

**AREA WORKING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

MEETING, 18<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2007

Present – Councillors Connell, Critchley, Hayes, Ibrahim, Lord, A.S. Walsh, J. Walsh and David Wilkinson.

Also in Attendance

Ms. C. James – Head of Strategic Projects

Mr. J. Shannon – Area Working Manager

Mrs. V. Ridge – Principal Democratic Services Officer

**1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

It was agreed that Councillor Ibrahim be appointed Chairman of the Policy Development Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Councillor Ibrahim here took the Chair.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

It was agreed that Councillor Lord be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Policy Development Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Area Working Policy Development Group held on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2005 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

**4. REVIEW OF AREA WORKING IN BOLTON**

The Chief Executive submitted a report and gave a presentation which updated members on the current arrangements for Area Working in Bolton and highlighted potential areas for review in response to the Local Government White Paper ‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’.

Information was provided in relation to the following, viz:-

- (a) short history of Area Working in Bolton;
- (b) main objectives for Area Working;
- (c) key outcomes for Area Working;
- (d) why the need for a review;

- (e) current arrangements for Area Working;
- (f) the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities';
- (g) changes that were currently being made;
- (h) the review process;
- (i) issues - democratic renewal;
- (j) issues - leadership of place; and
- (k) issues - efficiency and personalisation of services - meeting customer demands.

A paper was also circulated at the meeting which outlined the marketing and publicity arrangements for Area Forum meetings.

A discussion ensued regarding the current arrangements and the following issues were highlighted, viz:-

- themed meetings were beneficial;
- concerns regarding the gaps in meeting dates felt that this should be a continual programme;
- the Area Forums should be programmed in for twelve months with dates and venues made available in advance;
- there was a need to look at the geographical make up of existing Area Forums;
- consideration should be given to ensure that residents associations and neighbourhood panels were more integrated with Area Working;
- links to corporate initiatives such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and to partner organisations such as Bolton at Home should be included in the review;
- arrangements for marketing and publicity should be included in the review;
- research on approaches in other local authorities should be undertaken as part of the review;
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concern was expressed regarding the lack of attendance from members of the public and there was a need to ensure that the Forums were more attractive to a wider audience;

- with regard to the review process, all members of the Council should be asked for feedback; and
- the relationship between Town Councils, the area regeneration partnerships and the respective Area Forums needed to be addressed.

Overall, members were of the opinion that there was an urgent need to review the current operation of Area Forums in the context of an overall review of Area Working which should be undertaken in a positive way to enhance Area Working in Bolton.

The review process, as outlined in the report, was agreed as an appropriate way forward with the addition that the three political groups be informed of options emerging from the review.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 10.00 a.m. and finished at 12 noon.)