

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 6 September 2007  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Corporate & Policy  
**SUBJECT:** Review of Area Forums  
**WARDS:** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

This report and its appendix detail the recommendations of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board for improving the operation of Area Forums.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED That:**

- a. the Board considers the recommendations of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board in relation to Area Forums as set out in Appendix 1 to this report;
- b. the Board approves the recommendations set out in Section 5 of the attached report (subject to any amendments arising from (a) above), with the exception of those items requiring amendments to the Constitution;
- c. the Board supports those recommendations in Section 5 of the attached report requiring amendments to the Constitution, (subject to any amendments arising from (a) above) and recommends to Council that the changes be incorporated at the appropriate time; and
- d. the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy prepares an action plan for the implementation of this Board's decisions in the 2008/09 municipal year and regular progress reports be made to this Policy and Performance Board.

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board has conducted a review of Area Forums, involving surveys, focus groups, interviews and visits to other local authorities. The review looked at how Forums have evolved in Halton, and has identified recommendations for further improvement.

The report of the Review is attached (Appendix 1) and the recommendations are set out in Section 5.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Empowering "local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision-making and the delivery of services" is a key objective in the Council's

Corporate Plan. Effective Area Forums are a key tool for the delivery of this objective.

There are resource implications in the recommendation that the NRF contribution to the Area Forum budgets be replaced from the Council's mainstream budget; and in the recommendations for improved communications, transport and the provision of refreshments. The last three items would have to be met from the existing area forum budgets, subject to approval.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no other implications.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

The recommendations include provision for the involvement of young people in Area Forums, and joint meetings of the Area Forums and the Area Youth Forums.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

There are no specific implications for this priority, but the Area Forums are a means of engaging with local communities in order to deliver our targets.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The Primary Care Trust has expressed interest in attending forums and using them to engage at a local level.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Both the Police and Fire Services have indicated willingness to engage with local people through area forums (in the case of the police service this is a continuation of current activity).

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Area forums are attended by the relevant Streetscene team manager and provide residents with the opportunity to influence service delivery.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The main risks associated with this action are failure to implement the recommendations, and failure to increase participation in area forums. Recommendation (c) is intended to ensure that the recommendations are implemented. The likelihood of failure to achieve the desired outcome is mitigated by the depth of research and consultation that was involved in the conduct of the review.

## 8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

The report attempts to address a number of barriers to access, including transport, and the formality of meetings.

## 9.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Notes and reports of surveys, focus groups and interviews	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes	Rob Mackenzie
Local Government White Paper	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes	Rob Mackenzie