

Report to: Cabinet
Date: 26 June 2008
Subject: Townships and Participation in Decision making
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive
Contact officer: Katherine Fairclough 01942 827095

Purpose / summary: The Council and its partners have made good progress in developing new ways of working in partnership with local people in communities. This report references back to recent reviews and developments in this area and considers how we could develop this in the future.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: A range of options in compiling this report has been considered, including no change to current arrangements. Given the changes in legislation and the requirement for the council to work in altogether different ways, it is considered that no change is not an option.

Recommendation / decision: That Elected Members consider this report and support the further developments as outlined, and that the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committees are consulted on the options for change. Cabinet is also asked to consider whether consultation be extended to Townships and the Wigan Borough Partnership.

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision.

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	Within existing resources
Staffing:	Within existing resources
Policy:	Community Engagement
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Equality and diversity implications have been considered though a full impact assessment has not yet been completed as this work is in a developmental stage.
Wards affected:	All

Property – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the

Council's asset base or its occupation?

No

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A full diversity impact assessment has yet to be completed but equality implications have been taken into account in the work concluded thus far.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

If the proposals are accepted, there will be a need to amend the constitution..

Has the Service Director Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Service Director Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No ***

For Cabinet reports only:

Categorisation of the report:	x		x
Discussion leading to a decision	x	Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
Audit and Governance 31 July 2008	14 July 2008	26 June 2008	

Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Local government White Paper – Strong and Prosperous Communities
 Report to Cabinet 26 June 2008- Review of Advisory Panels and Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees
 Report to Wigan Borough Partnership 31/03/2008– Local Strategic Partnership Architecture

Proper Officer Sue Johnson
 Date 28 May 2008

1. Background:

- a)** Over the past 8 years the Council and its partners have made good progress in developing new ways of working in partnership with local people in communities. We have tried a range of ideas and approaches and have learned some important lessons. This report has been produced as part of the Democratic Services Review and looks back at other reviews and developments in this area. It makes proposals for how the Council and its partners develop this in the future.
- b)** Elected members are very familiar with the work that has taken place with communities and will have heard a number of common themes raised. This has included:
- How can we give local people more influence over local budgets and decision making?
 - How do we get service / agency plans to align with locality action plans in the way that townships and neighbourhoods have said they want?
 - How can we enhance the community leadership role of elected members?
 - Can we be more efficient in the way that the Council and its partners connect their own management and governance systems to locality partnerships?
 - How can the Council adjust its constitution in order to formalise the relationship with locality management and governance?
 - How can the Wigan Borough Partnership update its shape and terms of reference to give a stronger focus on the delivery of local action plans and priorities?
 - How can we improve connections between services working in localities with effective reporting, accountability and scrutiny?
- c)** Ever since the Local Government Act of 2000 community engagement and community leadership have been key priorities for Local Authorities. We must demonstrate this is central to the way that we work at every level.

Previous inspection regimes focused on whether Local Authorities managed and delivered the services efficiently and cost effectively. The new Comprehensive Area Assessment from 2009 will insist that we demonstrate

that we have engaged our diverse local communities in every aspect of the work that we do including service delivery, scrutiny and monitoring, forward and spatial planning.

The local context is critical too – engaging communities, enhancing participation in decision making and providing effective community leadership is core to local democracy.

- d)** The Council and its partners have a history of working in localities and recently there have been a number of reviews that have led to new approaches or recommendations for change. This has included
- PACT development
 - The Select Committee review of Township programme
 - A review of Wigan Borough Partnership’s structures (also known as LSP “architecture”)
 - The development of Routes to Involvement – a new policy framework for community involvement, engagement, participation and consultation.

The Democratic Services Review has drawn on the findings of each of these and identified the potential areas for the next phase of development and implementation.

2. Proposals

- a)** This section looks at a range of proposals beginning first with Townships and in particular how Township Forums can operate in the future. We also explore possible structures and their relationships with Wigan Borough Partnership and Overview & Scrutiny and their fit with the Council’s constitution
- b)** There is an excellent opportunity to place Township Forums firmly at the heart of the Council’s constitution and to emphasise the mutuality of the relationship between the Council and Township Forums.
- c)** This signals not only the Council’s commitment to locality working and enhancing our community leadership role but can also show how Elected

Members and officers will participate in these forums. A two stage approach may be helpful to achieve this.

- d) Stage one will include setting out a broad set of minimum standards to be included in the next review of the constitution that demonstrates our commitment as a Council. These could include for example:
- Retaining the existing number and geography of the Township Forums.
 - Making clear our responsibilities to the Township Forums including officer and member expectations – this may require further work linked to member allowances, code of conduct and so on.
 - Aligning business processes and cycles across the Council, Wigan Borough Partnership and partners to locality and neighbourhood structures. This will include financial and business planning.
 - Making clear that Township forums are key facilitators of both “bottom up” and “top down” engagement and involvement is key. As such they can provide intelligence to inform the Council’s scrutiny processes; identify key locality issues that may be referred to Overview and Scrutiny for further investigation; and provide a locality level view on issues referred to them by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - The Township Forum has a key role to play in scrutinising locality plans and activity. For example the establishment of ‘Mini Local Area Agreements (LAA’s) for each Township Forum area would help us to plan, track and measure impact in localities.
- e) Stage two would follow a process of engagement with Township Forum chairs and other interested parties to establish a revised terms of reference for Township Forums. This could then be embedded within the constitution and describe how the standards described above will be achieved.
- f) **At the same time**, consideration would need to be given to how locality structures could work effectively with Wigan Borough Partnership (WBP). A key aspect of this is how we connect local delivery plans with partnership wide policy and strategy so that locality issues influence policy, strategy and resourcing. We suggest that the Democratic Services Review consider a number of current or completed pieces of work to enable this. For example

- How Township Forum's views (perhaps through the joint chair role) can be reflected / represented at LSP board level
- PACT's and Townships Forums are aligned which means that Forums are scrutinising PACT's delivery and setting local strategy and priorities; PACT's are delivering sustained improvements in localities. This is a model that could work with other partnerships.
- Aligning, partnership wide, business processes so that the right things happen at the right time to enable influencing. This is a key part of the implementation of the Local Area Agreement and the development of a more integrated commissioning cycle.
- A new Wigan Borough Partnership Forum could be established to provide opportunities for sharing and learning across and between townships, PACT's, thematic partnerships, Wigan Borough Partnership Board and Local Strategic Management Group.
- Senior Officers need to be linked to each township
- Township Forums need to be clearly identified as the way into engaging with communities and the way for localities to influence wider strategy, policy and funding decisions. This is already happening with PACT's – it needs to be developed for other service delivery aspects.

g) Consideration would also need to be given as to how Township Forums can fully engage with scrutiny processes. There is a great opportunity to make sure our Council scrutiny arrangements are aligned with the wider partnership activity; to strengthen opportunities for all local public sector organisations to be held to account by local elected members and members of the community.

h) Scrutiny can happen at many different levels. For example

- Identifying key locality issues that may be referred to Overview and Scrutiny for further investigation;
- Providing a locality level view on issues referred the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Scrutinising locality plans and activity like Mini LAA's.

Wigan Borough Partnership is reducing the number of partnerships to four.

Proposals to redesign Council's existing panel structure, identified in the report elsewhere on this agenda outlining changes to the advisory panels and

Overview and Scrutiny Function which would allow for four distinct scrutiny panels to align to these partnerships.

- i) A new scrutiny model could therefore include the following,
- Township Forums scrutinising Mini LAA's
 - Council Scrutiny Panels to scrutinise partnership delivery of local priority outcomes as set out in the LAA
 - Overview & Scrutiny Committee holding the Executive of the Council to account

All of these measures would therefore provide an overall scrutiny of Wigan Borough Partnership's activity.

- j) A further consideration is the Council's responsibility to enable the community leadership role and to outline a timetable for this work. The actions set out earlier in this report go some way to do this. But the medium term challenge is around developing and deploying community leadership that is inclusive, signals a cultural shift and makes a difference.

This is a more complex and transformational piece of work and one that requires engagement from a broader range of stakeholders. We believe that this could form a new work stream outside of the Democratic Services Review to be concluded by December 2008.

3. Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:

We considered a range of options in compiling this report but felt those described best reflected the outcomes from previous reviews and met the requirements of the Democratic Services Review.

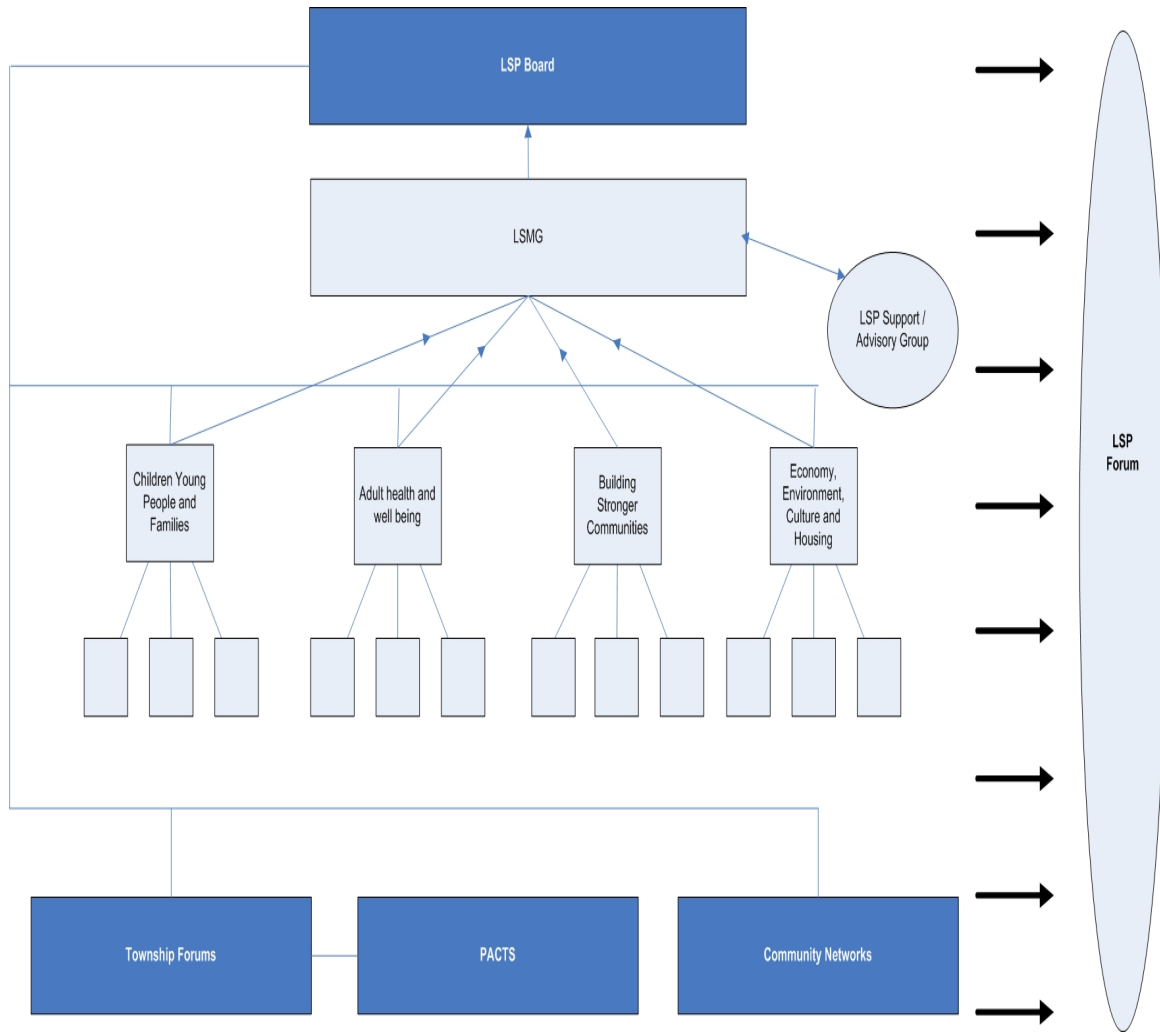
4. Conclusions:

This paper brings together current thinking on how local people can be more fully involved in decision making. It should be read in conjunction with the report entitled **Review of Advisory Panels and Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees elsewhere on this agenda** as it makes proposals for how the Council and its partners may wish to develop this work in the future.

**Katherine Fairclough,
Service Director, Business Transformation.**

Local Strategic Partnership Structures

Appendix 1



Democratic Services Review: Proposed programme of activity for 'Participation in Decision Making' workstream

We have made some proposals on a programme of activity to run alongside the formal Council consultation and decision making processes.

This is detailed below.

It is important that we carry out some briefings and initial set up work (carefully linked to other planned activity) over the summer to run concurrently with the Council's own processes so that we are open and transparent and engage fully with all stakeholders.

Activity	Dates	Comments / links
Initial briefing with key staff	Early June	Describe and "test" proposals, ensure consistency in delivery of the message that goes out
Provide a consistent message through a single briefing for co-chairs of forums (includes 20 people – 10 councillors and 10 community reps) and LSP board – to go out with copies of report	June	LSP board for information; Co-chairs to set up further work To explain the process, get buy-in, share thoughts and programme activity into their forum business cycle
1 st phase sessions Sessions with Township Forums	July – August	Initial update / briefing on key issues and interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marketing of PACTS ▪ Feedback on LAA ▪ Local information systems
2 nd phase sessions Development work on proposals with Township Forums	September – Dec	A series of workshops and information sharing / discussion at Township Forums: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detail of agenda structure / business cycle ▪ Scrutiny role ▪ Relationship between Locality and Council ▪ Proposals for updating Townships (Terms of membership etc.,)
Briefings / development with LSP Board	September	Sharing initial outcomes of work at Township level after planned work with LSP completed (membership etc).

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