP had stepped back from the original formulated approach and this had allowed NAGs to operate more freely.
3. One approach for NAG operation would not suit all areas.
4. NAGs needed support, training, particularly for chairs, and back office support.
5. There was a lack of awareness within NAGs as to what resources were available to them.

SNDG had conducted a survey during autumn 2012 with the aim that the feedback would provide basic information about the NAG as well as the current priorities and how they operate and areas where more support and development was needed.

The Survey results were received by the Group. Nine out of the 28 NAGs requested to complete the survey had returned responses. The Chair of this Review Group, as a member of Safer Neighbourhood Delivery Group (SDNG), had worked with representatives from TVP, who had offered their support, to phone and email people to try to get responses from people.

From the lists that SNDG was working from - out of 28 records:

15 NAG chair details were incorrect

4 NAGs have merged – with no record of this being available

2 NAGs further have disbanded - no record on the file

It was viewed that while this was a poor return it did highlight the following issues:

- Lack of central contact
- Lack of SNDG knowledge
- Lack of Resident members
- Lack of partnership attendance - mainly Parish or Town Councillors
- Lack of knowledge on budget availability

- Lack of knowing the password to the NAG email box.
- (This email address is published for each NAG on the Council website)

The positive from the returned surveys was that there was good attendance at meetings from TVP and the Council.

#### **4.5 Structure and priorities**

The Review Group discussed the process for how NAGs structured themselves. There was agreement that while NAGs should have the same general terms of reference it should be down to each area to interpret them. A common approach to communicating with residents and a process for identifying new priorities would be of great benefit. It was viewed that to provide all NAGs with a set of guiding principles would enable them to maintain a consistent approach without restricting the individuality of each area.

#### **4.6 Partnership working and resources**

A workshop with a cross section of partners took place where the objectives for the groups were to conduct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) of NAGs.

The key themes from the workshops were:

1. Partners from all sectors wanted to get involved with NAGs
2. NAGs should set achievable aims and priorities and manage expectations.
3. Council officer attendance for NAG meetings was thought to be an advantage to gain access to Council services.
4. Training of Chairs was key to running an effective NAG – with an effective handover process for new Chairs.
5. Communication links and a central source for support, including administrative support, were key for NAGs – and a single point of contact was of high value.
6. Sharing good practice and establishing good links between NAGs would be positive.
7. The parental role of the SNDG needs a more consistent approach.
8. To ensure all NAGs understand how to access funding.

Officers and Members raised an issue around what the function and purpose of NAGs was and what NAGs should be aiming to achieve. Once this had been established the structure for NAGs could be identified.

It was viewed that at times there was an overlap with functions performed by NAGs and other partnerships in Milton Keynes. This issue would need to be looked at in more detail as to what solutions could be put in place.

#### **4.7 Thames Valley Police**

The representative from TVP stated that it was important to look at the benefit to communities that NAGs enabled. When NAGs functioned fully they were effective from a TVP perspective in addressing issues of crime and disorder.

He queried the governance structure for NAGs and where the central point of contact was. He believed after hearing the evidence gathered via the workshops and SNDG survey this was missing and would solve many of the problems that had been identified.

It was viewed that it was important for NAGS to have this central point of contact, knowledge of what was available and also where the access to funding was and how to apply for this. Once

NAGs had funding they could implant projects and see tangible results. This would in turn give credibility to NAGS and stimulate further activities.

It was viewed that NAGs were important as they identified the priorities for their areas. This assisted TVP with the coordination of their resources. Direction had been lost recently but NAGs are an important resource for TVP to access to get messages to communities.

It was viewed that a central point of contact position could be a role performed over 2-3 days per week. It would provide a person that NAGs could engage with and seek advice from.

An online resource was viewed as highly valuable in providing information and guidance for NAGS. It would also act as somewhere for NAGs to promote the work they were doing.

The point was raised that perhaps within the Thames Valley area there could be more joined up working between NAGS.

#### **4.8 Community Safety Crime and Policing Select Committee 6 February to get comments ahead of taking to RAG**

TO BE COMPLETED FOLLOWING THE MEETING

#### **4.9 Responsible Authorities Group**

The Group discussed the need to involve senior members of the Council and other Partners. It was agreed that the Group would take this report to RAG in March 2013 to get support on the recommendations from a wide range of senior officers.

### **5. Conclusions**

To be completed once recommendations drafted

### **6. Recommendations**

1. TBC
2. TBC
3. TBC
4. TBC
5. TBC
6. TBC
7. TBC
8. TBC

### **7. Lessons learnt**

### **8. Background papers**

1. Responsible Authorities Group meeting link

<http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/CommitteeDetails.aspx?committeeID=2410>

2. Neighbourhood Action Groups, Review Group Meeting papers  
<http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/CommitteeDetails.aspx?committeeID=2442>
3. Community Safety Crime and Policing Select Committee meeting link  
<http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/CommitteeDetails.aspx?committeeID=2412>
4. Police and Crime Commissioner link  
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/police-crime-commissioners/>
5. Localism Agenda  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/local-government>  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5958/1923416.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5958/1923416.pdf)

## 9. Acknowledgements

The Neighbourhood Action Groups Review Group would like to thank Richard Solly (Head of Community Safety), Colin Wilderspin (Deputy Head of Community Safety) and Auzra Flynn (Head of Neighbourhood Management) for their assistance during this review. The Review also acknowledges the input from witnesses who provided valuable information for the Group.



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