



REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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MEETING: EXECUTIVE

DATE: 21st March 2007

SUBJECT: AREA INITIATIVE REVIEW

REPORT FROM: Councillor Gill Campbell, Executive Member for Community Engagement and User Focus

CONTACT OFFICER: Ruth Fairhurst, Assistant Chief Executive

TYPE OF DECISION: Non Key

REPORT STATUS: For Publication

PURPOSE/SUMMARY: This report presents a proposed model for the development of area working through the evolution of the current Area Initiative into Local Area Partnerships.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION (with reasons):
 Following recent consultations, members are asked to come to a view regarding the future arrangements for the Area Initiative.

IMPLICATIONS -

Financial Implications and Risk Considerations See DoFEG comment below.

There are no specific risk management issues arising from the report although devolved funding carries with it a need for strong governance and accountability arrangements. Risks relating to partnerships arrangements generally are currently being assessed and will be the subject of a future report to Members.

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:

Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes X No

Are there any legal implications? Yes No (see paragraph)

Considered by Monitoring Officer: Yes Comments The proposals may involve amendments to the Constitution and in order to ensure the efficient conduct and transparency of business an agreed framework, rules or protocol will have to be developed.

Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:

Staffing/ICT/Property:**Wards Affected:** All wards**Scrutiny Interest:****TRACKING/PROCESS****DIRECTOR:**

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Various dates between August 2006 to March 2007	29 August 2006 3 October 2006 22 November 2006 Plus special meetings	Labour Group: 19 th Feb Conservative Group: 26 th Feb Liberal democrat Group: 28 th Feb.	Warwick Forward Planning Event – 19 July 2006 PSB: 25 th Jan LSP Board: 20 th Feb
Scrutiny Panel	Executive	Committee	Council
	Strategic Priorities Executive: 7 th March	Area Board Chairs and Co-opted Members 30 August 2006, 5 March 2007 20 March 2007	28 th March 2007

1.0 BACKGROUND

A report to Executive on 10th January 2007 agreed that whilst the Area Initiative and each of the Area Boards have been successful, there is a view that the Area Initiative needs to move forward to reflect the changes in its future operating environment. The 2006 Warwick Forward Planning Event concluded that the Area Initiative should develop its potential in terms of social capital and strengthening of partnerships in communities, and celebrate the distinctive characteristics of the Borough's Six Townships. It is also clear that we are obliged to review our arrangements to be more responsive to the "Place Shaping" agenda.

Since April 2006 the Local Strategic Partnership has been delivering a programme of Neighbourhood Management in East Bury as a succession to the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) initiative. Central to these programmes in East Bury has been the involvement of local residents/community groups. The approach proposed in this report sees residents and local community group members as community champions in their areas, knowledgeable and a valuable source of ideas on better ways to shape and deliver local services.

Concurrent to the Area Initiative review, the Council and its partners are conducting a review of the Local Strategic Partnership in light of the recent Local Government White Paper and in preparation for the implementation of our Local Area Agreement commencing in April 2007.

These reviews will re-affirm Bury's commitment to empowering residents to work with the Council and partners to ensure that local services are effectively focussed on local need. Arriving at locally agreed solutions will contribute to improving the quality of local services and reduce inequalities where they exist across the borough.

These proposals will support elected members in their role as place shapers and civic leaders by placing them at the heart of a local partnership, focussed on collectively developing the community they represent.

The proposal recognises that local Councillors and community members would have mutually supportive roles. Councillors democratically represent the electorate of a ward, whereas community members may have a more in depth knowledge of their immediate neighbourhood and/or particular issues.

1.1 Consultation process:

Since the Warwick Forward Planning Event of 2006 a wide ranging consultation exercise has canvassed the views of the following groups/agencies:

- All Elected Members
- Local Strategic Partnership Executive Board
- Public Service Board
- Area Board Chairs
- Area Board Co-opted members and regular attendees
- Bury MBC Management Board
- Government Office North West (informally)
- Staff

A further consultation meeting of Area Board Chairs and Co-optees will take place on Tuesday 20 March. Any additional issues raised at this event not already covered will be highlighted at Executive for further discussion.

2.0 ISSUES

The consultation exercise focussed on developing a second generation model for area working around the overall objective:

“To improve the quality of life and achieve better outcomes for **all** people in our communities through ensuring service providers are responsive to neighbourhood needs and improve their delivery.”

The underlying principles of the review are increased inclusiveness through:

- Sharing power with the community
- Reinforcing the place shaping and community leadership role of elected members in the new arrangements
- Community engagement and reducing inequalities where they exist (LAA overarching themes)
- Being aligned to the Local Strategic Partnership
- Having clear reporting links to Council/LSP through elected members
- Introducing Area Management i.e. more locally focused partnership delivery, as a strategic response to local conditions and issues
- Utilising refreshed Local Community Plans as ongoing operational documents
- Responding to key priority partnership documents:
- Community Strategy (Team Bury);
- Local Area Agreement;
- Neighbourhood Intelligence Assessment
- Developing the principle of targeted partnership working around local issues and concerns e.g. Area Tasking Teams, Sector Health Group; Employment; Education; Access to services in communities, and aligning these arrangements to the Local Area Partnerships.
- Achieve a broad consensus of views on new ways of working whilst retaining the diverse characteristics of each township.

2.1 The proposed model

Taking into account the comments received during the consultation to date the following draft model has emerged:

To update the current Area Initiative arrangements with six **Local Area Partnerships** reflecting the existing Area Board Boundaries i.e:

- Bury East
- Bury West
- Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor
- Radcliffe
- Whitefield and Unsworth
- Prestwich.

2.2 Membership

There will be a three way membership of the Local Area Partnerships:

- **Elected Members** for each ward within the six defined areas. (i.e. six councillors in Bury West, all others nine) The proposals would also permit elected members to hold locally accredited portfolios that reflect the Executive Member Portfolios in the Council and the Team Bury partnership themes.
- **Local people.** To be determined locally through an open and transparent process with clear guidance and criteria. Nominations will be invited from constituted community/voluntary groups and by individual application to each Partnership. A panel of local elected members would determine community membership; appointments to the Local Area Partnership would be renewed annually to ensure that as many local people/groups could take part as members of the Local Area Partnerships.
- **Locally appropriate service providers.** These would be determined by an assessment of local conditions and could include the council, police, health etc.

2.3 Chairing of Local Area Partnerships

There are a number of options around the issue of Chairing of the Local Area Partnerships have emerged from discussions with local people, elected members, partners and stakeholders in recent consultation events. The options are:

- (a) Council Chair and a Community Vice-Chair;
- (b) annual rotating Chair between the Council and the Community or,
- (c) bi-annual rotating Chair between the Public and Community sectors

Members are asked to agree: either option a, b or c to apply to all 6 Local Area Partnerships **or** that each of the 6 Local Area Partnerships choose the most appropriate chairing option for their area from options a, b or c above.

2.4 Structure of meetings

The Local Area Partnership meetings will be principally focussed on delivering strategic responses to local issues. Consistent with the Council's principle of public engagement a pre-requisite of the Local Area Partnership meetings will be to allow a period for public question time either before or after the main business meeting. This could also be supplemented with one to one consultations between local people and members of the Local Area Partnership. Ward members surgeries would continue.

2.5 Operational activity

The focus of operational activity at a local level will take place through the Area Tasking Teams (ATTs) and other locally agreed sector groups. It is proposed that changes to the ATT arrangements are updated in line with local priorities and that this will result in a high level of participation of elected members in service specifications, rather than operational arrangements.

2.6 Democratic accountability

The Council's constitution will formally reflect the changes at a local level, as appropriate, to ensure clear accountability through Council, The Executive and Scrutiny Commissions. There will also be clear alignment between the Local Area Partnerships and the Local Strategic Partnership.

2.7 Decision Making Arrangements and Resource Allocation

The principle of local area working is that decision making should normally be arrived at through consensus. All Local Area Partnership members would be encouraged to give a view on all policy matters affecting their area at partnership meetings.

The benefits of allocating limited, targeted funding streams at a local level are acknowledged eg Kickstart and Cleaner, Safer Greener. The new arrangements propose to retain and extend this principle by delegating the decision making power specifically for Kickstart funding to the Local Area Partnerships. Other service providers will be encouraged to adopt this approach to local resource allocation. Additionally the Local Area Partnerships will have a clear role in influencing the way in which partners plan to allocate medium to long term resources to meet local priorities through debate at Partnership meetings.

2.8 Implementation Timetable

The intention is to arrive at an agreed model for the Local Area Partnerships for implementation early in the new Municipal Year. The precise timescale for implementation will be managed by each local area. Roll out to begin June-September (2nd quarter of 2007/08 financial year).

3.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- No negative impact has been identified
- Local Area Partnerships will support the Council's work with partners in addressing the issues that really concern local people. It will give the Council and its partners a greater opportunity to tackle their combined commitment to reducing inequalities and community engagement and development by providing greater freedoms to support the improvement of local public services.

4.0 Risk Management

- Not to implement these proposals could severely affect the Council's ability to deliver better outcomes for local people within a focus on strengthening the role of elected members as community champions.
- The risk of not implementing the proposal could impact on the Council's ability to attract new and emerging funding like the Local Area Agreement as the focus is on allocating resources to authorities that demonstrate strong leadership in developing partnership working with communities and service providers.
- Providing better customer service to service users and citizens relies heavily on improved communication and co-ordination between delivery units.
- Not to implement could affect the Council's ability to improve its overall performance; achieve key internal and external efficiency targets; sustain improved performance standards in localities.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This proposed approach is about taking a new look at the circumstances that affect services delivered in our local areas. The key focus will be on the way mainstream service providers operate- how they use their budgets and manage their services. Through sharing power

between a partnership of elected members, local community members and service delivery partners the purpose of this approach is to influence local services so that they adopt the most effective way of working to deliver better outcomes for local people. Integrating this local approach within the overarching Local Strategic Partnership will help to influence the Council's and other partner's strategic plans. All services should benefit from local people's experience of what they do and their aspirations.

The starting point is to agree the local model for delivery. The proposals set out here represent a clear determination on behalf of the Council and its partners to work effectively with local people in shaping appropriate services for the future.

List of Background Papers:-

- Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper:-
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503999>
- Presentations to various consultation events – available in Members Library.

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