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## CHARNWOOD AREA FORUM OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS

### Background

Leicestershire Together agreed to the establishment of forums across the county area to develop community engagement with local authorities, the Police and Primary Care Trust. Having adopted a broad framework for such Forums, Leicestershire Together asked District Local Strategic Partnerships to oversee the delivery of Forums to suit local circumstances in each district council area.

During the summer of 2007 Charnwood Together, the Local Strategic Partnership for Charnwood, consulted with parish and town council's, parish meetings and key partners on proposals to implement "Area Forums" within the Borough. Having considered the outcome of that consultation Charnwood Together adopted "Charnwood Neighbourhood Engagement Policy" as the high level approach to creating Area Forums in the Borough (Appendix A shows the Area Forums for Charnwood and the breakdown of elected members on each Forum as established by this strategy).

This document develops on that strategy by setting out the practical operational arrangements that have been adopted to support effective establishment and running of the Forums.

The Vision for Area Forums in Charnwood is:

**Area Forums** will contribute to revitalised local democracy and effective community engagement across the Borough.

They will provide Forums for local people and their representatives to raise issues of local concern with, and be consulted on local service provision by, relevant local authorities, service providers, partnerships or agencies. They will be public meetings that bring together Borough, County and Parish Councillors as well as relevant officers and representatives from the Police and other agencies such as the Health Service as required.

### Area Forums Co-ordination

The overall operation of the seven Area Forums in the Borough comes under Charnwood Together. To assist with co-ordination and effective community engagement a common framework is developing that balances consistency of approach with a need for Forums to have flexibility in engaging with their communities. Oversight of that framework is provided by the Area Forum Co-ordination Group, which is convened by Charnwood Together.

The effectiveness of Area Forums is to be reviewed during summer 2009, following the outcomes of a countywide review of Community / Area Forums to be completed by March 2009.

## **The Area Forum Co-ordination Group**

### **Area Forum Co-ordination Group Terms of Reference:**

- I.1 The Area Forum Co-ordination Group is chaired by the Chair of the Charnwood Together Board and its other membership consists of the seven Charnwood Area Forum Chairs ( Vice Chairs may attend in place of their respective Area Forum Chair. If neither the Chair nor the Vice Chair can attend a representative may be selected from the core membership).

In the event of being unable to attend meetings of the Area Forum Co-ordination Group, the Chair of Charnwood Together may invite the Vice Chair or other member of Charnwood Together to Chair the meeting.

Meetings of the Group will be supported by the attendance of officers from Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council and appropriate representatives of the Police and Leicestershire County and Rutland Primary Care Trust.

- I.2 The remit of the Area Forum Co-ordination Group is:

- To lead on forward planning for Area Forums, including developing the draft agendas' for Forum meetings;
- To co-ordinate the content of agendas for each round of Area Forums to ensure effective partner contributions
- To co-ordinate the follow-up on actions agreed at Forum meetings and ensure the progression of agreed Action Plans;
- To promote the Area Forums within their respective areas and create links with relevant organisations and partnerships operating within the area;
- To aim to continually ensure high standard Forum meetings;
- To continually monitor the development of Area Forums, review their progress and report to Charnwood Together as appropriate.

- I.3 The role of the Area Forum Co-ordination Group with regard to the practical management arrangements of Area Forums is:

- (i) To agree three standard cycles of Area Forum meetings to be held during late January/February, late May/June, and late September/October, with the middle cycle being optional for Forums that consider two meetings a year sufficient. Rolling two year schedules of meetings should be agreed in the January/February cycle each year. These should include preferred venues. Individual Area Forums may request additional meetings although officer support and service provider co-ordination may not be possible.

- (ii) To monitor the approach of Area Forums to co-opting additional members.
- (iii) To monitor publicity about and promotion of Area Forums to the public and stakeholders.

## **Area Forums**

### **Area Forums Terms of Reference:**

- 1) To consider the issues facing communities within their area
  - a) To be informed by reports from local elected members (County/District/Parish Councillors)
  - b) To be informed by intelligence regarding public views (e.g. from parish plans) and stats
- 2) To influence the pattern of community engagement within their area
- 3) To propose improvements to and comment on the quality of service provision by public and voluntary agencies
- 4) To receive and comment on proposals regarding policy development or service configuration from public and voluntary agencies
- 5) To influence the community leadership role of the local authorities including the identification of issues to raise with private sector and other bodies (for example - concerns about water supply with Severn Trent, bus services with Arriva Fox or telephone supply with BT)
- 6) To receive reports on the responses of public and voluntary agencies to the issues raised and views given by them
- 7) To be able to represent issues directly to County Council (and to the District Council if it wishes) Cabinet/Scrutiny forums as appropriate
- 8) To have representation on relevant forums of Leicestershire Together (and the District LSP if it wishes)

### **Area Forums Membership**

Area Forum meetings are open to the public and they should operate in ways that encourage participation and maximise the opportunity for meaningful engagement throughout their business.

The core membership of the Area Forums is defined as the relevant county, and borough councillors plus one named representative from each parish or town council or meeting in the area.

The core membership may be supplemented by co-opted individuals (see below) but it is not envisaged that the number of co-optees at any one time will exceed 5.

### **Roles of the core membership**

The core membership shall;

- 1) elect the Area Forum Chair and Vice Chair and co-opt additional core members (see below)
- 2) be able to vote on such other matters before the Forum where the Chair considers a ballot is needed ( see below)
- 3) shall liaise with the Chair and/or Community Engagement Officer in between meetings to suggest agenda items and take forward agreed actions as appropriate
- 4) liaise with the Chair to comment on and suggest improvements to the operation of the Area Forum
- 5) support the promotion of Area Forum meetings to local residents and community groups

### **Area Forums Attendance**

Area Forums are open to the public and public participation is possible throughout the meeting.

Public question times are a standard part of the business of all Area Forum meetings.

All residents are welcome to attend and no notification is required for raising something at the Forum meeting, but residents are encouraged to give notice of the issue they wish to raise to improve the chances of providing them with a satisfactory answer at the meeting.

### **Co-optees**

Area Forums are strongly encouraged to co-opt additional core members for a period two years from the September/October cycle of meetings as they think fit. In deciding whether to co-opt additional members the Area Forums should have regard to the range of representation within their current membership. Potential sources of co-optees include:

- Voluntary sector
- Community groups
  - Residents associations
  - Neighbourhood Watch
  - Play groups

Community of interest

- Ethnicity
- Disability
- CYP – youth reps from school/district youth councils
- Older ( reps from the OP Consultative networks)
- Faith Groups

- School Governors (representatives of school families)
- Businesses
- Private services (shops/pubs/post offices)

Co-optees will be appointed for two year terms or for the remainder of any two year term already part way through.

In the first year, the two year term of any co-opted members will run from the September/October cycle in 2008.

### **Chairing Area Forums**

In setting up the Area Forums, Charnwood Together agreed that the interim chairs would be appointed at the first round of Area Forums should continue until the September/October 2008 cycle of meetings. At those meetings Chairs and Vice Chairs will be appointed for the next two years and so on.

Chairs and Vice Chairs will be appointed by the core membership from the core membership. There is no requirement for the Chair or Vice Chair to be an elected member.

The following is a suggested protocol for Chairs to adopt when a Forum considers a consultation item:

- A) Take presentations on consultations (within an agreed time limit)
- B) Take all local speakers and questions (with particular emphasis on these being local views)
- C) Give any organisation 3 minutes at the end of the discussion, if notified to the Chair in advance.
- D) Give a right of reply from the Consultation organisation.
- E) Take any propositions without further debate.

It should be noted that this protocol is merely guidance and that the Chair has the discretion to organise the business of the Forum as they see fit.

As a courtesy, organisations should be requested to provide the organisers with copies of any literature that they intend to circulate in advance of the meeting.

### **Making decisions**

Area Forums are advisory bodies and as such do not have the power to make decisions regarding public funding, policies or service provision. They can make recommendations to the responsible organisations to which these bodies will formulate a formal response. At Forum meetings recommendations will be developed and agreed on a consensual basis, i.e. by show of hands.

Where it is not possible to reach a consensus, proposals or resolutions that were not supported by the Forum will be recorded alongside the majority decision. It will normally be the case that all views expressed at meetings of the Forum will be

reported to the relevant body, for the sake of completeness, be they supported by a majority or minority of the members and/or those present at the meeting.

Occasionally, i.e. when the public attendance is dominated by the presence of a single issue group, the Chair may consider it necessary to put a recommendation to a formal vote by the core membership. This will normally also be done by a show of hands. In the event of an equality of votes the Chair may exercise a casting vote.

### **Area Forum meetings**

Following consultation with the Forum chairs, a rolling two year schedule of meetings and locations will be agreed by Area Forum Co-ordination Group prior to the January/February cycle each year.

There will be three standard cycles of Area Forum meetings: late January and February, late May and June, and Late September and October, with the middle cycle being optional for forums which only feel that they needed two meetings a year.

Area Forums may ask for additional meetings but officer support and service provider co-ordination may not be possible for these.

### **Meeting Format**

Outline agendas for each round of Area Forum meetings will be agreed through the Area Forum Co-ordinating Group. A basic agenda template is attached as Appendix B.

The agendas of the four Area Forums containing Priority Neighbourhoods will specifically provide for discussion of issues concerning those neighbourhoods as well as the other standard items that will be included on all Area Forum agendas.

Agendas will contain some key issues that will be discussed in detail during the meeting. These will be a mix of the topics that residents or other local representatives have indicated they want to discuss, as well as those which service providers want to bring to peoples attention and on which they want people's views. Through presentations and discussions on these issues, the forum will develop recommendations for further action.

The responsible council or agency will then follow up the recommendations and respond within three weeks of the meeting, setting out what they intend to do. Sometimes it may not be possible to follow up recommendations - in these cases clear explanations will be given.

Progress of recommendations can be checked on the website at [www.leicestershireforums.org/charnwood/](http://www.leicestershireforums.org/charnwood/) or alternatively, the Community Engagement Manager for the area, Richard Downing, can be contacted at [rpdowning@leics.gov.uk](mailto:rpdowning@leics.gov.uk) .

### **Area Forum Support**

Each Area Forum will be administered and supported by Officers from Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council. Meeting requests, agendas and minutes will be distributed by the relevant supporting officer.

Currently the County Council, Charnwood Borough Council, Police and PCT are committed to supporting the forums. Officers from these organisations will attend where relevant to inform discussion and listen to views. If an issue requires the involvement of a different organisation, they will be contacted advance so that they can come along and help answer any queries.

For items requested by service providers, there is an expectation that the responsible organisation will be responsible for introducing the item at the meeting and briefing the forum Chair in liaison with the Community Engagement Manager.

### **Police Commitment**

A minimum attendance of twice yearly in line with the National Intelligence Model (NIM) cycle. The NIM is a model that is intended to provide intelligence that can be used to provide strategic direction, make tactical resourcing decisions about operational policing and manage risk.

At those meetings, the Police will, among others, provide a recap of activity undertaken / problems solved, provide an update on crime statistics for the area and outline the challenges and priorities over the next six months. The Police see this as an opportunity for face to face consultation.

In addition to the above, the police will attend meetings where their presence is required by the issues on the agenda.

The officers in attendance will normally be a Sergeant and a Police beat officer for the area, with the LPU Commander (Inspector) attending occasionally (approximately once a year)

### **PCT Commitment**

The Leicestershire County and Rutland Primary Care Trust will attend meetings that fall within key local consultations and will also attend meetings where there is a specific item on the agenda that requires their presence.

The PCT will respond to any queries raised at forum meetings related to the services they provide within 20 days of receipt by the PCT.

### **Co-ordinating actions from the meeting**

A response to any queries raised at a Forum meeting will be provided within 20 days of the meeting. The responses will be fed back to the individual / organisation that raised the query (where known) and will also be published on the Forums website.

Recommendations for actions by a Forum will be forwarded to the relevant officer / authority for an initial response within 20 days. The Community Engagement Manager for the Charnwood area and the Charnwood Lead Director for Area Forums will ensure that the recommendations made by Forums are brought to the attention of the relevant partner. Each partner will be responsible for providing their response to recommendations related to their duties and responsibilities. Recommendations will be published on the forum website and regular updates on progress will be provided via the forum website.

## Appendix A

The arrangements for the clustering of neighbourhoods/communities to form Area Forums in Charnwood are as follows:

	Seven Area Forums in Charnwood	Parishes/Town Councils	Population Estimate
1	Shepshed, Dishley and Hathern	Shepshed Hathern	17,453
2	Loughborough North West	Ashby Ward Garendon Ward Storer Ward	17,967
3	Loughborough South West	Nanpantan Ward Outwoods Ward Southfields Ward	16,900
4	Loughborough East	Hastings Ward Lemyngton Ward Shelthorpe Ward	18,230
5	Quorn, Barrow, Sileby and the Wolds.	Barrow Upon Soar Burton on the Wolds Cotes Hoton Prestwold Quorn Seagrave Sileby Walton on the Wolds Wymeswold	21,460
6	Bradgate, Rothley, Mountsorrel, and Birstall	Anstey Birstall Mountsorrel Newtown Linford Rothley Swithland Thurcaston & Cropston Ulverscroft	32,890

				Wanlip Woodhouse		
	Proposed Area Forum	County Councillors	Borough Councillors	Parish and Town Chairs	Total*	Population Estimate
1	Shepshed, Dishley & Hathern	2	6	2	7	17,453
7	Thurmaston, Syston and Wreake Valley			Barkby & Barkby Thorpe Beeby Cossington East Goscote Queniborough Ratcliffe on the Wreake Rearsby South Croxton Syston Thrussington Thurmaston		30,640

#### Breakdown of Elected Representatives per Forum Area

2	Loughborough North West	2	6		7*	17,967
3	Loughborough South West	2	6		8*	16,900
4	Loughborough East	2	6		7*	18,230
5	Quorn, Barrow, Sileby, & The Wolds	2	7	8	15*	21,460
6	Bradgate, Rothley, Mountsorrel, Birstall & Wanlip	3	13 (includes 2 councillors from the Quorn & Mountsorrel Castle Ward to reflect this ward being split across Forums 3 and 4)	10	27*	32,890
7	Syston, Thurmaston and Wreake Valley Villages	3	10	11	21*	30,640

NB: \* - the total does not add across the columns because some individuals are both Borough and County Councillors

## APPENDIX B

### AREA FORUM AGENDA STRUCTURE

15 Mins	<b>Reports &amp; Feedback</b> What has been done as a result of the last meeting?
30 Mins	<b>Question Time</b> For public & forum members to raise current issues of concern / queries
45 Mins	<b>Items requested by Forum members</b> To include Priority Neighbourhoods (where applicable) Presentations, discussion etc. in response to requests for information, ie on particular services and policies
30 Mins	<b>Items requested by Service Providers</b> Consultative items and updates on: - (significant) changes to service provision in the area - Important new policies that will impact on the local area - Service plans for the local area