

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet		
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	11 April 2022		
<b>Report of:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive	<b>Report Number:</b>	31786
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Emily Brook, Assistant Director Strategy & Partnerships	<b>Telephone Number:</b>	01204 332410
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Rafael Martinez, Head of Community Safety & Neighbourhoods	<b>Telephone Number:</b>	
<b>Report title:</b>	Area Working Review Update & Proposals		
<b>Not confidential</b>			
This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public.			
<b>PDG reports – Not for wider circulation</b>			
<b>Purpose:</b>	The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Area Working Peer Review facilitated by the Local Government Association (LGA), set out proposals for a new model going forward, and seek relevant approvals on these proposals.		

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p>The Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Endorse the development and implementation of the Community Alliance model, as set out in this report, and recommend to Full Council:</li> <li>2.1 Adoption of the Community Alliance model and further recommends that the Community Alliance model replaces Area Forums, and,</li> <li>2.2 Delegate authority to the Assistant Director Strategy &amp; Partnerships and the Head of Community Safety &amp; Area Working to approve the necessary spend of the Area Working funding and the Constitution is amended accordingly.</li> <li>3. Request that a marketing and communication plan is developed to promote the aims and objectives of the Community Alliance.</li> <li>4. Request that a series of member and partner engagement sessions are delivered to share the role and function of the Community Alliance.</li> <li>5. Approve the development of an Area Working budget made up of a) historical unspent ward funding (consolidation exercise to be undertaken) and b) the distribution on a flat rate basis the annual £300k Area Working budget (£15k per ward).</li> <li>6. Approve the introduction of a criteria that would require at least 50% of the annual ward Area Working allocation (i.e. £7,500) to be used by members to harness social value and social action (i.e. matched volunteer hours) – this criteria to take effect from April 2022 and does not apply to historical funding.</li> <li>7. Approve the introduction of a consistent criteria for targeting investments, using as a base the Bolton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and where, via engagement with the Community Alliance, it supports principles of strengthening communities.</li> <li>8. Request that new approval and monitoring documentation be prepared for the Area Working budget.</li> <li>9. Request that the Executive Cabinet Member Stronger Communities receives regular updates on how these budgets are being used, and that ward level spend be published on the council's website on an annual basis.</li> <li>10. Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to carry out all necessary financial formalities.</li> <li>11. Authorise the Borough Solicitor to carry out all necessary legal formalities.</li> </ol>
<b>Decision:</b>	
<b>Background documents:</b>	

<b>Signed:</b>	Leader/Executive Cabinet Member	Monitoring Officer
<b>Date:</b>		

Consultation with other officers				
Finance	Yes	10/03/2022	Corinne Davoy-Wood	
Legal	Yes	01/02/2022	Helen Gorman	
HR	N/A			
Procurement	N/A			
Climate Change	N/A			
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes	07/03/2022	Rebecca Albrow	
<b>(b) Post consultation reports</b> Please confirm that the consultation response has been taken into consideration in making the recommendations. Please delete paragraph (a) in post consultation reports and confirm the position.			Yes	
<b>Vision outcomes</b> Please identify the appropriate Vision outcome(s) that this report relates or contributes to by putting a cross in the relevant box.			1. Start Well	√
			2. Live Well	√
			3. Age Well	√
			4. Prosperous	√
			5. Clean and Green	√
			6. Strong and Distinctive	√

## 1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Area Working Peer Review facilitated by the Local Government Association (LGA), sets out proposals for a new model going forward, and seeks relevant approvals on these proposals.
- 1.2. The review of Area Working was included in the Statement of Intent and Priorities for the Conservative Led Administration after the May 2021 elections, demonstrating a continued political commitment to developing a new model for the future. However, the review of Area Working has been rooted in the previous LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (2018) where it identified area/locality working as a key development area in need of attention. This flagged a sense of under-utilised potential in the 'Bolton Family' partnership at local level. It also signalled the need for the development of an enabling and facilitation role for the Council and Members – a move toward 'Leadership of Place'. This extract from the Review's Executive Summary highlights:
- a) *'Opportunity also exists within Bolton by utilising the willing capacity of strategic partnerships, which were some of the best the peer team had seen. To take these partnerships to the next level, the council should agree with partners what role they each now have locally. The 'Bolton Family' is widely used as an expression of how partners locally work together. The time is now for the council to agree what their role in that family is.'*
  - b) *Partners such as the CVS credit the council for taking a parental role in Bolton, during a period in which the sector needed to grow. They acknowledge the pressure the council is now under and welcome the move to a more facilitative / enabling role, rather than the council continuing as the deliverer, almost by default. Other partners also welcomed such a move and gave real examples where they could step forward with additional contributions to help achieve the vision they have clearly bought into. This would require a clear delivery plan setting this out with milestones and measures. The council and partners must then embed these commitments into their individual corporate plans to ensure delivery.*
  - c) *Partnership working at a community level is now underdeveloped. The council should address this to release community capacity in line with the 2030 vision. The council should establish what model of area - based working it wishes to create and how this could be resourced. As community leaders, members have a critical role in this. Members must therefore be involved from the design stage and supported by a relevant programme of member development.'*
- 1.3. The Corporate Peer Challenge Review made a specific recommendation as follows: Recommendation 4: Review, re-develop and invest in locality-based working which has member involvement at its core.
- 1.4. There are a number of other key drivers for this review, including:
- *Modernising engagement methods:* There has been a recognition across elected members and officers that there is need to review and modernise the formal methods of local member and council engagement with citizens and communities in Bolton. At present the Council still operates a model of 'Area Forums' at ward level which have served their purpose in the past, but which have over time become infrequent and limited in effect – functioning often as 'reporting to' rather than 'listening to' events, with a relatively small number of regular participants in many areas.

- *Prevention focus:* Bolton Council, similar to many other councils, faces significant resource challenges and needs to find ways to break the cycle of demand for acute and expensive interventions across a range of people and place - based services. There is a recognition that effective and modernised area working models can play a key role in enabling the early identification of issues for individuals, families, communities and businesses before they become acute, and providing early intervention to support people at the right time and to avoid spiralling avoidable costs.
- *COVID 19 pandemic response:* A more recent driver for reform of area working has been created by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has triggered excellent local responses to provide support and assistance across communities in Bolton. Alongside this, the pace of central and local partnership working has accelerated as the urgency to respond throughout the response phases has overridden previous constraints and organisational boundaries. The key question for the area working review is how a future model can sustain and accelerate these positive bi - products of a uniquely challenging past year.

1.5. Bolton Council requested Local Government Association (LGA) support in providing facilitation and brokerage through a further Peer Review style approach, that took place during March 2021, to enable the development of consensus across political parties on a future model of area-based working. The objectives of the review were agreed as follows:

- a) For the LGA to work with the Council on a review of area-based working to ensure it is 'fit for the future' and connected to wider plans and priorities.
- b) To build consensus across parties for a proposed future model which will then be subject to wider engagement, development and mobilisation.
- c) To develop arrangements for the future development of members budgets so that their use and value is maximised in a clear, consistent and transparent way.
- d) To identify member support needs.
- e) To inform a service review of Neighbourhoods and Communities Service (and provide context for the development of Council and partner services more broadly)

## **2. CROSS-PARTY MEMBER WORKING GROUP**

2.1. The Review adopted a co-design and co-production approach between Bolton Council members (developed specifically for the review to ensure representation across the diverse political landscape in Bolton. The 16 members of the cross-party group, reflective of the political composition of the Council at the time the review) and officers, facilitated by the LGA (advisor and political peers). This was informed by an all-member survey that asked members about the current arrangements.

2.2. Through the workshops the cross-party member working group had worked in a collegiate way to develop a consensus on the basis of a future model of Area Working. This joint work included agreement of the aims of Area Working and the scope of a future model and a set of design principles. These informed the development of a set of 9 specific proposals for change that are proposed for further discussion, approval and development over time.

2.3. The aims of a future Area Working model that were developed are:

- a) To enable inclusive, purposeful, two-way communication and engagement with all communities in Bolton, building citizen influence and trust.
- b) To enable local prevention work that anticipates and resolves community, family and individual concerns, improving well - being and managing demands on services and elected members.

- c) To enable and empower communities to make their own contribution to life and wellbeing in Bolton, and to celebrate this.
- d) To enable elected Members to play an enabling, facilitating role at the heart of strong community networks.

2.4 The Scope of Area Working was agreed as three, interconnected, key areas of activity:

- a) Engagement with citizens
- b) Delivering to local needs – including reflecting difference in places and communities
- c) Growing the contribution of communities

2.5 The discussions in the workshops enabled the development of a set of design principles that the working group would like to see underpin new ways of area-based working in Bolton. These represent a set of tests against which a future model can be assessed initially and over time. The principles are summarised in the below table.

<b>Design Principles: ‘tests’ for a future model</b>		
1	<b>Engages &amp; Empowers Communities</b>	Enables two – way purposeful communication and engagement with all of Bolton’s rich and diverse communities. Increases the influence of citizens and communities in decision making, building trust.
2	<b>Resources Communities</b>	Invests in and grows the role of community led action and mutual aid to deliver impact locally, building on existing strengths and recent Covid response experience and reflects the diversity within Bolton’s communities.
3	<b>Culture of Collaboration</b>	Creates and sustains positive networks and collaborative behaviours at community level and across services at all levels
4	<b>Reduces Inequality</b>	Acknowledges and aims to reduce social, economic and health inequalities between areas in Bolton and between Bolton and other areas – ‘levelling - up’. Focuses on communities who experience particular disadvantage e.g. BAME communities.
5	<b>Prevention</b>	Anticipates and seeks to prevent potential challenges facing community, family and individuals. Spots and responds early to avoid escalation to crisis point.
6	<b>Intelligence Driven</b>	Uses community insights, human stories/lived experience and data together to inform strategies, plans and use of resources
7	<b>Strengths - Based</b>	Values and builds on the strengths and passions of communities and individuals to establish positive solutions.
8	<b>Stable &amp; Sustainable</b>	Supported across political parties and key organisations in the Bolton Family, able to withstand short term political change and sustain over the long – term.

*Table 1: Design Principles for a Future Model of Area Working*

### **3. PROPOSALS FOR A FUTURE MODEL OF AREA WORKING**

3.1 The outcome from the LGA facilitated working group identified nine key development proposals that collectively represent a ‘whole system’ approach to area-based working which can play a key role in helping the Council, partners and communities in Bolton face current and future challenges and opportunities. The set of proposals are intended to be implemented in manageable and incremental steps over the coming years.

3.2 This report brings forward detailed proposals on those recommendations from the LGA report that can be delivered within the first 12 months. The other recommendations will require further planning and design work across the Council and its partners before any proposals can be brought forward.

### Proposal: Introduction and Implementation of Community Alliances

- 3.3 The various LGA Peer Reviews highlight the need for a culture shift to emerge where the council, and its members, take a less paternalistic position, instead working to create the conditions for citizen-based action and citizen-based co-design. Community Alliances, alongside other asset-based approaches and models, e.g. Integrated Care Partnership, will provide the building blocks for this shift to take place.
- 3.4 The aims of a future Area Working model as set out in 2.3 above signal a political will to innovate and shift emphasis to empower local communities to work alongside the Council to design and deliver local solutions to local issues. They place a renewed emphasis on the role of ward members, placing them at the centre of a structured, networked approach to oversight of risks, issues and opportunities at local level.
- 3.5 What is proposed?
- a) A managed transition to the establishment of very local networks of key actors in civil society at ward level with Ward Councillors in an enabling role, through the creation of a Community Alliance for each ward.
  - b) Community Alliances are made up of groups of local citizens who have put themselves forward to help improve the communities they live in. They will work alongside the Council, elected members, anchor institutions, local business, and other partners, and the wider community to design and deliver local solutions to local issues.
  - c) Community Alliances would communicate and meet regularly with the aim of collectively enhancing community wellbeing and supporting community contribution.
  - d) Summaries of key issues, risks and opportunities at a local level would be reported on a regular basis to an agreed Council forum and neighbourhood level delivery model with agreed feedback loops.
  - e) Further detail on the development of Community Alliances is available in Appendix 2.
- 3.6 How does it meet the design principles?
- a) A key focus of the Community Alliance is on engaging, empowering, and resourcing communities. They will be pivotal to instigating and influencing, strengthening, and connecting local communities. They aim to increase social action, community empowerment, equality, diversity, and co-production (1&2).
  - b) It builds collaboration between local actors, and stakeholders, and builds on the strengths of community in a place. Encourages cross party working locally (3,7,8).
  - c) It focuses on intelligence - identifying local insights and stories to set alongside data on need and target efforts to this (6).
  - d) It feeds local insights and concerns to inform delivery and commissioning on local need, including on disadvantage (4).
- 3.7 How will it enhance Members Place Leadership role?
- a) Places members at the centre of a structured, networked approach to oversight of risks, issues and opportunities at local level.
  - b) Relationship based approach - requires brokerage, facilitation, partnership building as a means to problem solve locally.
  - c) Enables two - way communication 'line of sight' from very local to centre on key issues.

3.8 Proposals have been shared with key stakeholders (e.g. Chief Executive's Strategy & Partnerships, Bolton CVS, Public Health, Bolton at Home, Greater Manchester Police) to understand how the opportunities for Community Alliances could be strengthened and added to. These proposals have been welcomed by partners who have been able to see how they could contribute. Areas of opportunity identified, that will evolve over time, include:

- a) Community Alliances could provide an important platform at a very local level for the Vision Partnership on key thematic issues. For example, Community Alliances could support the local level promotion and support of social value, deepening the understanding and application of social value in a place to maximise its social, economic, and environmental benefits.
- b) Strengthen visibility of the Bolton's Fund at a local level so that elected members, and the Community Alliance more broadly, are sighted on VCSE organisations funded to provide activity in their area. This will support decision making of the Area Working budget going forward.
- c) Bolton at Home has signalled strong support for the introduction of the Community Alliance model. Further discussions will take place to determine how these resources will work in practice with the Council's Area Working Team. Proposals will also be shared with Bolton Community Homes to identify how the wider housing sector could contribute, where they have a place-based offer (community development).
- d) Continue to develop and join-up across Bolton a coordinated approach to asset-based community development, creating the space and support for citizen-led action.

3.9 What steps are required to make this proposal happen?

- a) *Service review of the Area Working Team* - the Council's Area Working Team is there to advise and support the development of the Community Alliance, working with other partners' community development teams across the 'Bolton Family'. A redesign of officer arrangements needs to focus therefore and be confined to the core support required to facilitate the effective operation of the Community Alliance framework; although it is important for all staff to respond to these new developments, and the need to focus their work so that it is appropriately aligned with that framework. This support will require a re-focusing of roles, placing emphasis on a different range and mix of officer skills within the Area Working team. There is the need to reconfigure officer roles and produce appropriate job descriptions within a revised staffing structure to be contained within the costs of the overall officer resources available. This will also include identifying the right level of business support required.
- b) *Training and development* – to support the newly designed Area Working Team training and development opportunities will be developed focused on key areas such as; community facilitation, participatory engagement models, and understanding of asset based community development.
- c) *Marketing & Communication (public and partner)* – an appropriately branded and designed marketing and communication plan will be required to ensure the Community Alliance can be easily understood by citizens and shared widely to encourage as much involvement as possible. Designs will need to look and feel innovative and fresh, with content ideally placed on a non-council platform.
- d) *Member engagement* – a series of engagement workshops will be set-up with all councillors to share the role and function of the Community Alliance. See Member development section for



further details. Members from the cross-party working group will be invited to support this sharing their insights from the LGA workshop sessions.

- e) *Partner engagement* – a series of engagement exercises will be developed with key partners to share the role and function of the Community Alliance.
- f) Community Alliances, whilst informal arrangements, will be asked to develop and agree a set of ground rules that can be contained within a terms of reference. A suggested template will be produced which each Community Alliance can use to set their own. This will be based on the council's core values and behaviours, and the Nolan principles for public life. A key matter to include will be that Community Alliances; a) should not be used to progress party politics or for political campaigning, and b) they should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

3.10 Based on the steps required it is anticipated that the Community Alliance model will begin to mobilise from summer 2022 on a phased approach, (pending the outcome of a staffing review). This will give the appropriate time for the 'next steps' to be progressed maximising a successful implementation period. Progress updates will be provided to the Executive Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities.

#### Proposal: Area Working Member Budgets

3.11 This proposal strengthens arrangements for the current member budgets allocated under Area Working and aims to support the wider implementation of the Community Alliance model.

3.12 What is proposed?

- a) Develop local members budgets as key tool to help a) stimulate citizen engagement / action and b) enable all members to grow their place leadership & enabling role.
- b) Retain a flat rate ward allocation to ensure all members have access to reasonable levels of local small investment – on the basis this sits alongside significant focus on deprivation/disadvantage through other area working and Bolton Family measures.
- c) Introduce clear consistent criteria for targeting investments including evidenced local priorities and need, using as a base the Bolton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) priorities of:
  - Children getting the best start in life.
  - Promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing ill health.
  - Empowering everyone in Bolton to reach their potential and take control of their lives.
  - Fair employment and good work for all.
  - Protecting and improving our environment to ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
  - Stronger, cohesive, more confident communities in which people feel safe, welcome and connected.
- d) In addition, criteria to also include specific intentions related to community engagement and impact including:
  - Encouraging and leveraging community contribution (e.g. volunteering and match funding contribution)
  - Community impact / social value achieved (simple monitoring reports)
  - Reinforce budgets should only be used to support constituted groups and no funding for political or religious aims.
- e) Members are encouraged to consider using these budgets to support projects and activity developed within the Community Alliance for their ward.

- f) Re-clarify officer oversight, support, sign off for the Area Working budget (i.e. With criteria this establishes a 'triple lock', to ensure consistency, to support Members position/integrity and enable learning/sharing of practice across wards).
- g) Progress reports will be submitted to the Executive Cabinet Member Stronger Communities on how these budgets are being used, paying particular attention to how the Area Working budget is contributing to the Community Alliance model. A summary of each ward spend will be published on the council's website.
- h) There could be potential to grow the scale of ward budgets over time subject to learning and impact. As a starting point, the awards under the Bolton's Fund will be shared with members, and the Community Alliance, to help inform the use of Area Working budgets.

3.13 How does it meet the design principles?

- a) Direct focus on engaging and empowering communities and generating community contribution, building community assets/strengths and resilience (1,2,5,7)
- b) Use of intelligence to direct local investment to priority needs and contributes to tackling inequality alongside wider measures (6,4)
- c) Local collaborative approach with key role working with the Community Alliance (3)
- d) Collectively supported and protects all members role and positions as non - politicised process (8)

3.14 How will it enhance Members Place Leadership role?

- a) Provides members with a resource to work with other local actors to directly support grass roots engagement and contribution.
- b) 'Triple lock' ensures clarity about process and transparency to protect members positions.
- c) Supports development of trust in democratic process and role of council/members.

3.15 All projects supported through this fund should have clear social benefits for the ward. Targeting investments including evidenced local priorities and need, using as a base the Bolton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) priorities. Members will have the opportunity to directly fund activity and projects developed within their ward Community Alliance.

3.16 A key change in the projects supported through this funding, compared with the current model, is that the monetary grant to a VCSE organisation / group would need to be matched by a volunteer contribution 'giving something back' to the community. In this sense, the projects would need to be able to demonstrate an element of social value rather than just accepting a grant donation. At least 50% of the Area Working annual allocation (£7,500) should be matched with volunteer hours / direct social value to encourage and leverage community contribution. Volunteer hours has been calculated at £13.51 per hour and groups will need to demonstrate the volunteering carried out matched to the level of grant award received. For example, a grant award of £472.85 would need to deliver 35 hours of volunteering / giving back. Guidance, training, and documentation will be developed to support social value. The remaining 50% of the Area Working annual allocation can be used for initiatives that have no volunteering element. This criteria will only apply to the Area Working budget annual allocation from April 2022 onwards, and will not apply to any historical funding.

3.17 The investment provided to the VCSE sector via the Bolton's Fund will be shared with Community Alliances to provide greater join up between members and groups that could be delivering projects at a ward level. This will also support members in determining how Area Working funding can be used to support grass-root activity.

3.18 What steps are required to make this proposal happen?

- a) *Budget Consolidation* - Undertake a consolidation exercise which will bring together previous year's unspent, historical, allocations into one new allocation for each ward – titled 'Area Working'. Members will then have an opening balance, which will reduce as spend takes place. This exercise will reduce the administrative burden on having to match spend across different year allocations, and across historical funding pots, e.g. Neighbourhood Management. A new reporting framework will be introduced, including publishing spend on the council website. Under the reporting to the Executive Cabinet Member Stronger Communities, the extent of Area Working budget contribution to Community Alliances will be highlighted, in particular the requirement for 50% of annual allocation (£7,500) to be used exclusively to stimulate community action. Members will work collegiately in their wards to reach consensus on how this funding should be used and will be encouraged to consider how this can support the aims and objectives of the Community Alliance.
- b) *Approvals and monitoring* – new approval and monitoring documentation (that strengthen arrangements for declaration of interests and a proportionate due diligence process) will be produced to strengthen financial probity of the Area Working budget, reconfirming overall budget approval by officers, via delegated authority (see recommendations). This will include simple monitoring arrangements to capture the social value of any grant donations to community groups.

3.19 Based on the steps required it is proposed that the new Area Working budget be prepared for the new financial year April 2022. This will coincide with the introduction at the same time of the new criteria linked to stimulating community action. As the Community Alliance model mobilises members can then use this funding, at their discretion, to support its aims and objectives.

#### **4. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 Throughout the LGA Peer Review of Area Working discussions have focused on the need for support for elected Members in the operation of the new model and also of the skills and confidence they would need to operate effectively within it as it develops.
- 4.2 Discussions have taken place with Democratic Services and Organisational Development, who jointly lead on member development, to understand the current offer and opportunities to strengthen this where appropriate, in light of the new approach to Area Working.
- 4.3 In recent years, member development support has mostly shifted on-line. The LGA provide a plethora of free on-line resources to support elected members in their roles, either as a new Councillor or as an existing one. Building upon the strong foundations of the LGA programme, the new member development focuses on the required skills and behaviours mirrored in the relational skills (communication, connective, digital and reflective skills) outlined in the latest research on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Councillor<sup>1</sup>.
- 4.4 This resource ([Newly elected councillor event, 22 June 2021 | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/21st-century-councillor.pdf)) includes the following specific content:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Councillor Hub</li> <li>• E-learning Modules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LG Inform</li> <li>• "I-Spy" my Ward</li> </ul>
--	--

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/21st-century-councillor.pdf>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Workbooks</li> <li>• Webinars</li> <li>• Leadership Essentials</li> <li>• LGA events programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> Century Councillor</li> <li>• Sector Led Improvement</li> <li>• Case Studies</li> </ul>
---	--

4.5 Development and resources are also shared with members from the Northwest Employers who also offer webinars and e-learning modules.

4.6 A bespoke training session will be developed on the Area Working model (focusing initially on the development of Community Alliances and engagement opportunities) for all members that will be incorporated into the member development programme and will then be used for any new Councillors elected in the future. A training provider will be identified to deliver one-off member development session around; community facilitation, participatory engagement models, and understanding of asset-based community development. This will provide members with the skills and techniques required to support citizen-led engagement processes. Members will be encouraged to take up equality training following the council's investment in this area. Further opportunities will be discussed with Organisational Development to identify other learning and development opportunities.

## **5. IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS:**

### **5.1 Financial**

5.1.1 The current total budget devolved to members for Area Working initiatives is £300k per annum, allocated to each ward on a flat rate basis (£15k) unless the amount allocated to each ward is amended by the council's political administration at the time. This report seeks approval to continue the same funding model going forward and that the budget be renamed 'Area Working Budget'.

5.1.2 Officers will undertake a review of historical funding devolved to members under Area Working and Neighbourhood Management to consolidate any historical budgets that remain. This historical funding held in reserves and will be available to supplement the annual budget. As members make decisions the reserve will reduce in line with the spend.

### **5.2 Legal**

5.2.1 The proposal to establish Community Alliances will require changes to the constitution, including the disbanding of Area Forums for which formal approval will be required via Full Council.

### **5.3 HR**

5.3.1 A more detailed piece of work, currently underway, is required to review the staffing structure that would support this new model. This would include an appropriately resourced Area Working Team and Business Support function. A separate report will bring forward these staffing proposals.

### **5.4 Climate Change**

5.4.1 The proposals offer an opportunity for the new Community Alliances to consider how communities and citizens could support responses to Climate Change at a local level. There is also an opportunity for members to influence this agenda locally via this mechanism.

### **5.5 Other**

5.5.1 N/A

## **6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a general duty to have due regard to the need to:

1. **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2. **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
3. **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

6.2 It is important to consider how the proposals contained within this report may impact positively or negatively on protected characteristics (see Appendix 1). It has been determined that it is not anticipated that the proposals within this report will have a differential impact on any of Bolton's diversity groups, including staff. The reason for this is that these proposals, and the design principles that underpin them, signal a political will to innovate and shift emphasis to empower local communities to work alongside the Council to design and deliver local solutions. This places a renewed emphasis on the role of ward members, placing them at the centre of a structured, networked approach to oversight of risks, issues and opportunities at local level. It is anticipated that members will engage positively with Bolton's diverse communities. A full EIA is therefore not required at this stage but will be reviewed once operational to assess whether there are any barriers to engagement.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

7.1 As outlined earlier in this report, these proposals have been developed via an LGA peer-style review. The review adopted a co-design and co-production approach between Bolton Council members (developed specifically for the review to ensure representation across the diverse political landscape in Bolton. The 16 members of the cross-party group, reflective of the political composition of the Council at the time the review) and officers, facilitated by an LGA advisor and political peers.

7.2 The cross-party working group considered the results of an all-member survey that asked about the current arrangements (positive and negative). This helped shape the design of the workshops and supported the cross-party working group to consider the wider member perspective. This helped the cross-party working group in the development of a core set of design principles (see paragraph 2.5) to ensure that any proposals that were brought forward would be aligned to members' requirements.

7.3 Between 28<sup>th</sup> January and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022, the Council ran a public consultation, seeking to engage residents and stakeholders on the proposal to disband Area Forums and establish Community Alliances across the borough (one located in each Ward).

7.4 During the consultation period a comprehensive communication plan was implemented to raise awareness of the proposal across the borough. Information was also distributed to all stakeholders, including the Vision Partnership, the current Area Forum mailing list, Elected Members and community leaders. Supporting documentation was made accessible on the Council's consultation webpages and social media was heavily utilised throughout the period to share key messages about the consultation.

- 7.5 Participants were surveyed using a questionnaire tool made up of open and closed questions, providing respondents the opportunity to reflect and share their thoughts on the proposal. The questionnaire was made available both digitally and offline, with the questionnaire being accessible on the council's consultation web page, as well as in hard copy format, on request.
- 7.6 Throughout the consultation period 160 electronic questionnaires from residents and stakeholders were received. Of those that responded, 157 outlined their multiple interests in the proposal. 93% of respondents completed the survey having a vested interest as a resident. Overall, 80% agree with the proposal. 64% outlining that it would enable residents to influence local plans, it would be based on a small area, and local people will be encouraged to join. However, there were concerns by 70% of respondents that there would not be enough allocation of funding/resources to make meaningful impacts within communities. Additional concerns were raised around the Alliances not having proportionate engagement, increasing inequalities within the borough. Further concerns were around how cross borough programmes or challenges would be delivered. There was also interest in the governance process of the Alliance model. The full consultation findings are contained within a report available in Appendix 2.
- 7.7 Participants completing the survey were asked which Area Forum they had attended within the last five years. Just under two-fifths (38%) had not attended any Area Forum within the period. Where reflections were made on the current Area Forum model, respondents outlined positive aspects being that they are open to all (55%), as well as providing an opportunity to build relations with partners and Councillors (54%).
- 7.8 Feedback received from the consultation will be incorporated into the implementation planning, e.g. by identifying opportunities for Community Alliances to participate in cross-borough challenges through the Bolton Vision.

## **8. VISION 2030**

- 8.1 The various LGA Peer Reviews highlight the need for a culture shift to emerge where the council, and its members, take a less paternalistic position, instead working to create the conditions for citizen-based action and citizen-based co-design. Community Alliances, alongside other asset-based approaches and models, e.g. Integrated Care Partnership, will provide the building blocks for this shift to take place.
- 8.2 The aims of a future Area Working model as set out in 2.3 above signal a political will to innovate and shift emphasis to empower local communities to work alongside the Council to design and deliver local solutions to local issues. They place a renewed emphasis on the role of ward members, placing them at the centre of a structured, networked approach to oversight of risks, issues and opportunities at local level. Members will be well placed to influence and steer citizen-based action, having regard to all the VISION 2030 outcomes, where this aligns with what local communities want and are motivated to support.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The Cabinet is recommended to:
1. Endorse the development and implementation of the Community Alliance model, as set out in this report, and recommend to Full Council:
  - 2.1 Adoption of the Community Alliance model and further recommends that the Community Alliance model replaces Area Forums, and,

- 2.2 Delegate authority to the Assistant Director Strategy & Partnerships and the Head of Community Safety & Area Working to approve the necessary spend of the Area Working funding and the Constitution is amended accordingly.
3. Request that a marketing and communication plan is developed to promote the aims and objectives of the Community Alliance.
4. Request that a series of member and partner engagement sessions are delivered to share the role and function of the Community Alliance.
5. Approve the development of an Area Working budget made up of a) historical unspent ward funding (consolidation exercise to be undertaken) and b) the distribution on a flat rate basis the annual £300k Area Working budget (£15k per ward).
6. Approve the introduction of a criteria that would require at least 50% of the annual ward Area Working allocation (i.e. £7,500) to be used by members to harness social value and social action (i.e. matched volunteer hours). This criteria to take effect from April 2022 and does not apply to historical funding.
7. Approve the introduction of a consistent criteria for targeting investments, using as a base the Bolton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and where, via engagement with the Community Alliance, it supports principles of strengthening communities.
8. Request that new approval and monitoring documentation be prepared for the Area Working budget.
9. Request that the Executive Cabinet Member Stronger Communities receives regular updates on how these budgets are being used, and that ward level spend be published on the council's website on an annual basis.
10. Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to carry out all necessary financial formalities.
11. Authorise the Borough Solicitor to carry out all necessary legal formalities.

## Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Title of report or proposal:</b>
Area Working Review Update & Proposals

<b>Directorate:</b>	Corporate
<b>Section:</b>	Strategy & Partnerships
<b>Date:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> March 2022

Public sector bodies need to be able to evidence that they have given due regard to the impact and potential impact on all people with 'protected characteristics' in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees.

Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a general duty to have due regard to the need to:

1. **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2. **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
3. **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

By completing the following questions the three parts of the equality duty will be consciously considered as part of the decision-making process.

Details of the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment must also be included in the main body of the report.



**1. Describe in summary the aims, objectives and purpose of the proposal, including desired outcomes.**

The report sets out two proposals:

1. Introduction of Community Alliances (and disband Area Forums)
2. Consolidation of devolved funding to create a new Area Working budget.

Community Alliance:

- a) A managed transition to the establishment of very local networks of key actors in civil society at ward level with Ward Councillors in an enabling role, through the creation of a Community Alliance for each ward.
- b) Community Alliances are made up of groups of local citizens who have put themselves forward to help improve the communities they live in. They will work alongside the Council, elected members, anchor institutions, local business, and other partners, and the wider community to design and deliver local solutions to local issues.
- c) Community Alliances would communicate and meet regularly with the aim of collectively enhancing community wellbeing and supporting community contribution.
- d) Summaries of key issues, risks and opportunities at a local level would be reported on a regular basis to an agreed Council forum and neighbourhood level delivery model with agreed feedback loops.

Area Working Budget

- a) Develop local members budgets as key tool to help a) stimulate citizen engagement / action and b) enable all members to grow their place leadership & enabling role.
- b) Retain a flat rate ward allocation to ensure all members have access to reasonable levels of local small investment – on the basis this sits alongside significant focus on deprivation/disadvantage through other area working and Bolton Family measures.
- c) Introduce clear consistent criteria for targeting investments including evidenced local priorities and need, using as a base the Bolton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) priorities of:
  - Children getting the best start in life.
  - Promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing ill health.
  - Empowering everyone in Bolton to reach their potential and take control of their lives.
  - Fair employment and good work for all.
  - Protecting and improving our environment to ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
  - Stronger, cohesive, more confident communities in which people feel safe, welcome and connected.
- d) In addition, criteria to also include specific intentions related to community engagement and impact including:
  - Encouraging and leveraging community contribution (e.g. volunteering and match funding contribution)
  - Community impact / social value achieved (simple monitoring reports)
  - Reinforce budgets should only be used to support constituted groups and no funding for political or religious aims.
- e) Members are encouraged to consider using these budgets to support projects and activity developed within the Community Alliance for their ward.

**2. Is this a new policy / function / service or review of existing one?**

Review of an existing model of Area Working with a new model proposed.

**3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the proposal?**

- Local residents and active citizens
- Local VCSE community groups
- Elected members
- Local stakeholders – e.g. Bolton at Home, Greater Manchester Police, Bolton Community Homes
- Bolton CVS
- Bolton Council – Strategy & Partnerships, Public Health, other council directorates

**4. In summary, what are the anticipated (positive or negative) impacts of the proposal?**

Community Alliance: Positive

The aim of the Alliances will be to help connect existing individuals, groups, organisations at a local level so they can achieve more together. The Alliances will also encourage the growth of community level activity and joining up of efforts. Ultimately the goal is to value and grow social action - people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the important problems in their communities. This will help achieve better outcomes, improve local environments - all part of our overall vision of an Active, Connected and Prosperous Bolton.

As these will not be formal meetings of the Council, with the aim of elected members and council officers jointly developing Alliances with active citizens, they are seen as a way to modernise and improve engagement and create greater opportunities to support communities.

Community Alliance: Negative

These arrangements will be informal, rather than formal meetings of the Council, and as such may be seen by some to lack overall accountability. Community Alliance will have council resources to support their implementation and this level of resources will be accountable to the Executive Cabinet Member Stronger Communities. Ultimately, the strength of Alliances will depend on the extent of the engagement from active citizens and partner agencies.

Area Working Budget: Overall aim is to strengthen arrangements and stimulate social value that can be measured. Funding decisions will continue to be reported to the Executive Cabinet Member Stronger Communities and made publicly available. No negative impact is expected.

**5. What, if any, cumulative impact could the proposal have?**

This is an impact that appears when you consider services or activities together. A change or activity in one area may create an impact somewhere else.

It is anticipated that the cumulative impact of these proposals will be positive. There will be opportunities to align with other community development type activity within the borough, e.g. via Public Health or Bolton at Home, to consider how a strength-based approach can be maximised over time. This will create a new relational approach between citizens, council and wider partners.

**This EIA form and report has been checked and countersigned by the Directorate Equalities Officer before proceeding to Executive Cabinet Member(s)**

**Please confirm the outcome of this EIA:**

No major impact identified, therefore no major changes required – proceed	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
Adjustments to remove barriers / promote equality (mitigate impact) have been identified – proceed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive impact for one or more groups justified on the grounds of promoting equality - proceed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continue despite having identified potential for adverse impact/missed opportunities for promoting equality – this requires a strong justification	<input type="checkbox"/>
The EIA identifies actual or potential unlawful discrimination - stop and rethink	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Report Officer**

Name: Rafael Martinez

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Directorate Equalities Lead Officer**

Name: Rebecca Albrow

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022



# **Area Working Review**

**Report by Consultation & Engagement  
Team**

**March 2022**

## **1. Background**

Bolton Council were one of the first Local Authorities in the country to establish Area Forums, following the introduction of the Local Government Act 2001. Initially established in Halliwell and Central wards, the Area Forums were established to share what the authority had planned for communities and provide residents and stakeholders the opportunity to feedback their thoughts on Council led schemes. They provided a channel for residents to meet with Council officers, leaders and local Councillors. In recent years attendance at Area Forums has been mixed, with some areas having very few residents attending. In 2020 the Area Forums suspended their activity due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has provided an opportunity to evaluate the Forum model and look at more effective methods for engagement and for supporting community-led change action.

## **2. Methodology**

Between 28<sup>th</sup> January and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022, the Council ran a public consultation, seeking to engage residents and stakeholders in a proposal that would see the replacement of Area Forums for 20 Community Alliances across the borough (one located in each Ward). The Community Alliance proposal would focus on local issues and allow residents to come up with solutions that suit them, thus focussing on community-led action. The overarching aim for the Alliance would be to create more opportunities for people of different backgrounds and experiences to get involved and contribute to local life, providing opportunities to have an active role in local decision making.

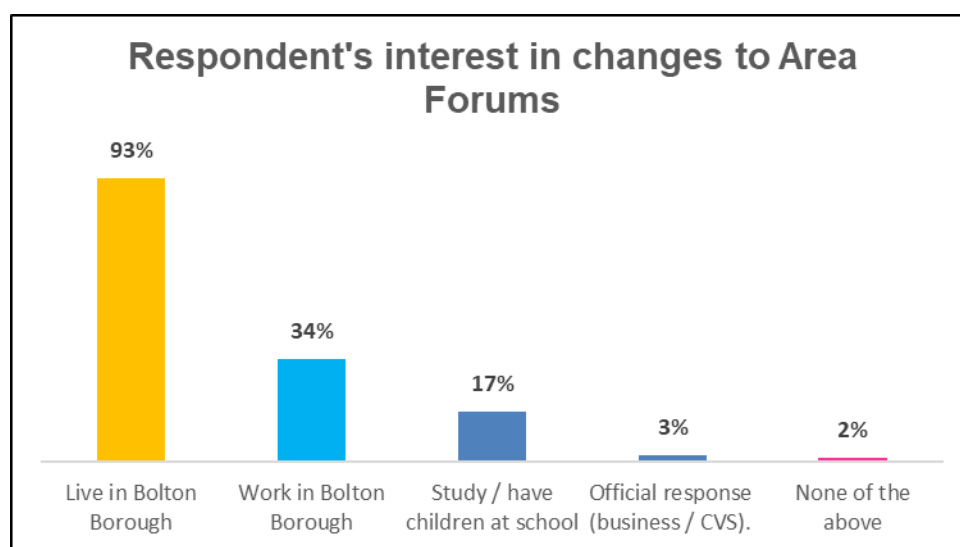
During the consultation period a comprehensive communication plan was implemented to raise awareness of the proposal across the borough. Information was also distributed to all stakeholders, including the Vision Partnership, Elected Members and community leaders. Supporting documentation was made accessible on the Council's consultation webpage and social media was heavily utilised throughout the period to share key messages about the consultation.

Participants were surveyed using a questionnaire tool made up of open and closed questions, providing respondents the opportunity to reflect and share their thoughts on the proposal. The questionnaire was made available both digitally and offline, with the questionnaire being accessible on the council's consultation web page, as well as in hard copy format, on request.

\*A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this document, located in Appendix A.

### 3. Consultation responses

Throughout the consultation period 160 electronic questionnaires from residents and stakeholders were received. Of those that responded, 157 outlined their multiple interests in the proposal. 93% of respondents completed the survey having a vested interest as a resident. 34% had an interest in the proposal as work in the borough and 17% study or have children attending schools in the borough. 3% of respondents completed the consultation in an official capacity, representing faith and community organisations. 2% of respondents said they had a vested interest in the proposal, as lived on the boarder of Bolton in a neighbouring authority or were thinking of moving into the area.

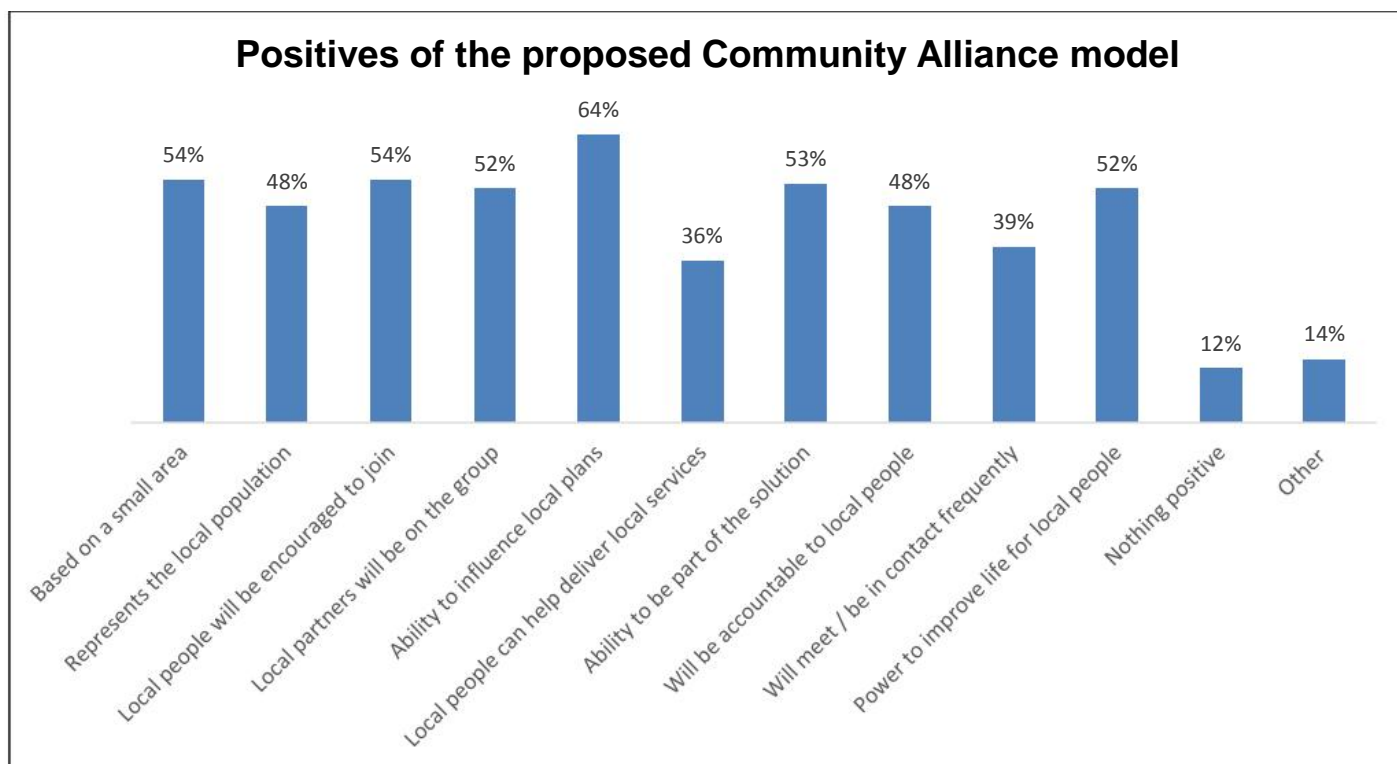


Base: 157

## Proposal for a Community Alliance

### 4a. Positive considerations of a Community Alliance

Residents and stakeholders were asked to reflect upon the Community Alliance model and consider what the positive aspects would be for implementation. The top constructive outcomes of a Community Alliance model are that there would be '*an ability to influence local plans*' (64%), it would be '*based on a small area*' (54%) and '*local people will be encouraged to join*'. 12% of respondents think there are no positive attributes of a Community Alliance model.



**Base: 151**

**‘Other’:** 14% (21 respondents) chose ‘other’ and expanded on their comments. These comments are categorised into five key themes:

**Barriers to engagement:** Comments received reflect concerns around how to incentivise communities to engage.

*“All lovely on paper but the biggest obstacle will be the fact the community doesn’t care to engage or volunteer unless something effects them.”*

*“There are many disaffected, discouraged people in my ward. You say virtually nothing about how you will recruit the first volunteers. Any real plans to get “feet on the ground?”*

**Allocation of funding:** Respondents feel that any allocation of community funding should be managed by the community or by the Alliance.

*“Bolton’s Fund should be divided equally between all the twenty wards through the Community Alliance”.*

*“Decisions about how my alliance spends its allocation of LA budget to help it action change, improvements, developments, and deliver what is needed and not the whims of strong vocal individuals in each ward.”*

**Delivery model:** Comments received are around having clarity, a clear structure and governance process.

*“From the information given it’s not clear how many people are in the groups and how local people contribute or influence outcomes.....and meeting at last annually doesn’t give confidence that the group will be in a position to respond to concerns with any urgency.”*

*"I think that Bolton Council attempts to engage communities in a way that it thinks people should be engaged, rather than handing the power, voice and influence to communities. I think that Bolton Council should commission a community partner like Bolton CVS to lead this programme."*

**Positive proposal:** Some respondents think the proposed model would make a positive contribution to their communities.

*"If the autonomy with guidance is really given to communities at grassroots level, then it will be a big achievement and a very positive outcome in the long term."*

*"The people in the community will be the heart of the community."*

**No distinction between Area Forums & Community Alliances:** Some respondents are confused by the lack of clear distinction between the current Area Forum model and the Community Alliances proposed.

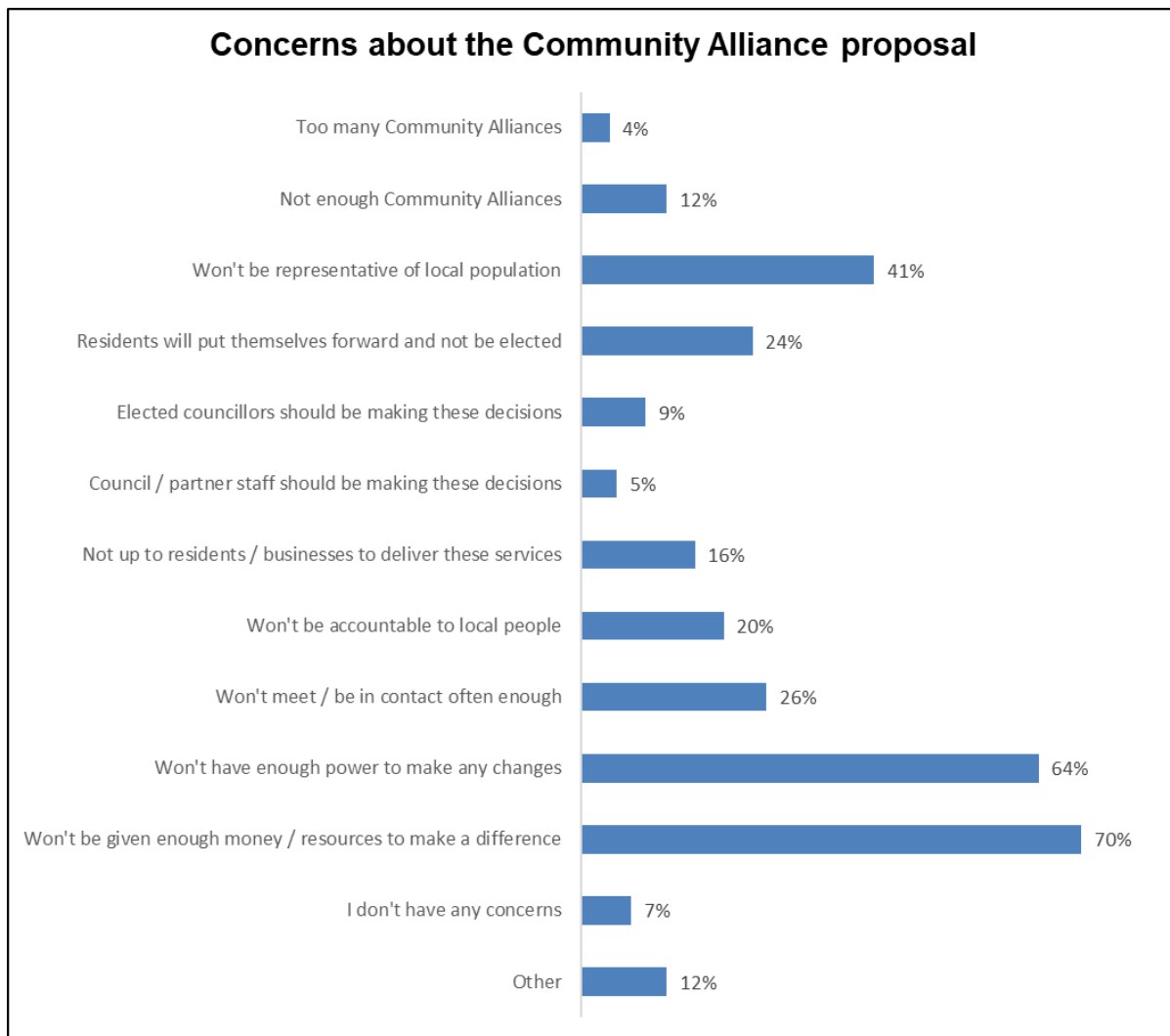
*"I'm still not very clear (having watched the presentation) how these differ from the current setup of Area Forums?"*

*"Other than a name change I personally do not see what difference there is".*

#### **4b. Concerns around the implementation of Community Alliances.**

Respondents were asked to reflect on possible concerns around the implementation of the proposal. The areas of greatest concern for residents is around not having enough *allocation of funding or resource* to make a significant difference in their community (70%), as well as not having *enough power to influence change* (64%). Of least concern is having too many Community Alliances (4%) and the notion *that 'Council staff and partners should be making these decisions'* (5%).





**Base: 148**

**‘Other’:** 12% (18 respondents) chose ‘other’ and expanded on their comments. These comments are categorised into six areas:

**Engagement:** Comments received are concerned by a disproportionate engagement from one ward to another, leading to a potential widening of inequalities:

*“More affluent wards are likely to have more people involved”.*

*“Maybe dominated by some residents; some residents out for their own gain.. elected members will want to have strong influence”.*

*“The group's/residents chosen could have political allegiance”*

*“Not representative of all people”.*

**Governance structure & accountability:** Comments received are around a lack of clarity on what the Governance will look like and whether the model will provide a holistic approach in supporting the wider borough.

*"I really feel like I've missed a link to more information on the format, process and authority of the groups both individually and as a whole? Without more information how can people contribute."*

*"There isn't enough information provided to know what services are involved - you're asking questions without providing enough detail to be able to answer them. For example there is no information about the governance arrangements or how decisions here will relate to council decisions."*

*"If it is seen that it is led by councillors, LA officers or the same organisations directing the conversations, then it will just create animosity and backlash than good."*

*"What will the remit & scope of these groups be?"*

*"Won't be accountable to anyone."*

*"I love the principal but there needs to be investment in an officer who will support the alliance, ensure it is representative of the ward, and link into a borough wide strategy. It's not up to citizens to deliver all objectives though many will want to be part of the solution. We must prevent self interest by the hegemony."*

**Lack of trust:** Some residents are concerned that the Alliance model will become a talking shop for political agendas and how that could lead to misinformed action being taken.

*"Local people need an attitude adjustment over time re possible relations of govt. and local people, feel bruised, sceptical and cynical, all too often".*

*"The only concern is members preaching their own agenda".*

*"Usual woke politicking, religious groups; decision making based on misinformation".*

**Community Alliance by Ward:** Some residents are concerned by the delivery model taking a Ward approach.

*"Basing them on wards is an administrative decision and may not be appropriate eg my groups work across*

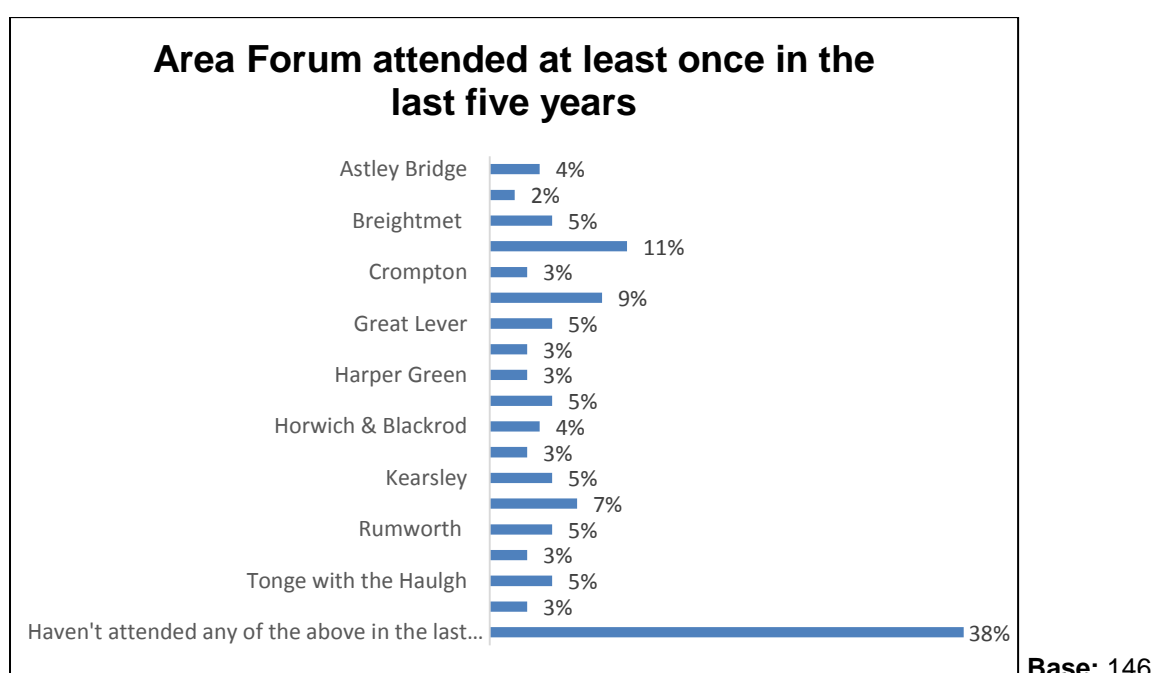
*"There are some areas where it would make sense to have one forum - eg Westhoughton, Horwich - because ward boundaries cut through the middle of the communities, so I think the forums should cover areas that make sense, not necessarily based simply on ward boundaries".*

*"How will consistency & cross border issues be dealt with? For example I regularly cycle 10 mins to play sport, in that time I go through 3 wards. Would I be expected to engage with 9 elected members whose wards my route passed through?"*

**Further comments:** Other comments received are around giving the Alliance model time to “*bed in and develop good working relationships*”, as well as a concern around the economic cost, “*Wouldn't it be more cost effective to continue with the current system and tweak for better efficiency?*”.

## 5a. Attendance at Area Forums

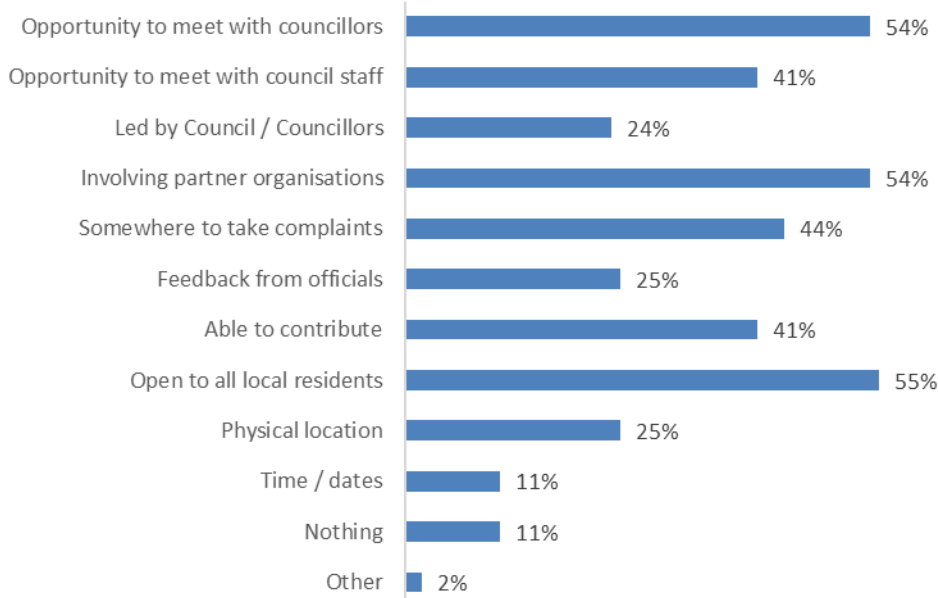
Participants completing the survey were asked which Area Forum they had attended within the last five years. Just under two-fifths (38%) had not attended an Area Forum within the period. The Wards that have seen the greatest attendance by respondents are Bromley Cross (11%), Farnworth (9%) and Little Lever & Darcy Lever (7%). Least attended is Bradshaw (2%).



## 5a. Positives of Area Forums

Residents and stakeholders were asked to reflect upon the current Area Forum model and consider what the positive aspects are. The top three attributes of an Area Forum model are that it's ‘*open to all residents*’ (55%), it ‘*involves partner organisations*’ (54%) and it's an ‘*opportunity to meet with Councillors*’ (54%). Least popular is the date and time of delivery (11%). 11% state that there is ‘*nothing*’ positive about the current model. 2% state ‘*other*’ aspects, these include reference to the positive delivery from Area Forums in the South, as well as the lack of action from Councillors representing the Bradshaw Area Forum.

### What respondents like about Area Forums

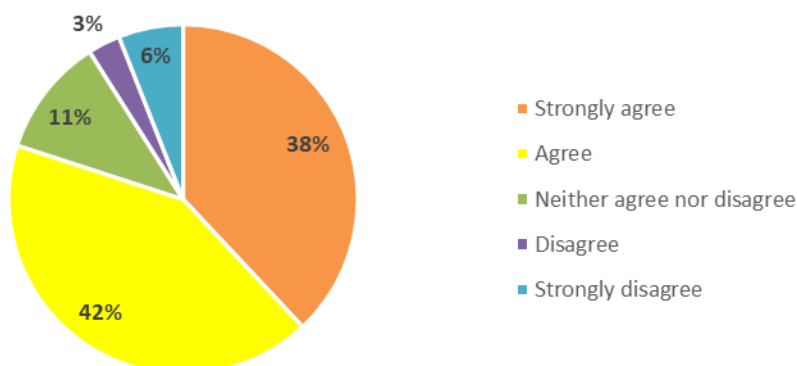


Base: 91

#### 6a. Proposal

Those taking part in the survey were asked to reflect on how strongly they agree / disagree that Community Alliances should be set up to allow local people to get involved with area working and community led action. 80% of respondents strongly agree / agree with the proposal. 9% of respondents disagree/strongly disagree with the outlined proposal.

### Support for the Community Alliance proposal

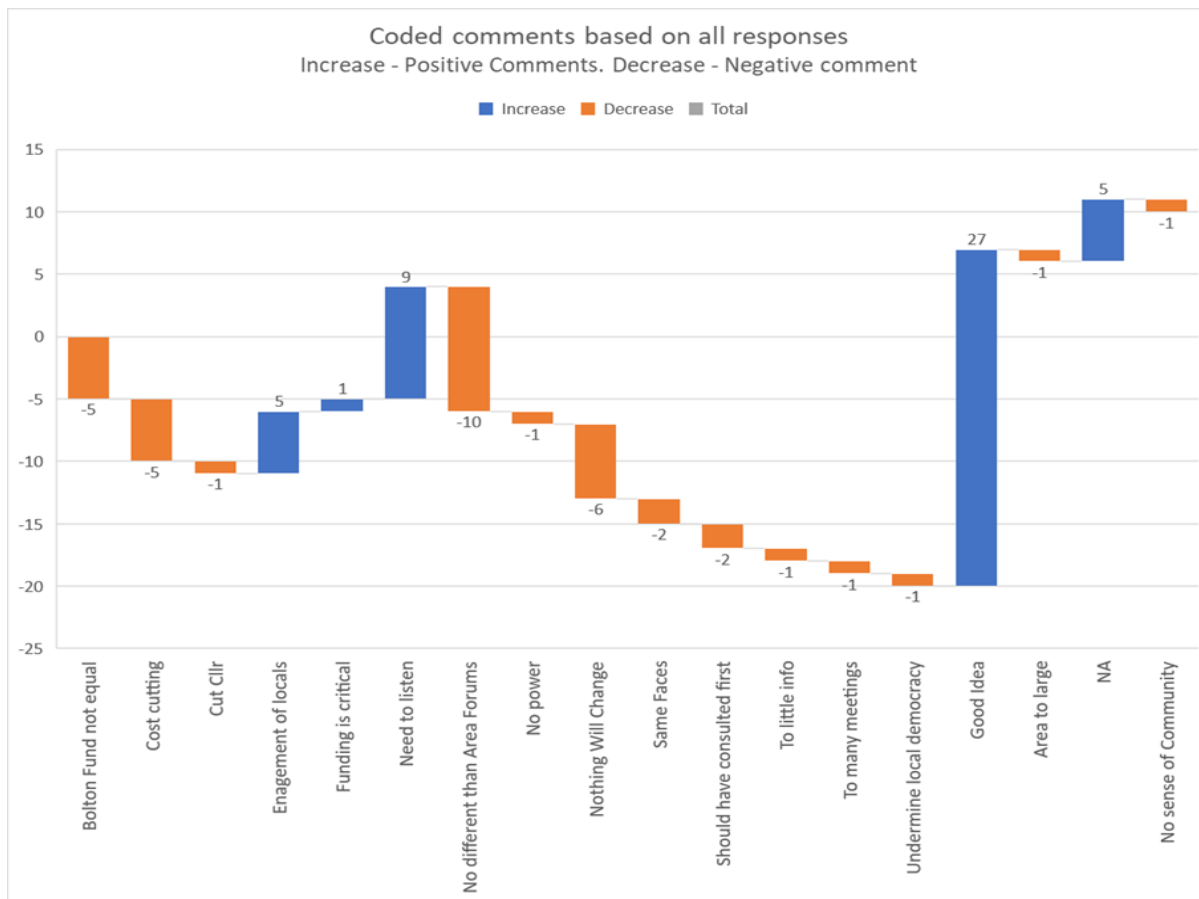


Base: 156

#### 6b. Respondent comments on the Community Alliance proposal

Respondents to the survey were encouraged to provide further comments on the proposal, as well as outline any alternative suggestions for area working. 84 comments were received (2 responses

were not relevant leaving a total of 82.) 54% of all comments received are negative, in term of the proposals, with 46% who support the new way of working. The waterfall chart below displays these coded into response types.

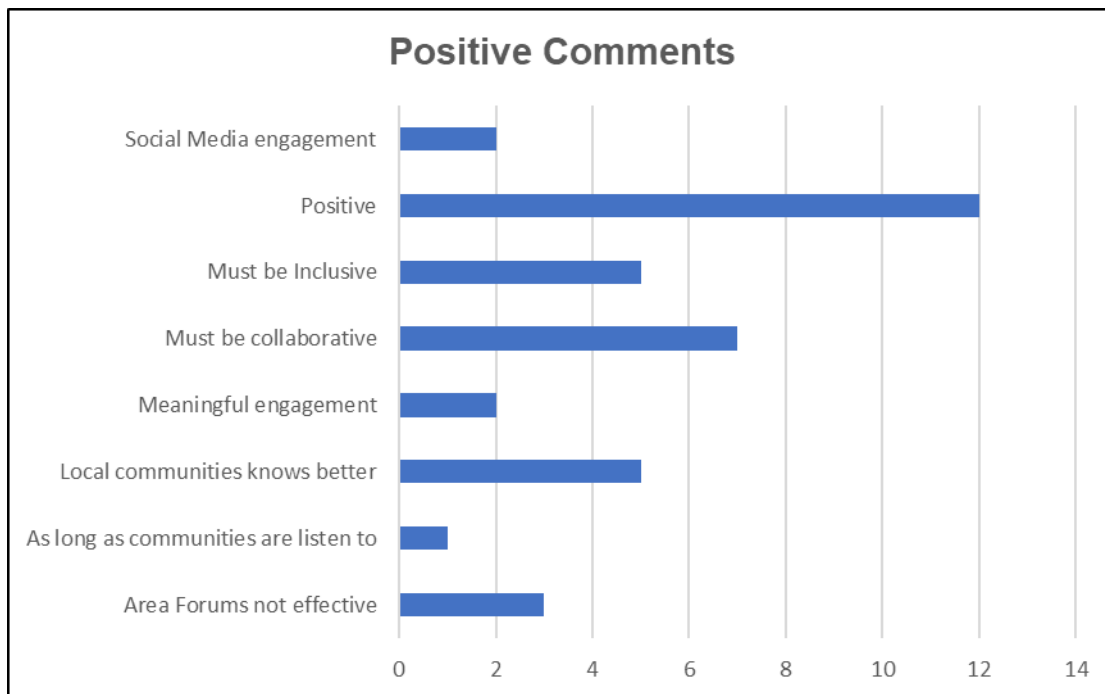


**Generally positive comments:** 46% of those who responded are generally positive about the new proposals.

*"I am in agreement with the proposal to set up community alliances, or alternative suggestions for Area Working, to make a difference and positive impact in the local community, whether it be on a small or larger scale."*

*"I think Community Alliance is a very good concept. People have multiple barriers and are fearful of voicing opinions in area forums. However, if community Alliance engaged with community on a smaller scale by going to community groups and partners, I think it will have better representation of community needs."*

The chart below displays the coded version of these responses.



**Collaborative and inclusive:** Of these comments, 73% of respondents suggest that the proposal is a good idea. 37% of respondents agree with the proposal but state that the process must be collaborative, inclusive and engage with local communities.

*"They need to be inclusive, well-advertised and accessible. They will work when they give powers to make real, local changes. They need to encourage a collective sense of belonging and togetherness rather than them against us."*

*"Must let people engage and contribute to proposals and changes that may be needed to make improvement."*

**Area Forums:** A small proportion (8%) agree that the Area Forum process is no longer effective and needs to be changed; *"something is needed as Area Forums are no longer effective being held just once a year!"*

### ***Better placed to make decisions:***

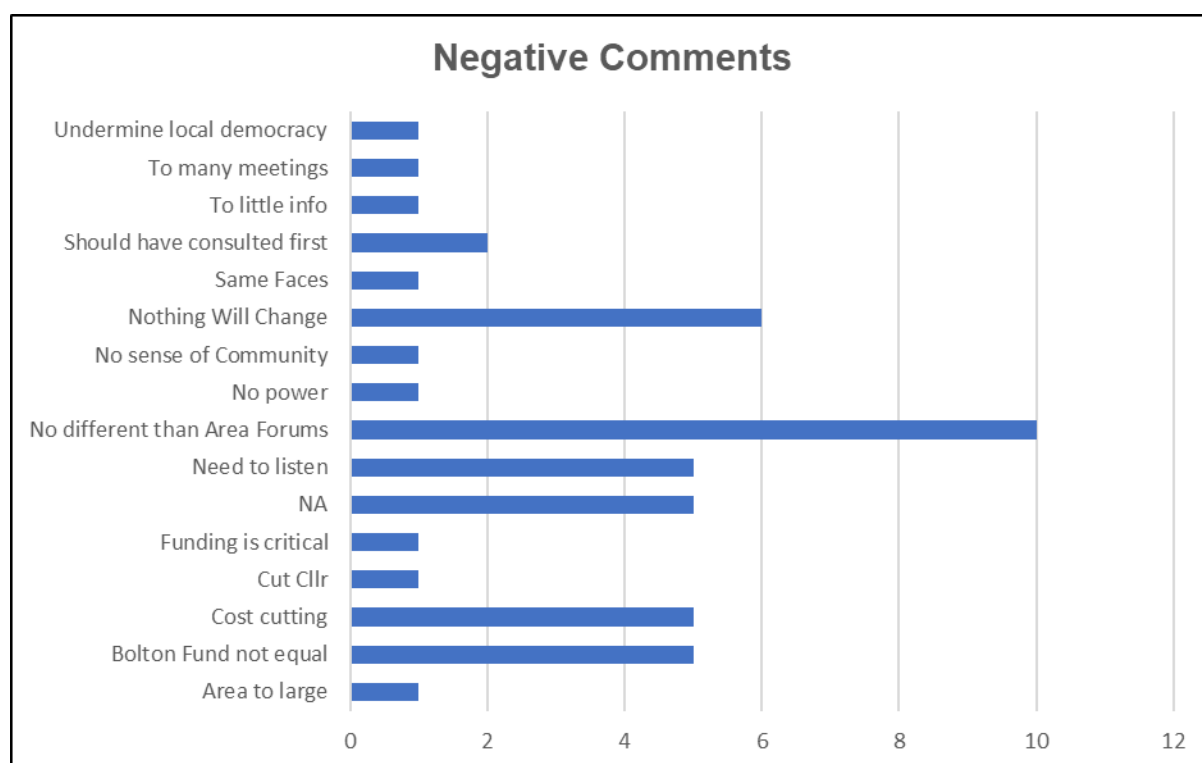
Almost 14% of respondents suggest that communities are better placed to make decisions in their local area.

*"The local community know an area better than the local councillor, who in many cases has no personal connection with the area they represent."*

*"Local people have a feel for the problems that occur in their neighbourhood, and probably have ideas about how best to tackle them."*

**Social Media:** 5% of comments received support the proposal and suggest that a better social media platform is developed to support Community Alliances; *“I think this is a good idea. The local community already have a Facebook group to discuss local issues, so this will take things a step further in a supportive structure. The social media platform can help to engage and share progress.”*

**Generally negative comments:** 54% of all comments received were negative in term of the proposal. The chart below displays the coded version of these responses.



**Area Forums:** 12% of respondents feel that the proposal is no different than the existing Area forums.

*“I can’t see how they are any different to the Area Forums. In terms of the current Area Forums, I’d maybe suggest that instead of spending money doing letter drops to every household in the area when it comes to election time, some of the money allocated to councillors for the area should be spent on doing a letter drop to every household setting out the dates, time, venues for every Area Forum meeting for the year ahead. Maybe even allowing online participation via Teams or Zoom?”*

**Cost saving Exercise:** 6% of respondents question whether this is just a cost cutting exercise; *“suspicious that in an era of cuts and squeezed budgets this is a way of passing the responsibility to people in the wards”* and *“the Council should be providing services”*.

**The Bolton Fund:** 6% of respondents highlight concerns that the Bolton Fund is not equally distributed across the borough.

*"Bolton's Fund is not equally distributed to all 20 wards, some wards with lots of community groups and charities are getting the majority of all the Bolton's Fund."*

*"Grant funding is handled by the Bolton CVS on behalf of Bolton Council, unfortunately this narrows the ways in which the community is involved in the distribution of grants from Bolton Council. Without the Bolton's Fund being handled by the Community Alliance, this new system would be pointless and present no reason for any resident to engage, it would just become another faceless PR exercise."*

**Listening to residents:** 8.5% of those who responded negatively to the proposal suggest that the Council need to listen better to local communities. If partnerships with communities is fully implemented, there will be a rise in communities wanting to engage.

*"Only if they are listened too and this isn't a PR stunt."*

*"I never bothered to attend the Area Forum after once visiting it in my ward of Tonge. I sat in the room, the Councillors told us what they had spent money on and that was that. If all funding from the council went into the Community Alliance and I was allowed to actually express my opinion, have a way to put forward suggestions that I and others would attend this Community Alliance."*

## General Comments

In terms of general comments, some respondents note that very little real information had been shared about the proposal.

*"There is far too little information here to be able to understand properly what you are consulting on. What are the governance arrangements? There is mention on a previous question of people being elected but where is this detail? What services can these alliances influence, and how will that work in relation to decisions made by councillors at council meetings? Will these meetings be part of the council's constitution? How will you ensure that a wide range of people participate and feel welcome and heard? What will the councillors' role be in these meetings, and who actually has decision making powers?"*

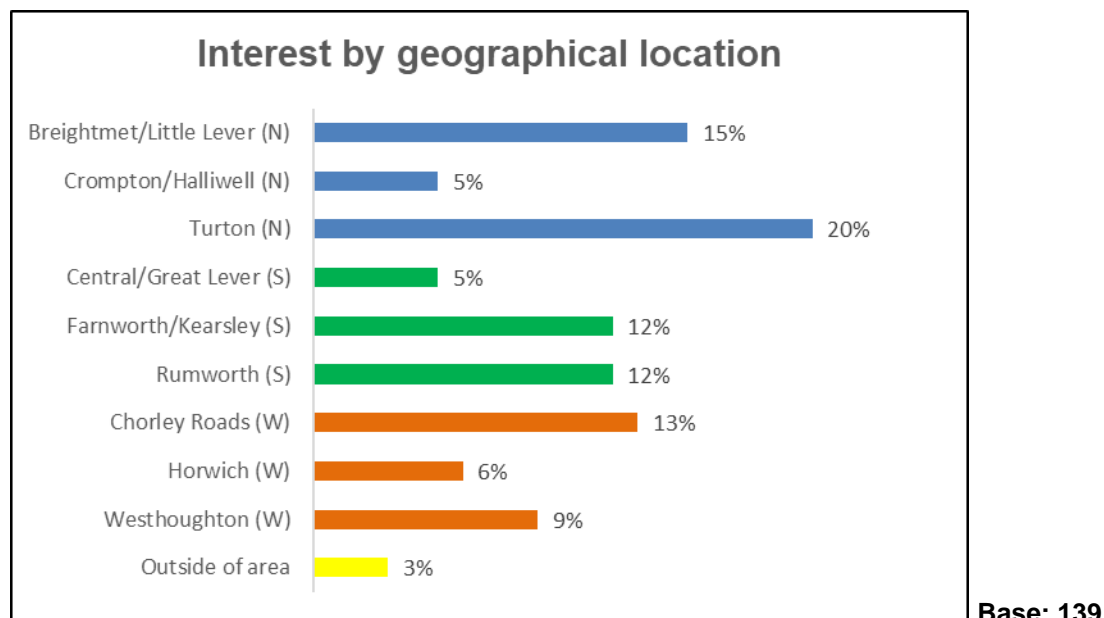
## 7. Keeping in touch

Respondents were asked whether they would like to be kept informed about the future of Area Forums. 75% of the 149 respondents answering this question state they would like to be kept up to date with any developments. 70% provided their email address.



### 8a. Demographics: Geographical location

The table below outlines the demographics of respondents by geographical district. A total of 139 respondents provided their full postcode. 40% of respondents are located in the North of the borough, 29% are located in the South, 27% are located in the West and 3% are located in other areas of Greater Manchester.

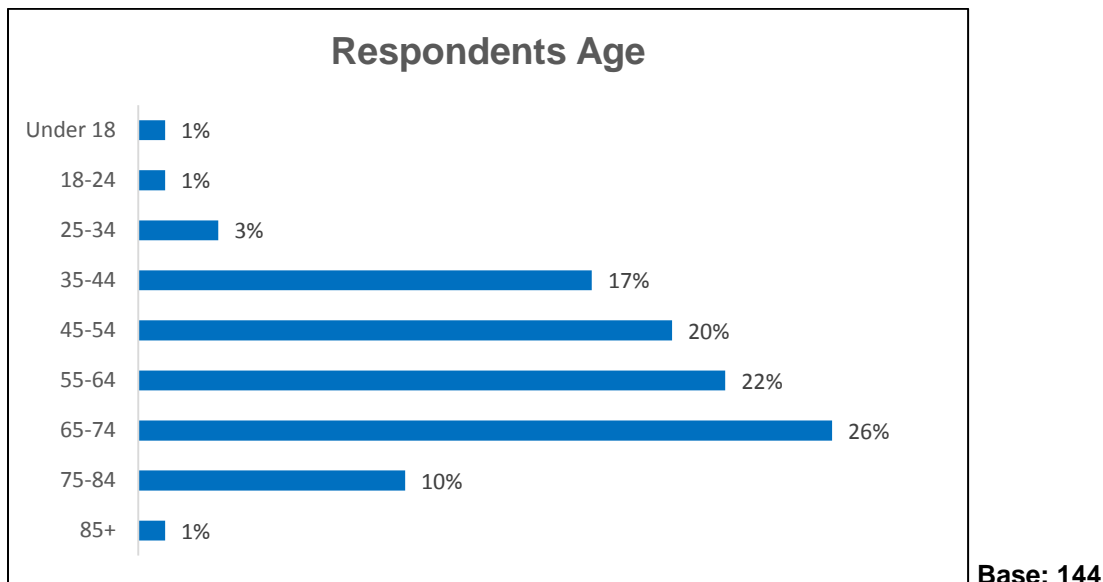


### 8b. Gender

143 responses were received providing the respondent's gender. 51% of respondents' identity as being female, 48% as male and 1% of respondents identify as 'other'.

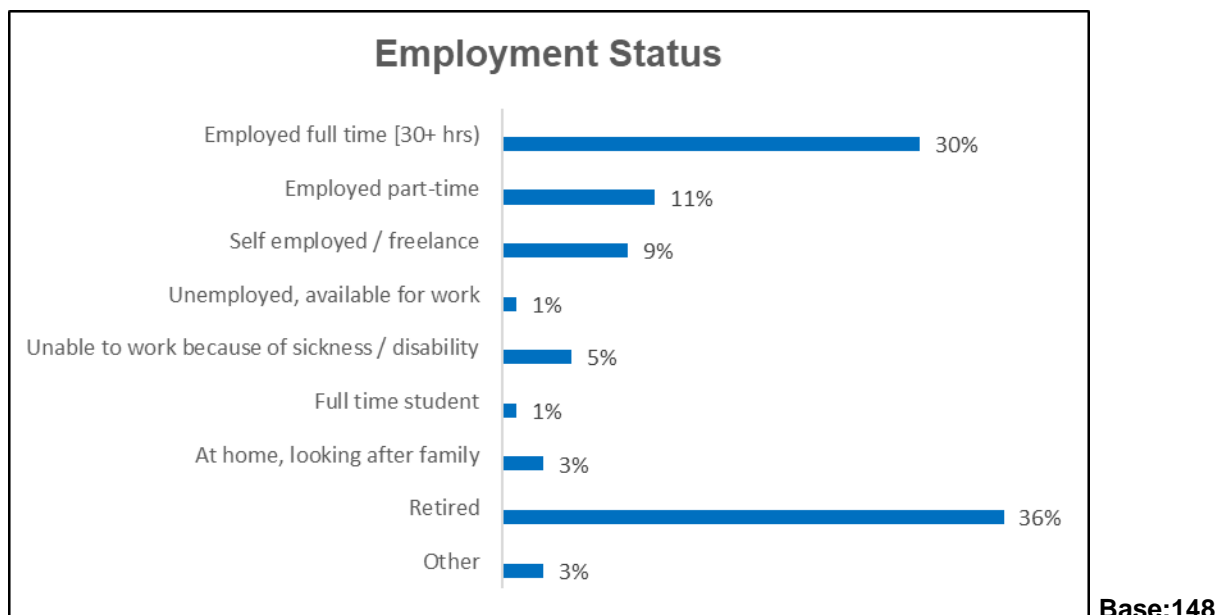
### 8c. Age

Responses were received from individuals in all age categories. 5% respondents are under the age of 34 years. 59% respondents are aged between 35 – 64 years. 37% responses were received from individuals above the age of 65 years.



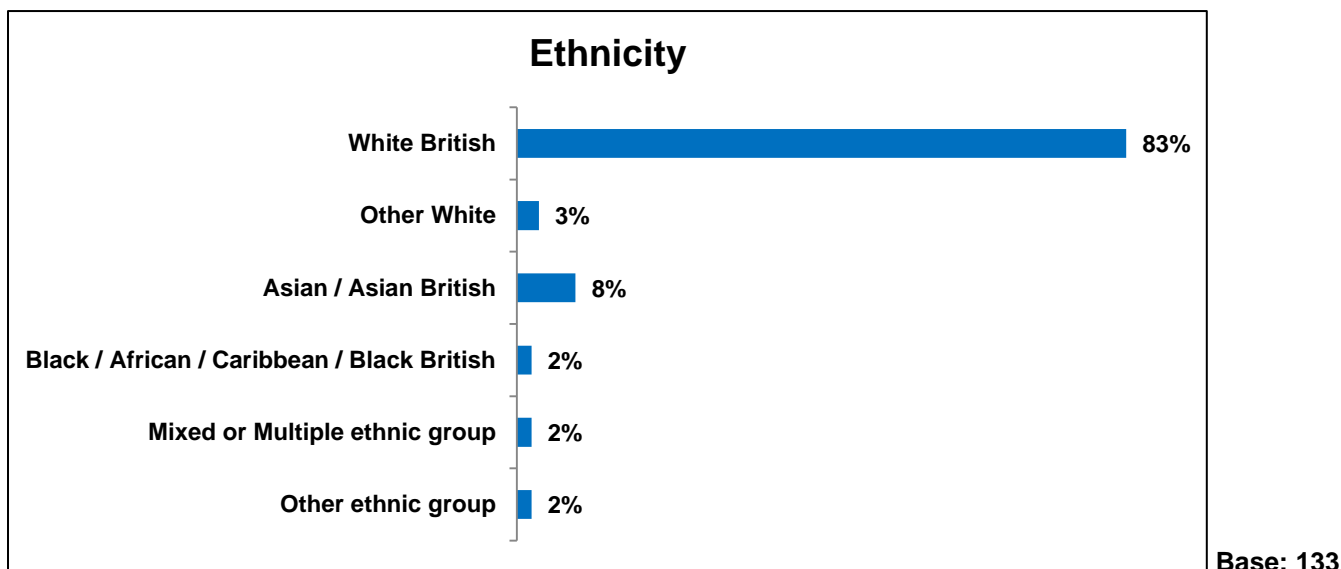
#### 8d. Employment Status

50% of responses received were from individuals in some form of employment. 1% responses were from individuals in education. 5% responses were received from individuals unable to work due to sickness or a disability. 3% of respondents stay at home to look after the family and 36% individuals responded as retirees. Those who stated 'other' (3%) are volunteers, work in a blend of employment types or didn't want to expand on further.



#### 8e. Ethnicity

83% of responses received are from residents and stakeholders who identify as being 'white British'. 17% of responses are representative of communities other than 'white-British', this includes 8% from Asian/Asian British communities.



## 9. Summary

160 residents and stakeholders took part in the consultation looking at a proposal to establish 20 Community Alliances across the borough, replacing the current Area Forum delivery model. Of those taking part in the survey, the majority (93%) are residents.

80% agree with the proposal, defined in the consultation, with 64% outlining that it would enable residents to influence local plans. However, there were concerns by 70% of respondents that there would not be enough allocation of funding/resources to make meaningful impacts within communities. Additional concerns were raised around the Alliances not having proportionate engagement, possibly increasing inequalities within the borough. Further concerns were around how cross borough programmes or challenges would be delivered. There was also interest in the governance process of the Alliance model, with respondents stating there was not enough information to make a fully informed decision on the proposal.

Where reflections were made on the current Area Forum model, respondents outlined positive aspects being that they are open to all (55%), as well as providing an opportunity to build relations with partners and Councillors (54%).

75% would like to be kept informed of any future developments on Area Forums and Community Alliances, with email being the preferred method of engagement.

## Area Working consultation

The Council wants to update the way it approaches Area Working and would like your views. These will be considered with comments from local councillors and a review led by the Local Government Association to help develop a new way of working with local residents.

Area Working is an approach that aims to strengthen partnership working at a community level, by creating an environment where local residents and communities can contribute their energy, ideas and perspectives. It allows the Council and wider 'Bolton Family' Partnership to work collaboratively and focus on solving community concerns at a very local level to help the Council deliver the best possible outcomes for all people, communities and places across the Borough.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the current way of Area Working needed updating, having been in place since the early 2000's. Area Forums - formal meetings of local residents, councillors and partners such as the police - were poorly attended, held infrequently, and bureaucratic, offering limited opportunities for the diverse local community to contribute. The way that local communities have come together to support each other during the pandemic has led to a greater aspiration to support local community action.

It's proposed that twenty Community Alliances are set up - one for each ward in the borough. They'll focus on local issues and allow local people to come up with local solutions that suit them, focussing on community action. This would create more opportunities for people of different backgrounds and experiences to get involved and contribute to local life.

In addition to local people, the Community Alliance would include representatives from the council, councillors, local business, and partners who provide local services - such as the police and voluntary organisations. While a formal meeting would take place at least annually, each Community Alliance would be expected to meet and communicate frequently to make sure action was taken and not just talked about.

## Your responses - keeping your data safe

All questions are optional, so please feel free to skip any that you prefer not to answer.

If you're responding as an individual you won't be identified in any report; your responses will be anonymised and grouped together with those from other people. Reports may be made public. If you are responding in an official capacity your response may be published, but no personal details will be made public.

Any personal data you provide will be held securely, in line with our retention schedule and privacy policy, which can be found here:

[www.bolton.gov.uk/data-protection-freedom-information/privacy-notices](http://www.bolton.gov.uk/data-protection-freedom-information/privacy-notices)

We use professional software called Snap Surveys to collect and process your data. As data processor, Snap Surveys Ltd. follow the UK General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR]. You can view their privacy policy here: [www.snapsurveys.com/survey-software/privacy-policy-uk/](http://www.snapsurveys.com/survey-software/privacy-policy-uk/)

## Proposed Community Alliance

### What do you think will be the positive points about the proposed Community Alliance?

- ☐ Based on a small area [one per ward]
- ☐ Will be representative of the local population
- ☐ Local people will be encouraged to join the Community Alliance
- ☐ Local partners will be on the group [police, voluntary agencies etc]
- ☐ Local people will be able to influence local plans
- ☐ Local people can help deliver local services
- ☐ Local people will be supported to be part of the solution
- ☐ Will be accountable to local people
- ☐ Will meet / be in contact frequently
- ☐ Will have power to improve life for local people
- ☐ Other - please state below
- ☐ I don't think there will be anything positive
- ☐ No opinion / Don't know

If 'other' please state

### Do you have any concerns about the proposed Community Alliance?

- ☐ Too many Community Alliances / area covered by each will be too small
- ☐ Not enough Community Alliances / area covered by each will be too large
- ☐ Residents on the group won't be representative of local population
- ☐ Residents will put themselves forward and not be elected
- ☐ Elected councillors should be making these decisions
- ☐ Council / partner staff should be making these decisions
- ☐ Not up to residents / businesses to deliver these services
- ☐ Won't be accountable to local people
- ☐ Won't meet / be in contact often enough
- ☐ Won't have enough power to make any changes
- ☐ Won't be given enough money / resources to make a difference
- ☐ Other - please state below
- ☐ I don't have any concerns
- ☐ No opinion / Don't know

If 'other' please state

## Area forum attendance

### Which, if any, Area Forum have you attended at least once in the last five years?

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astley Bridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Halliwell                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Rumworth   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bradshaw      | <input type="checkbox"/> Harper Green                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Smithills  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breightmet    | <input type="checkbox"/> Heaton & Lostock             | <input type="checkbox"/> Tonge with the Haulgh                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bromley Cross | <input type="checkbox"/> Horwich & Blackrod Two Towns | <input type="checkbox"/> Westhoughton with Chew Moor                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crompton      | <input type="checkbox"/> Hulton                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Haven't attended any of the above in the last five years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farnworth     | <input type="checkbox"/> Kearsley                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't remember   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Lever   | <input type="checkbox"/> Little Lever & Darcy Lever   |   |

### What did you like about Area Forums?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to meet with councillors                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Able to contribute          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to meet with council staff                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Open to all local residents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Led by Council / Councillors                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical location           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Involving partners, such as police, voluntary sector        | <input type="checkbox"/> Time / dates                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhere to take complaints about the council / police etc | <input type="checkbox"/> Other - please state below  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback from officials                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing                     |

If 'other' please state

### Overall

Thinking overall, how strongly do you agree / disagree that Community Alliances should be set up to allow local people to get involved with Area Working?

Strongly agree

☐

Agree

☐

Neither agree nor disagree

☐

Disagree

☐

Strongly disagree

☐

Please use this space for any comments on the proposal to set up Community Alliances, or to make any alternative suggestions for Area Working

### Keeping in touch

If you'd like to be kept informed about Area Working in future please give your details below. We'll contact you by email wherever possible. Your details will be held securely and only used to contact you about Area Working. You can change your mind at any time by responding to any communication we send you or ringing 01204 331051.

Please select the ways we can contact you

- ☐ Email  
☐ Post  
☐ Telephone  
☐ Don't wish to be kept informed

Email address

Name

Postal address

Telephone number



## Your interest

Which of the following describes you / your family's interest in changes to Area Working?

- ☐ Live in Bolton Borough
- ☐ Work in Bolton Borough
- ☐ Study / have children at school in Bolton Borough
- ☐ Visitor to Bolton Borough
- ☐ Official response from Parish / Bolton borough Councillor / Elected Member
- ☐ Official response from a business / organisation / community group. You must have their permission to submit an official response on their behalf
- ☐ None of the above - please explain below

Please say what your interest is

Please say in what official capacity you are responding

Please say which ward, business, organisation or community group you are responding on behalf of

## About you

Your answers in this section help us to make sure that we are getting views from different types of people.

They will not be used to contact you.

Please give your full postcode

Are you ...?

- ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other

Which most closely describes you?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Employed full time [30 hours or more a week] | <input type="radio"/> Unable to work because of sickness / disability |
| <input type="radio"/> Employed part-time [up to 30 hours a week]   | <input type="radio"/> Full time student                               |
| <input type="radio"/> Self employed / freelance                    | <input type="radio"/> At home, looking after family                   |
| <input type="radio"/> Unemployed, available for work               | <input type="radio"/> Retired   |
|  | <input type="radio"/> Other - please explain below                    |

If other please explain

---

**Which age group are you in?**

- |                                |                               |                                  |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Under 18 | <input type="radio"/> 35 - 44 | <input type="radio"/> 65 - 74    |
| <input type="radio"/> 18 - 24  | <input type="radio"/> 45 - 54 | <input type="radio"/> 75 - 84    |
| <input type="radio"/> 25 - 34  | <input type="radio"/> 55 - 64 | <input type="radio"/> 85 or over |

**What is your ethnic group?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> White British                  | <input type="radio"/> Asian or Asian British                     |
| <input type="radio"/> White other                    | <input type="radio"/> Black, Black British, Caribbean or African |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed or Multiple ethnic group | <input type="radio"/> Other ethnic group                         |

**Thanks for your views. Please click 'submit' to send your response to us**



## **APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY ALLIANCE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is a Community Alliance?**

Community Alliance is a term to describe networks of active individuals, groups, and organisations at a local community level across Bolton which we are proposing to support as part of a new model of working with and alongside communities.

Active citizens put themselves forward to help improve the communities they live in. They are motivated to work with others to define their own problems, their own solutions to those problems, and the action they wish to take to make those solutions visible. This social action is about people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the important problems in their communities. Its purpose is to achieve better outcomes, improve local environments, and transform public services – by engaging and enhancing the commitment and skills of citizens.

Supporting these active citizens is the Council, elected members, anchor institutions, local businesses, and other partners. This informal partnership has been given the name of Community Alliance and will be used to strengthen and develop social action across Bolton.

### **Why are they being proposed?**

The idea of supporting the growth of Community Alliances is to enable and release the energy of local communities – the many active citizens who put themselves forward to help improve the communities they live in through grass roots action, and the local organisations who work to improve wellbeing and quality of life.

The time is right to embrace, build on and connect lots of existing activity at community level and not least to help sustain and grow the fantastic response at community level that we have seen throughout the Covid 19 pandemic.

For the Council, this is an important part of a wider review of Area Working, modernising our engagement approach and getting closer to communities across Bolton.

### **What will Community Alliances aim to achieve?**

The aim of the Alliances will be to help connect existing individuals, groups, organisations at a local level so they can achieve more together. The Alliances will also encourage the growth of community level activity and joining up of efforts.

Ultimately the goal is to value and grow social action - people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the important problems in their communities. This will help achieve better outcomes, improve local environments - all part of our overall vision of an Active, Connected and Prosperous Bolton.

### **Is a Community Alliance a group or a meeting?**

Community Alliances will be active and dynamic networks of people and organisations – not meetings. It may be that Community Alliances arrange events, community conversations on key issues or other ways to bring local people and organisations together, but this will depend on local needs and issues and ideas. As an example, a Community Alliance might hold a celebratory event to review progress, celebrate successes, and generate ideas for improvement.

We expect that as the Alliances develop, in each area there will be a small core group of active citizens, councillors, and local partners who are prepared to spend time to coordinate and shape the development of Community Alliances in each ward. Each Community Alliance may need a small steering group for this.

## **How could Community Conversations work?**

Community Alliances can create relationships and ways to support community conversations to take place, to provide valuable community voice and insights on key issues for communities.

For example, Community Conversations over time could support:

- specific standing focus groups, e.g. development of the successful 'Youth Vision' approach at local level, specific engagement with BAME communities.
- development of local stories to inform local delivery, strategy, policy, e.g. ethnographic 'day in the life' studies.

In time this approach could chart a path to the development of deeper deliberative democracy methods, for example through citizens panels locally or for key issues.

## **How will the Alliances be developed?**

In a bottom - up way.

Firstly, we are clear that we want to build on what already exists at local level in terms of active citizens, groups and organisations. In some areas these will already be well connected, informally or formally so that is our starting point. We aim to follow the key principles of Asset Based Community Development by carrying out mapping of the assets (people, groups, organisations) at community level and then providing support and encouragement for them to connect in ways that work for them and their community.

The Council will work with and alongside local people and groups to provide enabling support for this (i.e. not doing 'to' or 'for' communities). We expect that Alliances will grow gradually, at the speed that suits local people and in ways that will not be exactly the same everywhere across Bolton.

Based on the principles of Asset Based Community Development, they will work from a strengths-based approach identifying the assets<sup>2</sup> that exist within communities and making these visible. Developing an understanding of what assets exist in a ward will help to create a strong network of connected individuals and groups that will feel able to take direct action. As these connections gather momentum, they will be supported to connect, identify what they can do collectively that they cannot do alone. In this way individual energies get connected, amplified, and multiplied through the building of new associations.

## **Is this the Council withdrawing and leaving it to residents?**

No, it is quite the opposite.

In fostering the development of Community Alliances the Council aims to get closer to Communities so it can work with and alongside them to achieve what is needed.

The public sector has a key role to play in local areas, and Community Alliances and getting closer to local people, groups and organisations can help change the way the public sector goes about fulfilling its role. For example, making the most of the commitment and expertise of local people involves re-designing services with social action in mind, and helping to shape an environment which encourages and enables residents to take action on issues they care about, removing barriers.

---

<sup>2</sup> Assets include: 1) the gifts, skills, knowledge, and passions of local residents. 2) the power of local social networks / associations. 3) the resources of public, private and non-profit organisations. 4) the physical resources and ecology of the place. 5) the economic resources of the place. 6) the stories of its residents' shared lives.