

AREA WORKING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 2007

Present – Councillors Ibrahim (Chairman), Lord (Vice-Chairman), Bashir-Ismail, Connell, Critchley and A.S. Walsh.

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 Hayes.

Councillor Ibrahim in the Chair.

5. MINUTES

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

6. REVIEW OF AREA WORKING IN BOLTON: UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report which updated members on the progress made on the current review of area working.

Members were reminded that, as part of the review, a workshop session, which involved this Policy Development Group and Area Forum Chairs and Vice-Chairs, was held on 16th August, 2007 to discuss the main elements for review and identify key issues for development. The comments made centred on the following themes, viz:-

- a) what was working well;
- b) what could be improved;
- c) democratic renewal and a stronger voice;
- d) leadership of place and identification of key issues; and
- e) efficiency and personalisation, meeting customer demands.

The report detailed the specific comments raised in relation to the above themes, together with the issues to be explored in light of the comments made.

Members were advised that from the issues raised so far, the options for development should focus on:-

- finding a format which ensured that community engagement involved elected members in their community leadership role and lead to positive outcomes for local people;
- seek more efficient ways of holding meetings and co-ordinating the various neighbourhood meeting arrangements;
- ensuring that key local issues were identified and that actions aimed at resolving them were agreed and their implementation monitored;
- establishing better links to local organisations, business and voluntary groups; and
- the use of budgets, including devolved and pooled, at a local level needed to be addressed.

A discussion ensued with regard to the options for development and the following points were made, viz:-

- a) an analysis be undertaken over the past two – three years of where monies from the Forum budgets had been spent within each Area Forum;
- b) key local issues which were identified for action should be reviewed and the outcomes evaluated;
- c) there was a need to engage Councillors more effectively and increase influence;
- d) senior managers from the Council's key partners should have greater involvement with Member only Meetings;
- e) there was a need to look at the current budgets in terms of the amounts available and what services/issues they were able to fund;
- f) there was a need to adopt a strategic approach to increase the publicity of area forums and any other meetings which took place within the area;
- g) steps should be taken to ensure that residents were kept informed of the issues and outcomes within their particular area;

- h) the need for a more integrated approach with respect to Bolton at Home, resident associations, neighbourhood panels and other Council funded organisations; and
- i) concern was expressed regarding the frequency of meetings and the possibility of holding more regular meetings in more localised areas.

In conclusion, it was stated that the comments received would prove to be a useful guide in the review process and further consultations were still taking place with elected members in their Member Only Meetings, the public and with key stakeholders and with remaining Chairs/Vice-Chairs who had not been able to attend the workshop session in August. These consultations would be augmented by analysis on how other authorities approached Area Working to help generate options for development.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

7. INITIAL FEEDBACK ON OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Mr. J. Shannon, Area Working Manager, circulated a paper which provided indicative information from other local authorities regarding their approaches to Area Working.

Members felt that the information provided was very useful, however, further work should centre around specific authorities for particular detailed issues and two or three authorities within the North West and the following were put forward as suggestions, viz:-

- Trafford MBC;
- Sefton MBC;
- Knowsley MBC; and
- Tameside MBC.

It was agreed that further information in relation to Area Working be sought from the authorities detailed above.

8. NEXT STEPS

Ms. C. James, Head of Strategic Projects, advised that the following actions would be undertaken prior to the next meeting of this Policy Development Group.

- a) more information on feedback received;

- b) the majority of Member Only Meetings would have taken place;
- c) report back on feedback from the public;
- d) an extra meeting would be held for those Chairs and Vice-Chairs who could not attend the joint session;
- e) geographical information (mapping exercise) would be available; and
- f) Further detail on information from other local authorities.

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Policy Development Group would be held at 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 16th October, 2007.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 10.00 a.m. and finished at 11.30 a.m.)