

REPORT

MEETING: Whitefield & Unsworth Township Forum
DATE: 10 July 2012
SUBJECT: Township Forum – Operating Framework
REPORT FROM: Cindy Lowthian, Communities Manager
CONTACT OFFICER: CindyLowthian, Communities Manager

TYPE OF DECISION: For information
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS: This paper is within the public domain

SUMMARY: Following a recent review of the Township Forum initiative, a number of recommendations, along with a revised Operating Framework, were agreed at Council on 16 May 2012.

This report highlights some of these changes. A copy of the revised Operating Framework is attached as Appendix A.

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR: Deputy Chief Executive

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Cabinet Member	Cabinet	Council	
		Refer to reports presented 28 March 2012 and 16 May 2012.	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 On 16 May 2012, Bury Council received a report presenting findings of a review of the Township Forum initiative. This report set out the overall context and purpose for the review and details of the consultation undertaken. A number of

recommendations to further enhance the operation of the initiative were agreed, including amendments to the Operating Framework. The full report can be viewed on the **Council's website**.

1.2 This report highlights some of these changes; a copy of the Township Forum revised Operating Framework is attached in **Appendix A**. Whitefield and Unsworth Township Forum is asked to note the changes made. In particular;

- The wording of the Operating Framework (Sections 5.0 and 8.0) has been amended to clarify the role of Advisory Group members and the role of Councillors on the Township Forums. (Consultation feedback included comments on the need to promote understanding of the role of Advisory Groups)
- Section 10.0 of the Operating Framework now includes clauses relating to non attendance by Advisory Group members (highlighted as an issue for some Township Forums).
- Consultation feedback indicated that it may be beneficial for each Township Forum to explore alternative ways to laying out their meetings (perhaps to create more informal environments for some meetings), and to consider acoustic arrangements for some venues. It also highlighted the importance of giving each Township Forum local discretion to plan and organize meetings in ways that best suit local circumstances. Section 1.0 of the Operating Framework has been amended accordingly.

1.3 In addition to the amendments made to the Operating Framework, the Consultation feedback we received shows a need for each Township Forum to continue to explore innovative ways to raise their profile, including how to encourage people to become involved. The following recommendation was agreed by Council:

"Each Township Forum should explore different methods of engaging members of the public in their work e.g. format of meetings, workshop discussions, questionnaires, press releases and use of Council and partner websites"

1.4 Whitefield and Unsworth Township Forum is asked to consider this recommendation.

1.5 The report to Council included a progress report for each of the Township Forums. It is important to note that the progress each Township Forum has made in establishing Advisory Groups and working with local residents and stakeholders to inform the development of their Township Area Plan was noted.

2.0 **Conclusion & Recommendation**

Whitefield and Unsworth Township Forum has undergone five cycles of meetings since the initiative was developed. Although it is still early days for the initiative, the report presented to Council on 16 May 2012 highlighted the positive progress made to date. The consultation exercise undertaken as part of the review has helped to identify a number of proposed revisions to the Operating Framework (see Appendix A) which should help further enhance the operation of the Forums.

Appendix A

(amendments are underlined)

Township Forum Operating Framework

1.0 **This document sets out the Operating Framework for Township Forums in Bury. The Framework outlines a minimum operating standard for each Forum, whilst allowing for local variations in running meetings that best suit local areas. For example, they may wish to consider alternative room layouts to create a more informal environment for some meetings, or hold workshop style discussions at other meetings. Chairs will also wish to use their discretion in agreeing venues for meetings, timing of meetings, agenda items, number of formal presentations and how they involve local communities in the development of Township Plans.**

1.1 It also recognizes the framework may evolve as a result of the requirement to implement legislative changes.

1.2 The Operating Framework covers the following areas:

- The Constitution of the Township Forums
- Operating arrangements and underlying principles
- Membership and procedures for election of co-opted members **(to the Advisory Group)**
- **Role and responsibilities of Advisory Group**
- Rules of procedure

2.0 Constitution

2.1 There shall be six Township Forums representing the different parts of the borough as follows:

Bury East – Moorside, Redvales, East.

Bury West – Elton, Church.

Prestwich – St. Mary’s, Sedgley, Holyrood.

Radcliffe - Radcliffe North, Radcliffe West, Radcliffe East.

Ramsbottom, Tottington & North Manor.

Whitefield & Unsworth – Pilkington Park, Besses, Unsworth.

1.0 Operating arrangements

In order to ensure the efficient conduct and transparency of Township Forums, all Township Forum meetings must follow this agreed operating framework when conducting business.

The overall purpose of the Township Forums is to promote better outcomes for the social, **health**, economic, and environmental well being of the area by:

- 3.1 Engaging with communities and advising the Council on the implications for the area of its objectives, plans and policies (this should be a two way process to enable the views of the local community to feed into the Council and to enable the Council to communicate with local residents. The Forums should become the hosts of citizen engagement).
- 3.2 Partnership working across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors at the local level.
- 3.3 Championing the area by raising issues of concern to residents and businesses with the Council and other organisations, to influence how services are delivered in the area.
- 3.4 Fostering good community relations between people of different ages, and ethnic and social backgrounds, both within the area and across the Borough.
- 3.5 Taking decisions about funding or other resources delegated to them by the Council as appropriate.
- 3.6 Consulting on matters affecting the local community and expressing a view on matters affecting more than one area.
- 3.7 Agree and monitor progress through a set of priorities for each Township Forum (Community planning).

4.0 Membership of Township Forums

- 4.1 All elected members (Councillors) for the wards comprising the respective area will be the core members of the Township Forum.
- 4.2 Core members will be asked to attend all Forum meetings.
- 4.3 Each Forum may appoint advisory members who are co-opted members of the forum to contribute and speak on relevant issues.
- 4.4 The advisory group can be made up of representatives from voluntary and community groups and partner organisations with an interest in the area.
- 4.5 Each Township Forum will designate a place on the advisory group for young person (16-24 year old).
- 4.6 Advisory group members do not have voting rights.

5.0 Role and requirements of Advisory Group

The purpose of the Advisory Group is to improve the range of knowledge and expertise on the Township Forum and provide an inclusive approach to improving the outcomes for each area.

5.1 Advisory group members are required to:-

- § **Attend all or most of the Township Forum meetings**
- § **Once selected to the Advisory Group, members will provide a brief description of the group/organisation that they represent (to be included on the Township Forum Webpages)**
- § **Actively promote the Township Forum to help increase the number of people attending the meetings and engaging in their work**
- § **Use their networks to communicate important issues and the work of the Township Forum**
- § **Provide support, challenge and play a key role in projects and initiatives to improve the Township area as outlined in the Township Area Plan**
- § **Provide information to the Township Co-ordinator on activities or events that their group/organisation are actively supporting so they can be cascaded to the whole of the Township Forum**
- § **Provide updates (as required) to the Township Forum on the work of their group including any funding awarded to support this work**
- § **Provide a link with similar groups/organisations in their area and the Township Forum**

5.2 Members of the Advisory Group will be selected by the core members of the Township Forum.

5.3 Members of the Advisory Group may be from partner bodies such as Police, NHS Bury, and Fire & rescue Service, Six Town Housing, Probation service, Chamber of Commerce and B3SDA. This will be in addition to members representing constituted local groups or identified "communities of interest".

5.4 Co-opted members to the **Advisory Group** will serve for a 2 year period from the date of the Council's Annual meeting in the year of their election. There is no limit to the number of terms a co-opted member can serve and they can be nominated again after their 2 year term is completed.

6.0 Rules for co-option of members (to the Advisory Group)

The following rules will apply when co-opting members to the Township Forum Advisory Group

6.1 Each Township Forum may appoint up to 9 members to its Advisory Group.

6.2 Members must be from constituted groups and represent the body/organisation to which they belong. If the nomination is subsequently withdrawn by the nominating body or the body ceases to exist, then they will be considered to have stood down from office as a Co-opted member and their place should be considered vacant.

6.3 Represent a group with an interest in the area or a recognised "community of interest".

6.4 Not hold the office of Councillor or Member of Parliament or be a council employee whom is in a politically restricted post.

7.0 Selection procedure for Advisory Group

- 7.1 Nominations for Township Forum Advisory Group members will be invited for prospective Co-optees. Vacancies resulting from the expiry of the 2 year term of office of co-optees will be publicised at the last meeting of their term of office to ensure these can be filled at the following meeting.
- 7.2 The "nomination" forms will require:
- a brief personal profile of the nominee;
 - when the nomination is on behalf of an organisation, a brief profile of the organisation, and confirmation that the nominee is its approved choice;
 - a summary of what the nominee thinks s/he can bring to the role of Co-opted Member; and
 - positive confirmation that the nominee is aware of the requirements for co-option and agrees to conform to them.
- 7.3 Only core members (councillors) on the Township Forum will be eligible to vote on the selection of co-opted members. In doing so Schedule 12 – Part VI - Paragraph 39 of the Local Government Act 1972 applies. This states "all questions coming or arising before a local authority shall be decided by a majority of the members of the authority present and voting thereon at a meeting of the authority."
- 7.4 The election will be administered by Democratic Service Officers present at the meeting.
- 7.5 The following process will be followed:
- a. The Core members will determine how many nominees are to be appointed and will ensure that the Advisory Group reflects the demographic make up of the area. For example Youth members.
 - b. Members will receive a copy of all application forms prior to the Township Forum meeting.
 - c. Members will be advised of the maximum votes "for" that they may cast equivalent to the number of vacant places.
 - d. At the end of the voting, the officer administering the election will verify the votes and compile a summary of the votes cast. They will advise the Councillors of the number of votes cast for each prospective co-opted member.
 - e. The nominees will be appointed to the Advisory Group in the order of the number of votes recorded, provided that no nominee shall be appointed if they secure fewer than 50% of the potential available positive votes. For this purpose the potentially available positive votes shall be reckoned as the number of Councillors present and eligible to vote.
 - f. In the event of a tied vote for the last place available the voting procedure will be repeated for the 'tied' nominees only. If an agreement is reached from this vote that candidate will be elected.
 - g. If the second round of voting for 'tied' places ends in a further tie, the Chair may defer any further voting to the next meeting.

- h. At this point the elected co-opted members will be asked to sign up to the Code of Conduct before they assume their place on the Forum.
- 7.6 Any candidate who is unsuccessful in a selection process is entitled to re-apply for selection, which can be within the same Municipal Year. However, any re-application must be supported by a newly completed and signed nomination form.

8.0 Role of a Councillor

Councillor's representing the Township Forum are required to:-

- § **Attend all or most of the Township Forum Meetings**
- § **Actively promote the Township Forum to increase the number of people attending the meetings**
- § **Use their networks to communicate important issues and the work of the Township Forum**
- § **Play a key role in projects and initiatives to improve the Township area as outlined in the Township Area Plan**
- § **Actively promote the various funding streams available to constituted community groups**

9.0 Rules of procedure

- 9.1 Township Forums will operate under the Council's Code of Conduct.
- 9.2 All Township Forums will meet six times per annum. Meetings will be arranged by Democratic Services.
- 9.3 Additional or special meetings of the Township Forum may be called at the discretion of the Chief Executive.
- 9.4 Meetings of the Township Forum will normally be held in the evening and will normally commence at 7.00pm. There will be a designated public forum time at the beginning of each meeting where members of the public can ask questions to the Forum.
- 9.5 Township Forum meetings will not be held during the period prior to the local Council Elections. Individual Township Forum meetings may also be deferred in the event of a Council- by-election.

10.0 Advisory Group Member -attendance

10.1 Advisory Group members who do not attend up to two consecutive meetings of the Township Forum and do not send their apologies will be removed from the Advisory Group and their place offered to other groups in accordance with appointment procedures laid down in the Operating Framework.

10.2 Where Advisory Group members do not attend more than two consecutive meetings but do send their apologies – it will be at the discretion of the Chair (of the Township Forum) to decide if they can remain on the Advisory Group.

11.0 Chair and Vice - Chair

- 11.1 Each Township Forum shall appoint a Chair and Vice Chair at its first meeting of the municipal year and at the next ordinary meeting of the Committee if a vacancy occurs during the year. This could be a core member or an advisory member. Only the core members of the forum can vote to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- 11.2 If the Chair elected is an advisory group member then the vice chair appointed must be a Councillor. In the event where a casting vote is required then it is the Councillor vice-chair that has the casting vote.
- 11.3 In the event of an advisory group member being in the chair covering a Councillor Chair, the core members present must select a Councillor vice chair who will have the casting vote.

12.0 Agenda

- 12.1 Whilst the agenda of the Township Forums will vary due to respective local priorities, each agenda will be based upon the principle of including the following items:-
1. Declarations of interest
 2. Public Forum
 3. Grant funding update
 4. Partnership and public consultation issues
 5. Progress on delivering priorities outlined in community plans
 6. Local issues
- 12.2 Township Forum Chairs, with the support of Council Officers will be responsible for setting the agenda.
- 12.3 No literature will be permitted to be distributed at the Township Forum without the prior consent of the Chair.

13.0 Decision making

- 13.1 Township Forums are appointed to ensure improved service delivery and more efficient, transparent and accountable decision making. Forums do not have budgets of their own and have not been given any specific delegated powers at this stage. However, Forums will need to prioritise actions for the area and from time to time give their views on decisions that service agencies need to make.
- 13.2 Where this is needed, only core members of the Forum will be able to vote.
- 13.3 Township Forums will comply with the Access to Information Rules set out in the Council Constitution.

14.0 Venues

- 14.1 In compiling proposals for meetings of Township Forums the Chairs and supporting officers will seek potential venues which:
- The residents of the area will see as part of their areas;
 - Are located to give convenient access to people who want to attend the meetings;

- Are accessible to all potential users

15.0 Relationship with the Council

15.1 The Council has a distinct role in promoting the effectiveness of Township Forums. In the light of this commitment the Council will:

1. Be impartial in its dealings with Township Forums
2. Provide administrative and officer support - including meeting arrangements and minute taking.
3. Encourage attendance.
4. Accept an annual report prepared by each Forum on local issues for consideration by Council.
5. Refer appropriate policy matters to Township Forums.
6. As part of the work programmes of the Scrutiny Commissions and the Executive consider any appropriate recommendations from Township Forums
7. Provide advice and guidance as required by the Forum.
8. The Township Forums are entitled to request the Leader to attend a meeting to discuss the work of the Executive. Any such request should be made through the Chair.
9. Township Forums can refer any relevant matter to the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**