

Improving neighbourhoods and the public realm

The Stockton-on-Tees approach - a member's perspective

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What do residents want

- Nice place to live
- Clean streets, quality public spaces
- Safe neighbourhoods
- Attractive to residents and businesses
- Good frontline council services
- Easy way to report problems including straightforward access to council staff and members if needed
- Action and results to improve things when they complain!



What do members want

- Clean streets, good public spaces
- Effective and efficient (vfm) frontline services and good customer care
- Straightforward route in to officers to report issues and good communication
- Joined-up working between council departments and other public services
- Happy residents, cohesive communities, less casework!



The wider challenge – social and financial

15 years ago

- Dirtiest towns in England
- Outsourced services and client/contractor issues; poor performance and silo working
- Low resident satisfaction levels



Now

- c£70m cuts to revenue funding by 2018-19
- High customer expectations
- North East people hit hardest by Police cuts, Welfare Reform, unemployment



Strategic approach and cultural change

- Restructure and services brought in-house
- Investment inc revenue funding for new team
- Area-based teams including Care for Your Area (CFYA) street cleaning, refuse/recycling, grounds maintenance; road/pavements inspection; Enforcement; Environmental Health
- Single CFYA ward contact
- Culture change to put residents first; cross-council teamworking, flexibility
- Strong performance management
- Staff and community engagement / participation - celebrate success!




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Big plans, bright future

Change on the ground

- Focus on public realm: new and existing parks and public spaces
- Cleaner streets, outstanding waste collection performance
- Joined-up approaches to challenges across council departments and other agencies
- Culture that empowers officers to respond and deliver results
- Strong member-officer working



Neighbourhood working in action

- Enforcement and CFYA: littering and tipping in alleyways
- Neighbourhood Police Team (NPT), Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) and Enforcement teams: sharing information and joint operations to tackle ASB in specific streets
- Environmental Health and CFYA: targeted interventions with problem premises



Neighbourhood working in action

- Private housing, Enforcement, CFYA teams; NPT: proactive new initiative to tackle rogue private landlords, improve living standards and tenants' behaviour
- CFYA and technical services: ongoing inspection of roads, footpaths, delivering responsive/planned repairs
- Community safety and NPT: identifying locations for CCTV deployment and arranging including through ward budgets
- Ward walks and casework: CFYA ward officers work with members and residents to co-ordinate responses and get the right people tackling each issues

Results and reflections

- Transformational change recognised and Council brand perception strong
- Award-winning council services and public facilities (eg parks, green spaces, street cleanliness, waste collection)
- Crime and antisocial behaviour reduced
- Resident satisfaction increases rapidly
- Member and community activism, business involvement slow to take shape
 - Council showed ambition
- Civic pride: PSST v Benefits Street



Future challenges: an assault on public services – but opportunities to improve?

- Further huge cuts to council funding hitting frontline services
- Health, social care and education relatively protected; other services suffer?
- Few national politicians standing up for local government
- Citizens expect strong public services, despite budget reductions
- Vertical integration? Health and social care, community safety, Combined Authorities?
- Devolved powers - but less money to deliver
- Forced to outsource? Or step up, commercialise and engage?

Thank you and contact details

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