

BCRNP 22.10.12 - Agenda Item 15

BCR NP Sub Group and affiliated community group protocols (carried forward from 18th June NP) by Clive Stevens & Alison Bromilow

Recommendations:

Section 1: (*Protocols that were formally agreed at the NP on 16th December 2010 (Minutes section 9).* **Change the term “Task Group” to “Sub Group”;** agree minor rewording / clarification.

Section 2: This paper sets out how a community group can be affiliated to the NP, the criteria for eligibility and process for work with NP. (*e.g. In Dec 2010 we agreed that existing Parks Groups would be BCR NP Environment groups for green spaces.*)

Approve process for approving community groups to NP as ‘affiliated groups’.

Section 3: Outlines the policy of subsidiarity and sets out when the NP might lead (*this is so as not to demotivate volunteers on community groups amongst other things*).

Approve process for deciding when affiliated groups or NP lead on projects.

Background:

The NP is the Neighbourhood Partnership which consists of the 6 Councillors, the Community Group members, appointed members of the public and the Police. The NC (Neighbourhood Committee) is the 6 Councillors.

For our NP to successfully achieve change will be dependant on whether the task groups and community groups in our area can work effectively and with one another. We have a number of subgroups and some affiliated community groups (see appendix) and could easily have more in a year or two's time. This document outlines some of the key principles to improve the chances of this happening.

1. NP Sub group Protocols:

Scope:

- The NP shall approve the setting up of a sub group (sometimes retrospectively if members have used their initiative and set one up e.g. in advance of a council paper) and shall approve its scope, membership and whether it is ongoing or time-limited.
- If a sub group seems to be ineffective or dysfunctional, the NP may take appropriate action (*e.g. terminate group function, nominate additional/alternative members*).
- The sub group can make recommendations to the NP to influence council provision. Any financial or policy ramifications must be taken account of by the NP or NC for money decisions.

(If many NP members (say 4 or more) wish to be on a sub group, it is indicative that this topic is of high interest to the NP as a whole; in which case the NP may decide to manage this issue in some other way which enables discussion at NP Meetings.)

The sub group's organisation:

- Each sub group should have at least one NP member, and can comprise members of the steering group and public. (*NB. many studies show that a group of three people is the most efficient and creative, more than three leads to diseconomies of scale. Smallness needs to be balanced with the need to include and engage the public (if possible sub groups would have members of the public too), and the need for members to do sub group work outside meetings.*)
- Ideally members should be from at least two of the three wards.

- A sub group may accept new members (the NP retains discretion to approve/ disapprove these). *The decision should take account of the balance between efficiency, work sharing and inclusion. Decisions such as these should be taken by the NP if the sub group can't decide itself.*

Formality:

- The formality of working should reflect the number of people on the group and complexity of scope. A minimum level (informal action points) are needed to show openness of decision making and ideally minutes will be kept where the importance of the work is critical to the effective functioning of the NP and/or the membership is large e.g. *C&E and Grants*. Any documents, with confidential information redacted, should be put on the website.
- If a chair (or facilitator) is warranted then their “power / influence” should be carefully considered to ensure balanced discussion¹. Decision making should be by simple majority with the chair having a second vote if necessary.

Council officer support:

- A sub group should be able to function without the NP Coordinator support (except occasionally). Other officers will be needed from time to time. *It is recognised that the council doesn't have the resource to support all these groups all the time. Therefore those on sub groups must realise they have to do some work (for free) for the benefit of the community.*

Reporting to the NP:

- It is expected that from time to time (at least twice a year) the sub group will write a formal paper to the NP. Ideally this will be 10 working days in advance of the meeting so it can be included on the official papers.
- Each sub group reports directly to the NP direct to keep a flat, non-bureaucratic structure. This means that sub groups will be allowed discretion and to take some initiative and report back to the NP for advice, financial and policy decisions.
- Sub groups may write articles in newsletters if they feel communication is necessary; it should be made clear whether the article is a personal view or the sub group's or even the Partnership's view.
- A standing item on the NP's Agenda allows a short verbal report from each sub group.

Finance:

- Any money requirements must be approved by the NC (councillors).

2. Existing and New Community Groups:

Community groups in the Neighbourhood (like Park's or Planning Groups) may wish to become an Affiliated Group of the BCR NP. This brings extra rights and responsibilities. Groups may decide to remain unaffiliated if they don't wish to meet the criteria.

2.1. Rights:

Affiliated Community Groups are encouraged to submit reports to the NP and can ask for Council Officer support at their meetings, when necessary. Their website link will be on the BCR NP website.

All Community Groups will have the right to submit a letter and/or speak at the NP Public Forum in accordance with standard rules for making a public statement at a full council meeting. A request to speak must be made to the Chair before the meeting, time will be

¹ Councillors naturally have more “influence” as they are elected representatives and cabinet members of course above councillors; an NP member has more than the public. To provide a balance therefore, ideally the lower influence/power member of the task group should be Chair or facilitator, of course if they don't want to then the role is open to others.

limited to 3 minutes for each statement and statements should be supplementary to the letter. A group may wish to ask their Councillor to raise an issue on their behalf.

2.2. Responsibilities

An Affiliated Community Group needs to follow the protocols of a NP Sub Group (see section 1 above) except they are not obliged to have an NP member on their Committee but encouraged to work with a Ward Councillor who attends meetings and provides advice.

2.3. The five criteria for a community group to become affiliated.

Groups must:

- show that they are open to all residents in their area;
- openly advertise their meetings by for example by email or Newsletter;
- elect representatives by a general meeting at least once each year and
- seek to represent a consensus view.
- have written aims and objectives consistent with the aims and objectives of the NP.

If groups do not hold an annual meeting to elect representatives they must explain how they ensure that they are representative and open to all.

Once these Criteria have been met, the Group may apply to the NP to be affiliated.

Membership will be agreed at a public NP meeting and the group's name will be added to the NP list and will be maintained by the Area Coordinator. Additionally a web link will be added to the BCR NP website.

3. How the NP interacts with Sub Groups and Community Groups

The NP encourages community groups, e.g. residents' planning groups, parks groups and individual local residents to respond to consultation invitations/ from BCC or other organisations on eg Transport reviews / TLOs / planning applications / .

For cases with a wide impact, the NP will help to ensure that the residents and groups are informed and issues are fully considered and may arrange public meetings to aid better understanding.

If there appears to be a gap in representation, the relevant group doesn't seem to be representing the needs of the wider public, or the group asks the NP for help, then the NP will consider getting involved so that the wider community interest is protected.

Appendix:

NP Sub Groups	Affiliated NP Groups
- C&E Group	- Planning: RCAS and Bishopston Society
- Wellbeing (Grants) Group	- Parks: FoHC*, FoSAP, RGCG, RCAS
- Gloucester Road Street Scene	- Sustainability: Sustainable Redland, Sustainable Bishopston
- Gloucs Rd Town Team?	-
- Highways Sub Group	
- Trees Sub Group	
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	* have not yet confirmed their wish to be affiliated as of 01.10.12.