### **REPORT FOR DECISION**



Agenda Item

DECISION OF:	Council					
DATE:	28 March	2012				
SUBJECT:	Interim R	Review – Township Forums				
REPORT FROM:		r Sandra Walmsley e Member - Communities				
CONTACT OFFICER:	David Fowler – Head of Communities Cindy Lowthian – Communities Manager					
TYPE OF DECISION:	COUNCIL					
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain					
SUMMARY:	Following the decision to create the Township Forum initiative, a detailed Operating Framework was adopted by the Executive on 22 August 2011. This included a proposal to review the Forums before the end of the municipal year 2011/12.  This report outlines interim findings from the review so far; a final report incorporating full conclusions from the review will be presented to Council on 16 May 2012. This will allow the first cycle of meetings (up until end of March 2012) to run their course and all consultation responses to be analysed and included in the final review (consultation closed 23 March 2012).					
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<ol> <li>Receive interim findings from the review of the Township Forums</li> <li>Agree that a report incorporating final recommendations from the review be shared at the 16 May 2012 meeting of Council.</li> </ol>					
IMPLICATIONS:  Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:  Statement by the S151 Officer:		Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework?  Yes  At this stage there are no wider resource				

Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	implications arising from the Review. As final proposals relating to assets and finance are developed it will be important to find an appropriate balance between 'strategic' issues/needs and the desire to develop the role of the TF initiative
Statement by Executive Director of Resources:	There are no financial / risk implications arising from this interim report. Further comments will be provided once proposals are finalised and reported to Members in May 2012
Equality/Diversity implications:	An Equality Analysis is being undertaken as part of the review; outcomes will form part of the full review findings to be shared with Council on 16 May 2012.
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes Jayne Hammond Legal implications are included in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the report.
Wards Affected:	All
Scrutiny Interest:	

#### TRACKING/PROCESS DIRECTOR: RUTH FAIRHURST

Chief Strategic Team	Executive/ Leadership	Executive Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Committee		Committee	Council	

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Following the decision to create the Township Forum initiative, a detailed Operating Framework was adopted by the Executive on 22 August 2011. This followed a comprehensive consultation exercise with key stakeholders. This consultation was widely publicised including use of the Council's website, press releases and contact with over 1500 people including community groups, partner organisations and members of the public who had previously had involvement in the Local Area Partnerships. 104 responses were received via a website survey, 8 emails and 1 letter. Responses received informed the development of the Operating Framework for the Township Forums.

- 1.2 This Operating Framework sets out a clear direction for the initiative to help focus on the debate of local issues; holding Councillors to account where necessary and finding local solutions for the benefit and wellbeing of local communities.
- 1.3 The Township Forum initiative has now been running for six months. Although it is still early days, the Operating Framework commits us to reviewing them before the end of the municipal year 2011/12. This is the interim review. The final review, to be brought to Council in May 2012, will allow any amendments required as a result of changing national legislation, particularly the Localism Act 2011, to be made. The final review will also allow learning from the first cycle of meetings (running up until end of March 2012) to be taken into account to help further enhance the operation of the Forums.
- 1.4 At the Ordinary meeting of Council in December 2011, a further motion was passed regarding the review of the forums. It was resolved that the review should incorporate ways in which the Township Forums can play a role in influencing future investment of "the resources that are available, and are likely to be available in the future, through various income sources including Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990" through provisions in the Localism Act and Local Community Plan.
- 1.5 This report outlines interim findings from this review including;
  - A progress update for each Township Forum
  - A summary of consultation responses received so far
  - Issues relating to funding
  - Likely implications of the Localism Act 2011 for the Forums
- 1.6 A final report will be presented at the May meeting of Council which incorporates the full findings from the review and recommendations for amendments to the Operating Framework as appropriate; this will allow the consultation (which closes on 23 March 2012) to be fully analysed and feedback from all the meetings held this municipal year to be incorporated into the review, in readiness for the 2012/13 municipal year.

#### 2.0 TOWNSHIP FORUM PROGRESS UPDATE (see Appendix A)

- 2.1 The Township Forums have undergone four cycles of meetings in the 2011/12 municipal year. Early meetings encouraged applications from key community organisations to become representatives on the Advisory Groups. These early meetings also provided an important vehicle for the Council to promote consultation on the Plan for Change Choices consultation (August September) & savings consultation (October to January); one of the biggest consultations ever undertaken by the Council.
- 2.2 Recent meetings have focussed upon the development of Township Area Plans. These will set out the key realistic and achievable priorities for each area and will determine the priorities and work of the Township Forums for the forthcoming year. At the January and February meetings a series of workshops took place giving local residents the chance to give their views and input into these plans. Advisory Groups have also played a key role in the formation of these plans using their local expertise. Appendix A provides a more detailed progress update for each Township Forum.

#### 3.0 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 To inform the review, consultation was carried out using an online survey to gauge opinion on Township Forum meetings and wider aspects of the initiative including:
  - Objectives contained within the Operating Framework
  - Membership of the Advisory Groups
  - Frequency of Township Forum Meetings
  - Venues
  - Agendas
  - Township Forum Funding Streams

This survey was launched on 16 February 2012 for five weeks, closing on 23 March 2012 after the last round of Township Forum meetings for this municipal year (Bury East was the last Forum to meet on 21 March 2012). It has been widely publicised including use of the Council's website, press release, through Township Forum Co-ordinators, Bury Third Sector Newsletter and contact with key stakeholders including Councillors, Advisory Group members and attendees of the Forums. The opportunity to respond to the consultation was also promoted through the most recent round of Township Forum meetings.

- 3.2 As part of the consultation process a number of drop in sessions are being held at public venues in each of the six Township areas. Each session is informal and takes approximately two hours. Members of the public are encouraged to share their views on any positive improvements that could further enhance the operation of the Township Forums. Those whom attend are invited to complete paper copies of the survey questionnaire.
- 3.3 On 24 February 2012 a meeting, chaired by the Executive Member for Communities, was also held with Chairs and Co-ordinators of the Township Forums.

#### 4.0 INTERIM FINDINGS

4.1 In total, 112 survey responses have been received as of 19 March 2012. These responses will be analysed in more detail following expiry of the consultation period on 23 March 2012. Key messages emerging so far include the following:

#### Responses

Majority of responses received to date are from members of the public, Advisory Group members or others interested in the Forums. They also include a cross section of views from those involved across each of the six township areas.

**Implications:** This indicates that feedback received to date is broad and inclusive.

#### Objectives of the Township Forums

Respondents are asked to prioritise the importance of the different objectives of the Township Forums (outlined in the Operating Framework). Respondents state 'championing the area by raising issues of concern with the Council and other organisations and influence how services are delivered' and 'engaging with communities' are the most important.

**Implications:** This indicates a need to continue to explore innovative ways to raise the profile of the Township Forums, including how we can continue to encourage people to become involved. The Survey also invited people to share ideas on how they could assist us in doing this. A common theme

emerging from these comments relate to the need to continue to advertise and promote the Township Forums and the importance of feeding back to communities actions taken.

#### Township Forum Advisory Group

Just over half of respondents believe that Township Forum Advisory Groups are representative of their local community. The other half state that more work needs to be done to broaden representation. Comments include the need to promote understanding of the role of Advisory Groups, consideration to broadening representation to active members of the community who aren't members of established groups, and challenges associated with getting people involved in meetings.

**Implications:** Further clarity needed on role and requirements of the Advisory Group.

## Meetings (frequency, venue, agenda format including public question time)

The majority of respondents are happy with the way the meetings currently operate.

There was more of a mixed response in relation to room lay out. The majority of comments received indicate that attendees favour a less formal room lay out with round table discussions. We have also received a number of comments around the need to improve acoustics at some venues.

**Implications**: Indicates that no major changes may be needed to the way meetings currently run, other than to look at alternative ways to lay out rooms to create a more informal environment, and the need to consider acoustic arrangements for some venues.

# • Influencing decisions/encouraging more active involvement of residents to improve local neighbourhoods

Respondents were asked to state how they could contribute to decisions that affect their local community, including how to increase participation at meetings. The majority of respondents emphasise the importance of publicity campaigns and communication to encourage people to become involved and become more active citizens.

Comments were also made about exploring opportunities to give the Township Forums more involvement in decision making.

**Implications**: As stated earlier in this report, we need to explore opportunities to develop the way we communicate with the public to promote the Township Forums and opportunities to participate. Issues around decision making and resources are explored below.

#### Meeting of Township Forum Chairs

Township Forum Chairs were invited to share their views on the Forums at a meeting held on 24 February 2012. Overall, they were generally happy with progress made. They also shared a number of suggestions to further enhance the forums. These are similar to the issues already highlighted above. They include exploring how we can further promote the Township Forums, the need

to explore opportunities to influence Section 106 funding and the need to explore the implications of the Localism Act 2011.

#### 5.0 SECTION 106 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

- 5.1 A report outlining how Section 106 obligations operate in Bury was shared at a meeting of the Planning Control Committee on 18 October 2011. This report shows how Section 106 obligations are legal contracts between the Local Planning Authority and the developer and are essential to allow the granting of planning permission in certain circumstances. Obligations often involve the payment of financial contributions, for example recreation contributions, compensation for loss of employment land and contributions towards ecological enhancements. Section 106 obligations may also include non-financial obligations such as provision of onsite artwork, affordable housing or the transfer of land. It must be noted however that the scope of these obligations is limited by legislation and must reasonably relate to the development for which Planning permission is granted.
- 5.2 The Government has also introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy, which is intended to replace Section 106 obligations for pooled infrastructure contributions. The Planning Committee Report referred to above states "Following the adoption of a Community Infrastructure Levy, or after 1 April 2014 (whichever is the sooner), further restrictions will be in place on funding of infrastructure through Section 106 obligations. The Council is therefore taking steps to prepare a Community Infrastructure Levy in advance of 1 April 2014".
- 5.3 **Implications for Forums:** There are potential opportunities to involve Township Forums in influencing prioritisation of Section 106 funds, but this will be constrained by the legal limitations contained in the obligations. We are exploring these and any recommendations will be included in the full review report to be presented at the meeting of Council in May 2012.

#### 5.4 COMMUNITY FUND, SMALL GRANTS FUND AND COMMUNTIY FIRST

- 5.5 **Community Fund:** The Council has allocated £1,000 per ward to support the work of voluntary and community groups. The application funding decisions are made by the relevant ward Councillors. Individual grants to the "ward" fund are available for a maximum of £250. Additionally, a borough-wide allocation of £13,000 is available for "cross-ward" applications from third sector organisations, with a maximum individual grant of £750. Examples of the type of activities funded through this scheme include community trips, art activities, community group equipment, bird boxes, plants and flowers to support community environmental projects.
- 5.6 **Small Grants Fund:** The Council has an annual allocation of £87,000 for the Small Grant's Fund. The current funding priority is to encourage and support grass-root community activity. This means small, community-based and locally controlled groups that manage themselves, encourage active participation from volunteers, and have minimal cash reserves and limited access to funding support. Examples of the type of activities funded through this scheme include community parties, room hire for community events, a job club, fun days and sports equipment.
- 5.7 **Community First:** Cabinet Office has recently introduced this £80m government funded programme aimed at helping communities come together through new and existing community groups, to identify their strengths and local priorities, plan for their future and become more resilient. Funding covering the next 4 years became

available from October 2011 and will be administered nationally by the **Community Development Foundation** (CDF).

- 5.8 Within Bury, the four wards of East, Moorside, Radcliffe East and Radcliffe West are eligible for funding under this programme; each will receive £33, 910 over four years.
- 5.9 In order to qualify for funding each eligible ward needs to establish a Community First Panel, made up of 4-8 local people. The Panel will work with their community to produce a Community First Plan and recommend projects/activities to be funded in their ward. The Council recognises the importance of helping communities to help themselves. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012 the Programme Manager facilitated a meeting with representatives from all four wards to discuss Community First and agree a way forward so that these areas don't miss the opportunity to access the funding that is available. As a result of this meeting a Community Panel has been established for each of the four wards, terms of reference have been agreed for the Panels and Panel Partners are now in the process of registering their Panels with the CDF.

#### 5.10 Implications for Township Forums

5.11 The Township Forum Survey invites views on the funding processes for these grants to community/voluntary groups. Respondents recognise that promotion and awareness of the process is important; they acknowledge the valuable role the Township Forums play in helping to promote grant funding opportunities. Some respondents have also suggested a more formalised feedback loop should be built into the process via Township Forum meetings so individuals are aware of activity in their local community. Comments have also been received about improving the administration process for processing grant applications. These consultation responses will be analysed in more detail following closure of the consultation on 23 March 2012; recommendations will be presented at the May meeting of Council.

#### 6.0 LOCALISM ACT 2011

The Act was introduced with the aim of devolving greater powers to local areas and community organisations. Key elements of the Act are summarised below.

#### 6.1 **Right to Challenge**

6.2 The Government aims to encourage new ways to deliver and design local services through harnessing the potential of "social enterprises and community groups to provide high-quality services at good value, and deliver services with and through them" The Localism Act gives these groups, parish councils and local authority employees the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local authority service. The local authority must consider and respond to this challenge; and where it accepts it, run a procurement exercise for the service in which the challenging organisation can bid.

#### 6.3 **Neighbourhood Planning**

6.4 The Act introduces a new right for communities to draw up a neighbourhood plan. The intention is to support communities to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like. Local communities will be able to use neighbourhood planning to grant full or outline planning permission in areas where they most want to see new homes and businesses; the aim is to make

it easier and quicker for development to go ahead. Provided a neighbourhood development plan or order is in line with national planning policy, with the strategic vision for the wider area set by the local authority, and with other legal requirements, local people will be able to vote on it in a referendum. If the plan is approved by a majority of those who vote, then the local authority will bring it into force.

6.5 As part of neighbourhood planning, the Act gives groups of local people the power to deliver the development that their local community want through a Community Right to Build. They may wish to build new homes, businesses, shops, playgrounds or meeting halls. A community organisation, formed by members of the local community, will be able to bring forward development proposals which, providing they meet minimum criteria and can demonstrate local support through a referendum, will be able to go ahead without requiring a separate traditional planning application.

#### 6.6 Community right to bid (assets of community value)

- 6.7 The Localism Act requires local authorities to maintain a list of assets of community value which have been nominated by the local community. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, the Act then gives community groups time to develop a bid and raise the money to bid to buy the asset when it comes on the open market. The proposal is aimed at helping local communities "keep much-loved sites in public use and part of local life"
- 6.8 **Implications for Township Forums.** Further work is being undertaken to explore the opportunities and implications of these 'rights' as they affect the work of the Township Forums. Any recommendations will be included in the May report.

#### 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Following the decision to create the Township Forum initiative, members agreed a review would be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the initiative before the end of the municipal year. The purpose of this review is to allow any amendments required as a result of changing national legislation, particularly the Localism Act 2011, to be made. It will also allow learning from the first cycle of meetings to be taken into account to help further enhance the operation of the Forums.
- 7.2 At the Ordinary meeting of Council in December 2011, a further motion was passed that this review should incorporate ways in which the Forums can play a role in influencing future investment of resources through various funding sources including Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, through provisions in the Localism Act and Local Community Plan.
- 7.3 This report outlines interim findings of the review. This will allow the first cycle of meetings (up until March 2012) to run their course and all consultation responses to be included in the final review (consultation closed 23 March 2012).
- 7.4 These interim findings demonstrate the positive progress made to date in the Township Forum initiative. A number of themes are also emerging which have the potential to further enhance the work of the Forums. A further report which incorporates the full review findings and recommendations will be presented to the May meeting of Council.

#### **List of Background Papers:-**

Executive, 22 August 2011. Report from Head of Communities "Township Forums." Planning Control Committee, 18 October 2011. Report from Development Manager "Section 106 Obligations".

Ordinary Council meeting, 14 December 2011 "Township Forums and Resource Allocation Mechanisms" (notes of meeting containing resolution)

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#### Appendix A

#### **TOWNSHIP FORUM - PROGRESS UPDATE**

Bury Council's Township Forums have undergone 4 cycles of meetings so far in the 2011/12 municipal year. The Forums have convened over the following timescales:

- September 2011
- November 2011
- January/February 2012
- March 2012

The first task of the Township Forums was to encourage applications from key community organisations to have representation on the Township Forum Advisory Groups. Each Township Forum also designated a place for a young person aged 16-24 year old.

The Township Forums in Bury West and Ramsbottom, Tottington & North Manor have yet to secure youth representation on their Advisory Groups. Presentations have been completed by Township Coordinators at Colleges within the borough to promote the forums to young people and encourage participation.

The number of Advisory Group applications received has varied in each area. In Bury East and Radcliffe the applications far outweighed the number of places available but in Ramsbottom, Tottington & North Manor only four places were filled in the first round of voting.

The Advisory Group members have provided a really positive dimension to the forums with their local expertise playing a key role in the formation of the Township Area Plans. In some areas attendance of Advisory Group members at meetings has been varied and this is an issue that will be taken into consideration as part of the interim review.

Following the establishment of the Advisory Groups the key focus of the forums has been to identify the key priorities for the area and develop the work programme that would deliver on our objectives over the first 12 months.

At the January and February meetings a series of workshops took place giving local residents the chance to give their views and input to identify 4 or 5 key realistic and achievable priorities to be included in their Township Area Plan.

The groups discussed a range of themes including Health, Perceptions of Crime, Worklessness, Educational Attainment and Regeneration. The latest local intelligence was made available to attendees and each group was asked to give their views on issues within their area.

The discussions were both interactive and informative allowing residents, Elected Members and partner organisations to identify new projects to help achieve the goals for each key priority. Feedback from the workshops and the first draft of the plans were presented at the March meetings. Discussions have taken place with key stakeholders to finalise the priorities for inclusion in the final draft.

The next step will be to establish a series of thematic working groups made up of key stakeholders who play a leading role in the delivery of projects linked to each priority. Each group will be chaired by an Advisory Group member and will meet bi-monthly to monitor agreed milestones on projects and drive forward delivery of agreed outcomes.

Appendix A – Progress Update

TOWNSHIP	MEETING 1	MEETING 2	MEETING 3	MEETING 4	Township Area Plan Status
Bury East	<ol> <li>Advisory Group Election</li> <li>Nominations for Chair</li> <li>Township Forum Presentation</li> <li>Waste Management Presentation</li> <li>Plan for Change</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Draft programme of savings</li> <li>LDF Core Strategy</li> <li>Healthy Futures Consultation</li> <li>Formulating Area Plan Presentation</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Area Profile Presentation</li> <li>Round Table Discussions and Feedback Session</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Township         Area Plan         Draft         Presentation</li> <li>Partnership         Tasking         Meeting         Update</li> <li>BARDOC         Presentation</li> </ol>	Roundtable discussions held 08/02/12. Initial draft being developed through Township Co- ordinator. A Working Group is being established comprising of Advisory Group members and Councillors to select priorities for the final draft. Update to be shared at Township Forum meeting 21/03/12
RTNM	<ol> <li>Advisory Group Election</li> <li>Nominations for Chair</li> <li>Township Forum Presentation</li> <li>Waste Management Presentation</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Draft     programme     of savings</li> <li>LDF Core     Strategy</li> <li>Healthy     Futures     Consultation</li> <li>Watling</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Nomination for Vice Chair</li> <li>Area Profile Presentation</li> <li>Round Table Discussions &amp; Feedback Session</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Police Update</li> <li>Township Area Plan Draft Presentation</li> <li>BARDOC Presentation</li> </ol>	Roundtable discussions held 19/01/12. Initial draft being developed through Township Coordinator. A Working Group is being established comprising of

	5. Plan for Change	Street Affetside 20mph Speed Limit  5. Township Coordinator Update/Plans	Advisory Group members and Councillors to select priorities for the final draft. Update was shared at Township Forum meeting 08/03/12
Radcliffe	<ol> <li>Announcements of Advisory Group Appointments</li> <li>Nominations for Chair</li> <li>Waste Management Presentation</li> <li>Plan for change</li> <li>Priority Setting</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Nomination of Chair</li> <li>Advisory Group Appointments</li> <li>Draft Programmes of Savings</li> <li>LDF - Core Strategy</li> <li>Healthy Futures Consultation on Secondary School</li> <li>Area Plans</li> <li>Welcome from new Chair</li> <li>Radcliffe Township Area Plan</li> <li>Review</li> <li>Readcliffe Township Area Plan</li> <li>Review</li> <li>The PORTA Review</li> </ol>	It was agreed at the meeting on the 29/02/12 that Radcliffe Township Forum adopt the Draft
	1. Advisory Group Election	1. Draft 1. Update on 1. Section 10 Programme Elton High Funding	O6 A draft plan has been

	2 1	Nominations for		of Savings		School Plans	2	Highways	developed. This will be
		Chair	2.	LDF - Core Strategy	2.	Youth Club Development	۷.	Update	considered at the next
Bury West	I	Township Forum Presentation	3.	Healthy		(ROC)	3.	Area Plan	meting. This is because at the
	M	Waste Management Presentation	4.	Futures Consultation Formulating	3.	Formulating Bury West Area Plan		Update	meeting on 15/03/12 - at the point of decision (for
	5. P	Plan for Change		Area Plans					this plan) – the meeting was not quorate.
		Advisory Group Election	1.	Appointment of Advisory Group	1.	Breast, Bowel and Lung cancer	1.	BARDOC Presentation	At the Township forum meeting on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
		Nominations for Chair	2.	Members Plan for	7	awareness Formulating	2.	Township Area Plan Presentation	March it was agreed that the Township Area
		Township Forum Presentation	۷.	Change – Consultation		Area Plans	3.	Police	Plan for Whitefield be
		Waste Management	3.	Feedback Healthy	3.	Police Updates		Update	adopted as a working plan for the area and
Whitefield &		Presentation Plan for Change		Futures consultation	4.	Community Funding Update			that regular feedback on actions be
Unsworth	6. N	-	4.	LDF – Core strategy		o padico			presented to the Township Forum.
	I	Setting	5.	Police Update					FOLUIII.
		_		Formulating Area Plans					
	1. A	Advisory Group	1.	Appointment	1.	Advisory	1.	Section 106	At the township

### Appendix A – Progress Update

	Election	of Chair &	Group Funding For	
		Vice Chair	•	ch 2012 it
		or		agreed that
	Chair	2. Draft	2. CCTV in in Prestwich the	
		Programme		nship Area
	3. Township Ford	m of Savings		n be adopted
Prestwich	Presentation		3. Police Update   3. PORTAS   as	a working
PIESTWICH		3. LDF - Core		ument and
	4. Waste	Strategy	4. St Mary's that	- ,
	Management			itions or
	Presentation	4. Healthy		endments to
		futures	5. Formulating the	document
	5. Plan for Chang	e Consultation		forwarded to
			Update the	
		5. Area Planning	CO-G	ordinator,
			6. Area Plans Kim	Griffiths
		6. Police Update		