

# CHAIRING COMMUNITY FIRST PANELS:

## Introduction

In my experience Chairing a Community First panel involves a wide range of skills. It is a bit like running a micro-business, while managing key relationships, meeting deadlines, analysing funding bids and co-ordinating processes leading to decisions affecting volunteers, local non-profit organisations and the community at large.

I was also struck by Alison Seabrooke's comments late in 2012, about the potential for the programme to deliver real change locally. Writing as the chief executive of The Community Development Foundation (central Government's delivery partner) Alison hoped that Community First panels would be 'seen as a model' for involving local people in decisions on how money is spent in their area.

I am very grateful to volunteer panel members, councillors, Community Engagement plus Safeguarding officials, Voluntary Action Waltham Forest and 2012-13 funded projects for their efforts to learn about Community First from scratch, make the model work, and produce great results for the ward in the process.

The following comments are written from the perspective of a panel chair whose goal was 'supporting and empowering the community by allocating Community First funding to projects in line with local priorities, in a fair and timely way'. There are a few checklist questions to answer as well.

Good Luck in your role as Chair! - Roger Dennison - Hoe Street First panel chair 2012/13.

**NB** Views expressed are the author's own. The material presented here is for your / your panel's information. You will know the scope of your work and the specific technical, or other, advice you need to obtain. The author is not liable for any loss resulting from groups, or individuals, viewing or acting on this material.

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# Leadership

1. Welcome to the second in a series of information sheets offering a view on Community First Panel leadership.
2. The first information sheet you looked at concerned your goal as chair, and the inter-relationship with the goals of panel members Mr A, Ms B, and Mrs C. I hope that material gave you a solid place to start planning your volunteering work as panel chair. I definitely believe a clear set of Goals is central to a panel's success.
3. A clear set of Goals will also underpin your leadership vision. Linking your goal to your vision helps you picture what you want the panel to achieve, and how the key personnel – Mr A, Ms B and Mrs C - will contribute to successful panel outcomes.
4. Your example of good leadership will also set the standard for the panelist who takes on the chairing role, whenever it is time for you to stand down.
5. I think it is worth thinking about this important topic and writing down your answers and where appropriate your proposed actions.

## Your Checklist

- Who are the leaders you admire?
- What are the three core values that you will use to underpin your idea of good leadership?
- How will you collect feedback on the effectiveness of your leadership from your panel colleagues?
- How flexible are you prepared to be in response to their feedback?
- How will you tailor your team's action plan to produce results with limited resources?
- How will you record your actions so you can successfully hand over your work to your successor?