

AREA WORKING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 6TH NOVEMBER, 2007

Present – Councillors Ibrahim (Chairman), Lord (Vice-Chairman), Connell, Critchley, Hayes, A.S. Walsh, J. Walsh and D. Wilkinson.

Also in Attendance

Ms. C. James - Head of Strategic Projects
Mr. J. Shannon - Area Working Manager
Mrs. V. Ridge - Principal Democratic Services Officer

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Bashir-Ismail.

Councillor Ibrahim in the Chair.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Development Group held on 18th September, 2007 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

10. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF AREA WORKING

Ms. C. James, Head of Strategic Projects gave a presentation which updated members on the progress made on the current review of area working.

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

- a) context of the review;
- b) key findings;
- c) objectives of area working;
- d) possible options;
- e) the process for the review and
- f) learning points from other local authorities.

Members were also advised that seven of the nine member only meetings had now taken place and a summary of the feedback from these meetings were circulated. The remaining two member only meetings would take place during the next week.

In terms of the possible options, these were highlighted as follows:-

- move to Ward based Area Forums which would meet less frequently but more local. In some areas it might be more appropriate to use a two Ward Forum;
- increase the number of themed meetings;
- several Ward based Forum Areas could come together to form mini local strategic partnerships;
- develop a local action plan for each area;
- increase the level of resources;
- culture change for officers to become more public focused; and
- recognise that area working was not just about the Forum meetings.

A discussion ensued with regard to the above potential options and the following points were made. viz:-

- a) concern regarding the current marketing arrangements for Area Forum meetings;
- b) the Forums needed to be more community led;
- c) the need to engage more members of the public;
- d) guidelines should be produced on how the Forums should be operated;
- e) need for a more detailed analysis of potential Forum Areas using the electoral wards as a base;
- f) need to look at Bolton at Home neighbourhood panels which were currently being reviewed as well as Safer Neighbourhoods and see how these could be incorporated within Area Working;
- g) there was a need to ensure that dates of meetings and venues were programmed on a twelve month basis; and
- h) that action plans for each area should be developed and used to identify at key issues, establish local priorities, earmark actions and monitor outcomes.

In conclusion, it was stated that the next stage of the review would be to produce some detailed options on the possible make up of Area Forums and that these be submitted to the next meeting of the Policy Development Group.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 11.00 a.m. and finished at 12.15 p.m.)