

Consultation Paper

PROPOSALS FOR SETTING UP AREA FORUMS IN CHARNWOOD

INTRODUCTION

Charnwood Together is inviting comments on proposals to establish “**Area Forums**” (or “Community Forums”) covering the whole of the Borough of Charnwood. These proposals have been developed in response to decisions of Leicestershire Together, the county level Local Strategic Partnership, to promote the creation of such Forums across the whole County of Leicestershire.

Area Forums will contribute to revitalised local democracy and effective community engagement across the Borough by facilitating public engagement with elected representatives. They will provide Forums for local issues to be raised with the appropriate local authority or other agency. It will bring Borough, County and Parish Council elected representatives together with partners to focus on local issues.

Leicestershire Together has invited district Local Strategic Partnerships across Leicestershire to develop and implement Forums in ways that best meet local circumstances. To assist this process Leicestershire Together agreed a framework for the creation of these Forums – a Neighbourhood Engagement Policy Statement.

That Policy Statement has been considered and adapted by Charnwood Together to form the proposals set out in this consultation document. The proposed Neighbourhood Engagement Policy Statement for Charnwood sets out the rationale which underpins the development of Area Forums. Highlighted below are the key issues relating to the operation of the Area Forums in Charnwood.

Charnwood Together very much welcomes comments to help shape the proposals set out below to establish Area Forums across the Borough.

AREA FORUMS – KEY ISSUES FOR CHARNWOOD

The Leicestershire Together approach recognised the need for the principles in the Neighbourhood Engagement Policy Statement to be adapted to meet local circumstances and the following are the main areas where adaptation is proposed for Charnwood:

The Areas

There has been considerable debate about the geography of the proposed Areas. This has centred on the purpose of the Area Forums, how the Forums should relate to existing parish, Ward and County Division boundaries, what makes sense in terms of reasonable communality of interests of the populations and their sense of place, ensuring that the Forums that are established can be supported properly by the key agencies etc.

This consultation presents 4 geographical models for consideration and comment.

Please see Appendix A, starting at page 13 for a maps showing each of the models.

Model One - Five Area Forums:

	Five Area Forums in Charnwood	Parishes/Town Councils	Population Estimate
1	Shepshed	Shepshed	12,990
2	Loughborough	Hathern	59,550
3	Quorn, Barrow, Sileby and the Wolds.	Barrow Upon Soar Burton on the Wolds Cotes Hoton Prestwold Quorndon Seagrave Sileby Walton on the Wolds Wymeswold	21,460
4	Bradgate, Rothley and Mountsorrel	Anstey Mountsorrel Newtown Linford Rothley Swithland Thurcaston & Cropston Ulverscroft Woodhouse	22,930
5	Birstall, Thurmaston, Syston and Wreake Valley Villages	Barkby & Barkby Thorpe Beeby Birstall Cossington East Goscote Queniborough Ratcliffe on the Wreake Rearsby South Croxton Syston Thrussington Thurmaston Wanlip	40,600

Model Two – Six Area Forums

	Six Area Forums in Charnwood	Parishes/Town Councils or Wards	Population Estimate
1	Shepshed	Shepshed	12,990
2	Loughborough East	Hastings Ward Lemyngton Ward Shelthorpe Ward Southfields Ward	35,430
3	Loughborough West	Ashby Ward Dishley & Hathern Ward Garendon Ward Nanpantan Ward Outwoods Ward Storer Ward	24,130
4	Quorn, Barrow, Sileby and the Wolds.	Barrow Upon Soar Burton on the Wolds Cotes Hoton Prestwold Quorndon Seagrave Sileby Walton on the Wolds Wymeswold	21,460
5	Bradgate, Rothley and Mountsorrel	Anstey Mountsorrel Newtown Linford Rothley Swithland Thurcaston & Cropston Ulverscroft Woodhouse	22,930
6	Birstall, Thurmaston, Syston and Wreake Valley Villages	Barkby & Barkby Thorpe Beeby Birstall Cossington East Goscote Queniborough Ratcliffe on the Wreake Rearsby South Croxton Syston Thrussington Thurmaston Wanlip	40,600

Model 3a – Seven Area Forums

	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 and Mountsorrel	Anstey Mountsorrel Newtown Linford Rothley Swithland Thurcaston & Cropston Ulverscroft Woodhouse	22,930
7	Birstall, Thurmaston, Syston and Wreake Valley	Birstall Wanlip Barkby & Barkby Thorpe Beeby Cossington East Goscote Queniborough Ratcliffe on the Wreake Rearsby South Croxton Syston Thrussington Thurmaston	40,600

Model 3b – Seven Area Forums

	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 Wanlip Woodhouse	32,890
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

Clearly the larger the area and population covered then potentially the larger the size of the membership of the Forum. This may affect the ability of the Forums to focus on and give voice to really local issues. Hence the Seven Forum Models may offer a better solution in terms of enabling local participation on common issues as the areas are smaller. On the other hand a larger number of Forums covering smaller areas and populations though more local may be more difficult to support effectively by bodies such as the County Council, the Police and the Primary Care Trust who have to support Area/Community Forums across the whole County. Hence the Five Forum model may generate better support from key agencies but with a less localised focus. The Six Forum Model offers an intermediate solution.

There are many ways of creating such Forums and while we would particularly like to hear your views on these three models we would also welcome suggestions for alternative ways of sub-dividing the Borough to create Forum Areas.

Proposed Terms of Reference and Membership

The proposed terms of reference and membership for the Forums in Charnwood are as follows;

Terms of Reference:

- 1. To consider the issues facing communities within their area*
- 2. To be informed by reports from local elected members (County/District/Parish Councillors)*
- 3. To be informed by intelligence regarding public views (e.g. from parish plans) and stats*
- 4. To make recommendations on the use funds allocated to their Area by the Borough Council in pursuit of its power of well being.*
- 5. To influence the pattern of community engagement within their area*
- 6. To propose improvements to and comment on the quality of service provision by public and voluntary agencies affecting their Area*
- 7. To receive and comment on proposals regarding policy development or service configuration from public and voluntary agencies affecting their Area*
- 8. 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)*
- 9. To receive reports on the responses of public and voluntary agencies to the issues raised and views given by them.*
- 10. To represent issues directly to County and Borough Council Cabinet/Scrutiny forums as appropriate.*
- 11. To have representation on relevant forums of Leicestershire Together and Charnwood Together.*

Membership:

Area Forums shall have a core membership of;

- All Borough Councillors for the Area¹
- All County Councillors for the Area
- All chair persons of Parish and Town Councils for the Area
- A voluntary sector representative
- A business sector representative

This core membership shall;

- Appoint a Chair person for the Area Forum, annually
- Formulate recommendations to the Borough Council on the use of funds allocated by it for use in the area following consultation with relevant interested parties and stakeholders.
- Extend the Area Forum membership to establish a body reasonably representative of the key community interests in the Area, for instance:
 - Community groups
 - residents associations
 - neighbourhood watch
 - play groups
 - Communities of interest
 - Ethnicity
 - Disability
 - CYP - (youth reps from school/district youth councils)
 - Older (reps from the OP Consultative networks)
 - Faith reps
 - School Governors (representatives of school families)

¹ Please see appendix A showing the number of Councillors per area.

(It is expected the Forum membership will not normally exceed 25)

- *Carry out an annual review of the work of the Area Forum and report that to Charnwood Together*

- *Decide the style, frequency and format of meetings provided that*
 - *each Forum shall not meet more than x times in each calendar year*
 - *each Forum meeting will be open to the public and publicised as such*
 - *each Forum meeting will provide a time to hear questions from the public*

While the above describes the proposed membership it is intended that Forums may extend that membership if they wish to.

Forum Operation Proposals

Forum sessions will be open to the public and Forums will be encouraged to have time in their sessions for a public question time. Aside from this, Forums will run their own business with Democratic Services Officers of both the Borough and County Councils supporting them. It is proposed to make use of the new Charnwood Together web site, www.charnwoodtogether.com to support Area Forum administration and co-ordination.

With regard to other links to Charnwood Together, all members of Area Forums will automatically become members of the Charnwood Together Forum and it is proposed that each Area Forum has one representative on the Charnwood Together Board. There will be similar links to Leicestershire Together and the County Councils Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee will receive periodic reports on the operation of each Area Forum. Similarly Area Forum issues will feed into other key partnerships (for instance, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Highways Forums etc).

Funding

The Borough Council's budget includes an allocation of funding over the next three years (£400,000) to support administration of the Forums. It is envisaged that the bulk of those funds will be allocated to individual Areas to support area based improvement schemes and projects, with the allocations being pro-rata to area populations. As envisaged, the Forums will not be legal entities and so the Borough Council will be the accountable body for these funds. As such the funds will be subject to the Borough Council's policies and procedures and accounting regime.

The Area Forums will have a key role in developing and assessing proposals for use of the funds in each Area and making recommendations accordingly. To achieve that each Forum will have a core membership of County, Borough and Parish elected representatives that will, following consultation with the wider membership of each Forum and relevant officers, make recommendations on the use of the funds allocated. It is proposed that formal authority to authorise (and monitor) funding will be delegated to a named Borough Council officer and exercise of that authority would have regard to Forum recommendations, established Borough Council policy and procedures, the views of interested stakeholder etc.

The criteria for Forum spending recommendations are proposed to be flexible to enable local needs to be addressed. To achieve this it is proposed that the criteria are couched in terms of the discretionary power for principal local authorities in England and Wales to do anything they consider likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area.

A local authority may use the power to promote well-being where it considers this will achieve any one or more of the following three objectives:

- the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area;
- the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area;
- the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area.

Area Forums would be asked to put forward spending proposals having regard to these three objectives and after consultation with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

Area Committees

Article 10 of the Borough Council's Constitution provides for the creation of area committees with delegated powers. Area committees could be established as an alternative approach to Area Forums. However, Area Committees would be committees of the Borough Council and membership by County and Parish Councillors and other bodies would be by co-option. This would be a significant departure from the planned operation of Area Forums and change the operation of the Forums from a partnership basis under the auspices of Charnwood Together to a formal part of the Borough Council's decision making structure. It is not proposed to create area committees at this stage, although comments on this alternative approach are welcome.

TIMESCALES

It is expected that arrangements for Area Forums will be agreed, in light of responses to this consultation, by the end of September 2007 with implementation then taking place from October 2007 onwards.

The responses to this consultation will be considered by the meeting of the Charnwood Together Board scheduled for 5th September 2007.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is 13th August 2007

APPENDIX A

NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT FOR CHARNWOOD

Background

1. *This policy statement provides a framework for the further development of links with and support for neighbourhoods within Leicestershire – as adapted to the Borough of Charnwood.*
2. *Strong links with neighbourhoods are important because they:*
 - a. *Allow local people to shape and influence service delivery leading to more responsive services and greater public satisfaction in those services;*
 - b. *Are a strong thread running through the plans of the Government for achieving better service outcomes for the whole population; and,*
 - c. *Enable County, District and Parish Council Members to carry out their role as local champions more effectively.*
3. *The Government wants opportunities for people to get involved in their communities everywhere and wants local government to be at the heart of its plans for devolution to the “neighbourhood level” by building on existing arrangements.*
4. *Leicestershire County Council, District Councils and other agencies already support local working in a number of ways. For example:*
 - a. *County and District Councillors act as community champions working with the neighbourhoods within their wards and divisions through a variety of mechanisms;*
 - b. *The Local Area Agreement has introduced neighbourhood management processes to address the deep-seated problems in 20 priority neighbourhoods in the County (4 of which are in Charnwood -see Appendix A). These are being addressed through District Local Strategic Partnerships.*
 - c. *The County Council works with the Leicestershire Association of Parish and Local Councils by, for example, providing web sites and in supporting individual Parish and Town Councils to achieve Quality Council status.*
 - d. *District Councils use a variety of structures and processes where they work with Parish Councils or specific geographic communities.*
 - e. *Many County and District Council services have close links with Parish Councils.*
 - f. *The County Council leads the Leicestershire Rural Partnership which supports local consultation linked to service improvements in the form of Parish Plans and Service Co-ordination events. District Councils and other local agencies are members of the Partnership.*
 - g. *Neighbourhood policing involves neighbourhood and community engagement at a number of levels.*
5. *Therefore, this policy statement sets out to improve these links and support by building on existing good practice.*

Core Principles

6. *The following are proposed as underpinning core principles:*
 - a. *Links with and support for areas and neighbourhoods should be shared by all service delivery agencies in the County to avoid duplication and confusion. The County and District Councils will work with their partners through Leicestershire Together and the District-based Local Strategic Partnerships to achieve an agreed joined up approach.*
 - b. *Councillors should be the main link between their electorates and the service delivery agencies that they need to inform and influence on behalf of those they represent. Measures to assist elected Members to act as champions for the areas they represent will therefore be required.*
 - c. *Arrangements should build on and incorporate existing good practice and current structures.*
 - d. *Arrangements should improve the ability of local people and their representatives to scrutinise services provided by the County, District and Parish Councils and other service providers.*
 - e. *Where they exist, Parish and Town Councils play a key role in developing and representing their neighbourhoods.*
 - f. *In non-parished areas, local proposals for representative arrangements should be supported. Options include neighbourhood forums and parishing.*
 - g. *Area and neighbourhood working should be developed in service delivery arrangements.*
 - h. *Area and neighbourhood working should incorporate measures to promote and develop community cohesion and social capital and be based on equity of opportunity.*
 - i. *Area and neighbourhood working is complementary to links with and support for communities of interest. The work with communities of interest will be set out elsewhere.*

The Definition of Areas and Neighbourhoods

7. *The Government has indicated that the geographic areas represented by elected Members should be a building block for community engagement but that local issues, geographic extent and population size will also need to be taken into account.*
8. *Work within the County has identified four types of neighbourhood unit:*
 - a. *Parished areas where an elected local council exists to represent the views of the neighbourhood or neighbourhoods within its area.*
 - b. *Town centres where the population of the surrounding areas gather for shopping, leisure and employment. In these areas the views of a wide range of stakeholders need to be obtained and reflected in improvement plans.*
 - c. *Non parished areas where new representative structures may be needed to provide a community voice.*
 - d. *“Priority Neighbourhoods” where concerted multi agency action is required to address deep rooted problems. These areas vary in size sometimes representing a neighbourhood as a whole, sometimes crossing neighbourhood boundaries and sometimes a small part of a neighbourhood. Priority Neighbourhoods in Charnwood are:*

Priority Neighbourhood	Number of people perceived poor ²
Loughborough East	3,650
Loughborough West	2,040
Mountsorrel	430
South Charnwoods ³	613

Proposed Clustering of Neighbourhoods

9. It is proposed that these areas be used as the basic units of “neighbourhoods” in the County and work will be required to improve engagement at these levels. However, because there are about 300 of these neighbourhoods it is considered that there is a need for clusters of neighbourhood units to allow practical community scrutiny of local public services and practical engagement with local people through ‘Area Forums’. The words ‘neighbourhoods’ and ‘communities’ tend to be used interchangeably for the most local level of unit therefore in Charnwood the clusters of neighbourhoods/communities will be known as ‘Areas’.
10. The proposed arrangements for the clustering of neighbourhoods/communities to form Area Forums will be shown following the outcomes of this consultation process.

Taking Work Forward

11. Leicestershire Together have consulted on this policy and agreed its principles. They have also agreed that within those principles, finalisation of the detail of the arrangements should be taken forward by each District-based Local Strategic Partnership – in the case of Charnwood, by Charnwood Together.

² For each priority area the OAs within the poorest 10% from the PSE index were selected and the number of people defined as poor by the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey were aggregated

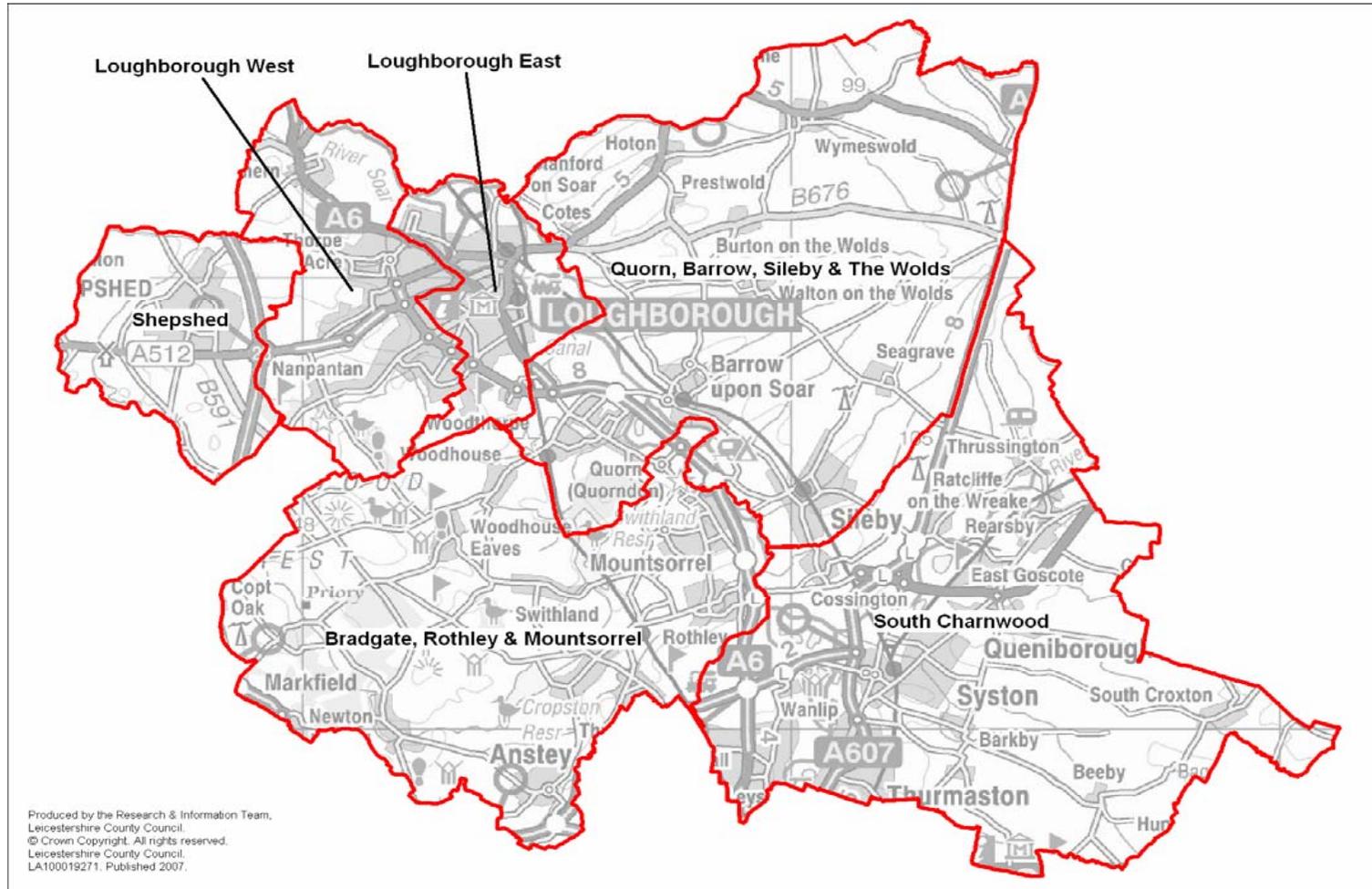
³ Added by the District LSP following consultation

Model One - Breakdown of elected representatives per area

	Proposed Area Forum	County Councillors	Borough Councillors	Parish and Town Chairs	Total*	Population Estimate
1	Shepshed	1	4	1	6	12,990
2	Loughborough	5	20	1	22*	59,550
3	Quorn, Barrow, Sileby, Seagrave & The Wolds	2	7	8	15*	21,460
4	Bradgate, Rothley & Mountsorrel	2	9 (includes 2 councillors from the Quorn & Mountsorrel Castle Ward to reflect this ward being split across Forums 3 and 4)	8	21*	22,930
5	Birstall, Syston, Thurmaston and Wreake Valley Villages	4	14	13	28*	40,600

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

Model Two – 6 Area Forums

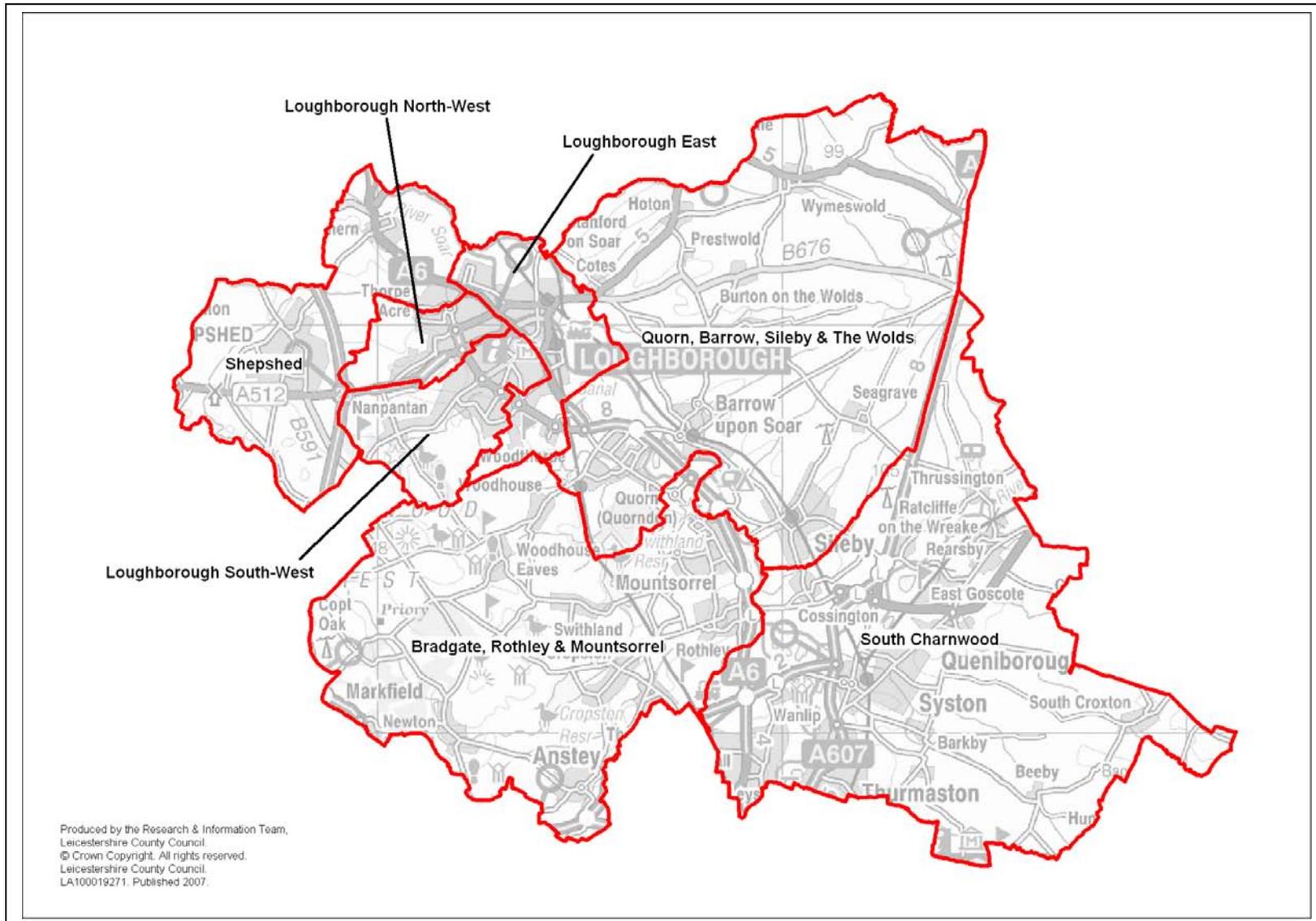


Model Two - Breakdown of elected representatives per area

	Proposed Area Forum	County Councillors	Borough Councillors	Parish and Town Chairs	Total*	Population Estimate
1	Shepshed	1	4	1	6	12,990
2	Loughborough East	2	8		7*	35,430
3	Loughborough West	3	12	1	14	24,140
4	Quorn, Barrow, Sileby, Seagrave & The Wolds	2	7	8	15*	21,460
5	Bradgate, Rothley & Mountsorrel	2	9 (includes 2 councillors from the Quorn & Mountsorrel Castle Ward to reflect this ward being split across Forums 3 and 4)	8	21*	22,930
6	Birstall, Syston, Thurmaston and Wreake Valley Villages	4	14	13	28*	40,600

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

Model 3a – 7 Area Forums

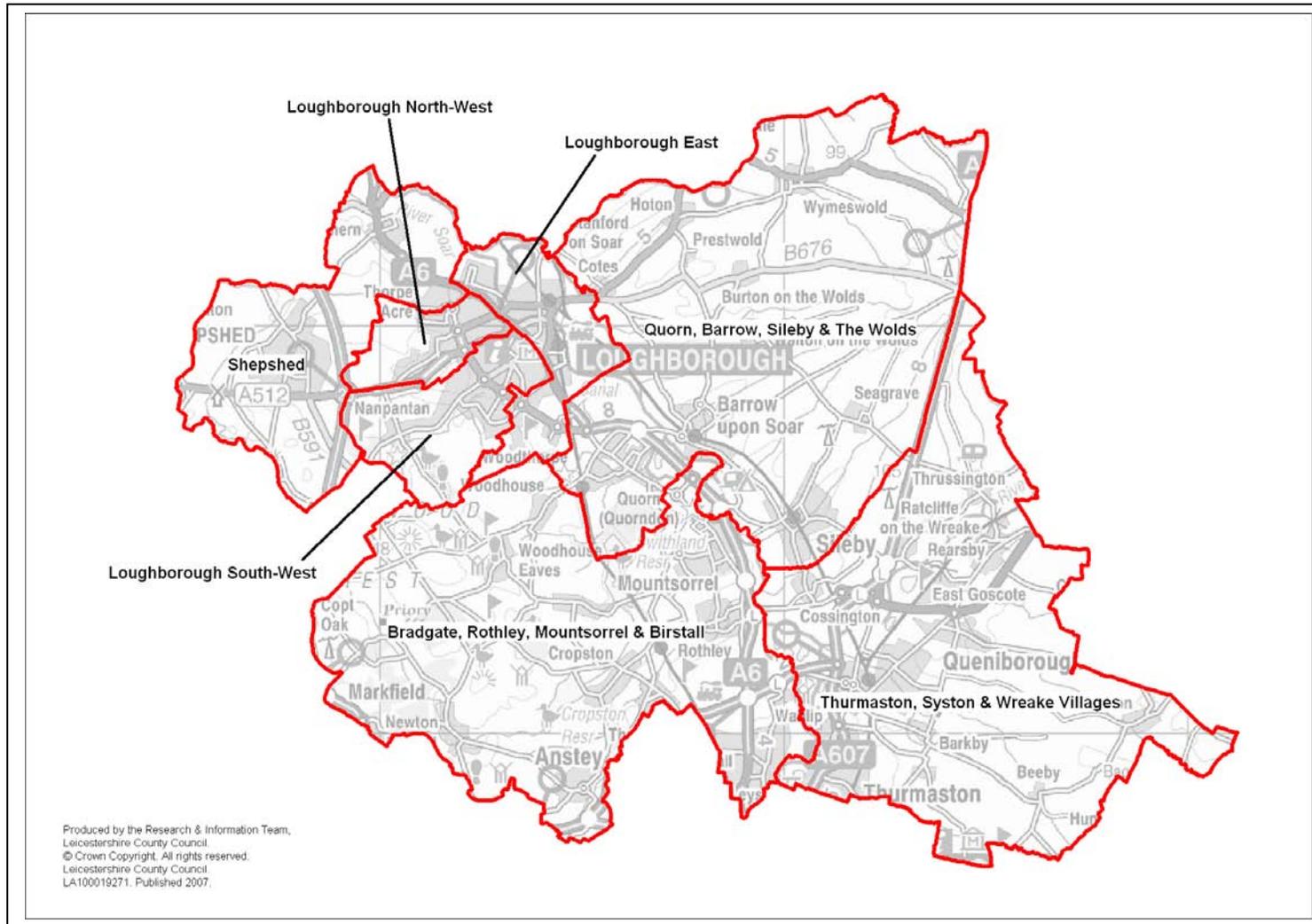


Model 3a - Breakdown of elected representatives per area

	Proposed Area Forum	County Councillors	Borough Councillors	Parish and Town Chairs	Total*	Population Estimate
1	Shepshed, Dishley & Hathern	2	6	2	7	17,453
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	2	9 (includes 2 councillors from the Quorn & Mountsorrel Castle Ward to reflect this ward being split across Forums 3 and 4)	8	21*	22,930
7	Birstall Wanlip, Syston, Thurmaston and Wreake Valley Villages	4	14	13	28*	40,600

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

Model 3b – 7 Area Forums



Model 3b - Breakdown of elected representatives per area

	Proposed Area Forum	County Councillors	Borough Councillors	Parish and Town Chairs	Total*	Population Estimate
1	Shepshed, Dishley & Hathern	2	6	2	7	17,453
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

Charnwood Together
Area Forum Consultation Document

Charnwood Together has been asked to consider a framework for establishing Area Forums in the Borough. This accompanying document lays out the proposed framework put forward for consultation with town and parish councils and other partners and stakeholders.

The information contained in this document provides the basis for the consultation. A form is attached to assist in key aspects of the consultation proposals. You do not need to use the form if you do not wish to.

Please complete the attached form or your own document and send back via email or in the envelope provided.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is 13th August 2007

The responses to this consultation will be considered by the meeting of the Charnwood Together Board scheduled for 5th September 2007

If you have any questions or queries please contact Verity Graham 01509 632516 or verity.graham@charnwoodtogether.com

Thank you once again for taking the time to complete this form.

If you require further information is also available

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503999> – Local Government White Paper

www.charnwoodtogether.com – Charnwood Local Strategic Partnership

www.leicestershiretogether.org – Leicestershire LSP

Consultation Feedback

Title _____ Name _____

Contact details Tel: _____ Email _____

Organisation you are representing _____

Please provide us with feedback on the following issues.

1: Please indicate your preferred choice of title for these proposed forums.

Area Forum Community Forum

2: Please indicate your preferred model.

Model 1 Model 2 Model 3a Model 3b

3: Please give your comments and reasons for your selection.

4: Please give brief comments on the remaining models.

5: If you have suggestions for an alternative model please let us know.

6. Please give your comments on the proposed Terms of Reference, page 5.

7. Please give your comments on the proposed membership, pages 6

8. Please give your comments on attaching funding to the forums, page 7

9. Please suggest how often you feel the Forums should meet and why?

10. Please give your comments on the possibility of Area Committees as an alternative, page 8

11. Please give any other comments or suggestions on the proposal of Area Forums for Charnwood.

12 . Do you agree with the overall principle of introducing Area Forums to Charnwood?

Yes

No

Thank you for help, it is very much appreciated.