

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Cabinet

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009  
16<sup>th</sup> April 2009

**Subject:** Democratic Services Review - Participation in Decision making. The Future role of Township Forum's. Report on Consultation with Forums.

**Report of:** Chief Executive

**Contact officer:** Katherine Fairclough Service Director 01942 827095  
Ian Harrison Head of Service Environmental Services 01942 827915

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**Purpose / summary:** This report summarises the outcomes of a process of consultation with Elected Members and Township Forums that took place between August 2008 and January 2009. The report makes recommendations for how the Council, its partners and Township Forums will operate in the future.

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** We could choose not to respond to the consultation. However this goes against the values and principles of this Council. The recommended course of action takes an incremental and measured approach to development.

**Recommendation / decision:** That Cabinet accept the findings of the report and the recommendations as set out in section 7.3 of the attached report.

The decision will be made as a result of this report and will be published within 48 hours

**Risks / Implications:**

Financial:	Within existing resources
Staffing:	Within existing resources
Policy:	Community Engagement
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment	Equality and Diversity implications have been considered throughout this review and are a

been conducted?  
Wards affected:

key part of the implementation plan.  
All

**Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?**

No

**If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?**

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

A diversity impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as an appendix to this report.

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

A diversity impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as an appendix to this report.

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Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution?	<b>Yes</b>
Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget?	<b>Yes</b>
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	<b>No</b>

\* delete which applicable

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**For Cabinet reports only:**

Categorisation of the report:	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
Discussion leading to a decision	<b>X</b>	Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

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**Tracking/Process:**

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
	Township Forums Sept 2008 – Jan 2009	Members Seminar August 2008	LSMG meeting September 2008
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny 6 <sup>th</sup> April 2009	Cabinet 19 March 2009	Council

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to	Date of meeting	Copy available from
Democratic Services Review - Participation in Decision making.	Cabinet Overview and Scrutiny Audit & Governance	26th June 2008 14 <sup>th</sup> July 2008 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2008	Town Hall, Library Street Wigan.

Proper Officer Joyce Redfearn

Date 3 March 2009

## **Background:**

- 1.0** Elected Members will recall previous reports (minute 37 applies) produced last summer that set out the background to this review.
- 1.1** Township Forums are a key aspect of the democratic process and in their current form they build on a long history in the borough of community development, engagement and capacity building.
- 1.2** Both the local and national policy context require the Council and its partners to demonstrate how communities are engaged in policy, planning and decision making. New legislation also demands that local communities have a stronger role in holding public bodies to account.
- 1.3** We have recently reconsidered our approach to working in Townships as part of a wider Democratic Services Review.

## **Introduction**

- 2.0** This report summarises the outcomes of a process of consultation with elected members and Township Forums that took place between August 2008 and January 2009. The attached report makes proposals for how the Council, its partners and Township Forums will operate in the future.
- 2.1** All consultation events followed a similar format with formal input and discussion with a focus on how Township Forums currently operate, what works well and the particular challenges faced. Each then discussed the broad proposals for change and officers sought comments and suggestions for improvement. In the second part of the discussion a list of potential minimum standards for Forums and partners to work to was explored and discussed.
- 2.2** All Township Forums engaged in the consultation process and welcomed the opportunity to shape the future role and function of the Forums. There was a maturity in much of the debate that recognised the mutuality of the relationship between Forums, the Council and the LSP – that we all need to be fully playing our part to ensure the best outcomes for local people. Overwhelmingly what emerged was a desire from all Forums to have a greater influence and for agencies to be accountable for their actions. Township Forum Members recognise that they need to reach out to seek wider community views and that they may need support in doing this.
- 2.3.** It is clear however that each of the Township Forums is at different stages of development. Some are ready to take on new responsibilities, others less so. As a consequence our recommendations and implementation plan include an element of capacity building and learning so that all parties understand the principles of “earned responsibility”.
- 2.4** A very strong theme that emerged in every session was how the Township Forum would interface with the PACT process. The general feeling that was raised was that the Forum’s role in the future would be to take the broad strategic planning and scrutiny approach with PACTs dealing with the operational issues. We explore this in detail in section 4.

- 2.5** In the report we make recommendations for strengthening the proposals consulted on. This includes how Township Forums will work with Wigan Borough Partnership; the Council's new approach to Overview & Scrutiny and how they will be recognised in the Council's constitution; and with new legislation like the Councillor Call for Action and Petitions.
- 2.6** In making recommendations to Elected Members we recognise that on some aspects the Council has the power to fully implement them if it is so inclined. This is because on some aspects the recommendations relate purely to Council business. However in other areas they relate more specifically to the business of Wigan Borough Partnership (WBP) and within this context we recommend the Council uses its leadership influence to bring these issues to the attention of WBP and requires a response from them.

**Proposals:**

That Cabinet support the recommendations contained at 7.3 in the attached report.

**Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:**

We could choose not to respond to the consultation. However this goes against the values and principles of this Council. The recommended course of action takes an incremental, measured and integrated approach to locality development.

**Conclusions:**

Township Forums play a vital role in our partnership approach to community development. We are recommending a pragmatic and incremental approach to Township Forum development that builds on current strengths and addresses weaknesses.

The report clearly shows the complementary role that Township Forums play to the wider democratic process. They are not intended to operate as "mini councils" but as the key method of locality engagement in policy, planning and accountability.

This report demonstrates how the Forums can continue to develop mutuality and trust with the Council as a whole, build on the principles of locality delivery and accountability and work with Elected Members in their democratic role.

## Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section: Business Transformation

Policy/Service Area: Townships and community engagement

Person Completing Form: Katherine Fairclough

Date: 3 March  
2009

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race		X	Disability		x
Ethnicity		X	Gender		x
Age		X	Religion		x
Class		X	Sexual Orientation		X

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?

During the course of our consultations with Township Forums they raised with us issues of under representation at Forum meetings. This included the range of people that came forward as Forum members and for some that they did not feel the Forums current activity reached all groups or vulnerable people within their community. Examples cited included BME communities; young people; hard to reach groups.

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

All 10 Township Forums

Action Plan – *What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?*

The implementation plan and resulting Township action plans will help tackle the specific issues.

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Yes

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Timescale	April 2009/March 2010
Responsibility	K Fairclough on behalf of LSP Advisory Group
Comments	

**Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?**

Departmental Service Plan	Chief Executives Services Environmental Services Business Support Services
Section/Team Plan	
Other (Specify)	

Date for further review March 2010
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# **A report of the Democratic Services Review**

## **Participation in Decision making – The Future role of Township Forums**

### **Feedback from consultation and recommendations**

**Authors:**

Katherine Fairclough – Service Director Business Transformation

Simon Dale – Policy and Planning Manager

Ian Harrison – Head of Service, Neighbourhoods

**March 2009**

## **Executive Summary**

- 1.0** The Council and its partners have made good progress in developing new ways of working in partnership with local people in communities. We've tried a range of ideas and approaches and have learned some important lessons. We have recently reconsidered our approach to working in Townships as part of a wider Democratic Services Review.
- 1.1** This report summarises the outcomes of a process of consultation with elected members and Township Forums that took place between August 2008 and January 2009. The report goes on to make proposals for how the Council, its partners and Township Forums will operate in the future.
- 1.2** All consultation events followed a similar format with formal input and discussion with a focus on how Township Forums currently operate, what works well and the particular challenges faced. Each then discussed the broad proposals for change and officers sought comments and suggestions for improvement. In the second part of the discussion a list of potential minimum standards for Forums and partners to work to was explored and discussed.
- 1.3** All Township Forums engaged in the consultation process and welcomed the opportunity to shape the future role and function of the Forums. There was a maturity in much of the debate that recognised the mutuality of the relationship between Forums, the Council and the LSP – that we all need to be fully playing our part to ensure the best outcomes for local people. Overwhelmingly what emerged was a desire from all Forums to have a greater influence and for agencies to be accountable for their actions.
- 1.4** A very strong theme that emerged in every session was how the Township Forum would interface with the PACT process. The general feeling that was raised was that the Forum's role in the future would be to take the broad strategic planning and scrutiny approach with PACTs dealing with the operational issues. We explore this in detail in section 4.
- 1.5** In the report we make recommendations for strengthening the proposals consulted on. This includes how Township Forums will work with Wigan Borough Partnership; the Council's new approach to Overview and Scrutiny and how they will be recognised in the Council's constitution; and with new legislation like the Councillor Call for Action and Petitions.

- 1.6** In making recommendations to Elected Members we recognise that on some aspects the Council has the power to fully implement them if it is so inclined. This is because on some aspects the recommendations relate purely to Council business. However in other areas they relate more specifically to the business of Wigan Borough Partnership (WBP) and within this context we recommend the Council uses its leadership influence to bring these issues to the attention of WBP and requires a response from them.
- 1.7** If these recommendations are agreed section 8 contains a draft implementation plan allocating responsibilities, timescales etc.

**Recommendation 1**

That the minimum standards described at 4.3.1 are developed and implemented by the Council by June 2009.

**Recommendation 2**

That the Council uses its leadership role at WBP to embed the recommendations as described at 4.4.

**Recommendation 3**

That the Council supports the establishment of a formally constituted "Forum of Chairs" as described at 4.5.3 by June 2009.

**Recommendation 4**

That the Council supports the definition of the interface between PACTs and Township Forums as described at 4.6 and communicates this effectively across key partners.

**Recommendation 5**

That the Council supports the further development of an integrated approach to locality planning and requires this to be implemented within the Council by Autumn 2009 for the 2010/11 planning cycle.

**Recommendation 6**

The Council supports the proposals for more effective local scrutiny as outlined at 4.8 and 4.9, to be integrated with the Council's other new scrutiny processes.

## Introduction and Background

**2.0** The Council and its partners have made good progress in developing new ways of working in partnership with local people in communities. We've tried a range of ideas and approaches and have learned some important lessons. We have recently reconsidered our approach to working in Townships as part of a wider Democratic Services Review.

**2.1** 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 also insist that we demonstrate how 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.

**2.2** 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 ( partners and communities together) development
- The Select committee review of Township programme
- A review of Wigan Borough Partnership's structures (also known as the LSP "architecture")
- The Council's recent review of its scrutiny arrangements
- The development of Routes to Involvement – a new policy framework for community involvement, engagement, participation and consultation.

**2.3** This report summarises the outcomes of a process of consultation with elected members and Township Forums that took place between August 2008 and January 2009. The report goes on to make proposals for how the Council, its partners and Township Forums will operate in the future.

**2.4** Consultation took place in three settings;

- Members' seminar August 2008
- Two sessions at each of the Township Forums from September through to January 2009.

**2.5** All events followed a similar format with formal input and discussion with a focus on how Township Forums currently operate, for example what works well and the particular challenges Forums face. We then set out the broad proposals for change and sought comments and suggestions for improvement. In the second part of the discussion we identified a list of potential minimum standards for Forums and partners to work to. This included issues like what is required for effective working at Forum level, membership, voting rights, attendance, rights and responsibilities and so on.

Full details can be found in appendix A.

### 3.0 Key Themes that emerged from the consultation

All Township Forums engaged in the consultation process and welcomed the opportunity to shape the future role and function of the Forums. There was a maturity in much of the debate that recognised the mutuality of the relationship between Forums, the Council and the LSP – that we all need to be fully playing our part to ensure the best outcomes for local people. Overwhelmingly what emerged was a desire from all Forums to have a greater influence and for agencies to be accountable for their actions.

The following tables summarise the key messages that emerged.

#### 3.1 What works well/what doesn't at your Township Forum?

What works well	What doesn't
Positive feedback about the <b>commitment</b> from some partners and individuals to improve their local area. This was based on <b>mutual respect</b> ; many had managed to <b>put aside party politics</b> ; united in making their area a better place to live.	Almost all Forums raised the issue of <b>poor or variable partner attendance</b> . It came across strongly that many participants did not feel that all key partners <b>take the Forum</b> or its role <b>seriously</b> .
Forum members also felt that their <b>local intelligence</b> about the area & statistical information helped them understand the strengths and weaknesses of the locality.	A view that service delivery agencies were <b>not accountable</b> to the Forum for their activity in that area. Even if the issue was in a Forum plan.
Forum meetings provided excellent <b>networking</b> opportunities and aided the sharing of good practice.	Many Forums felt they had " <b>no teeth</b> " and could not scrutinise service delivery.
Many Forums have <b>effective sub group meetings</b> that are working well and delivering positive outcomes for local people.	Some Forum's felt they were consulted in a <b>tokenistic</b> way – "a tick box exercise"
Access to small revenue and capital <b>resources</b> , extremely beneficial.	<b>Poor communications and promotion</b> of the role of Forum's.
Many felt that they were <b>well supported</b> by their Township Manager and support officers.	<b>Blockages to success included</b> clarity over membership, poor attendance and voting rights

### 3.2 Challenges faced:

In exploring this question with Forums they began to look ahead to what needed to be in place to help the Forum be more effective.

Themes	Direct comments that illustrate themes
Roles and responsibilities & Terms of reference	<p>“representation and voting rights need to be explicit”</p> <p>“don’t want more bureaucracy”</p>
Agency recognition and accountability to the Forum	<p>“Forums need to be taken seriously”</p> <p>“Partners need to be honest about what they can and can’t do.”</p>
Integrated plans and resourcing	<p>“Clear connections between township action plans and LAA themes and delivery plans needed”</p> <p>“Accurate local and statistical data and information needed”</p>
Maintaining interest and commitment from Forum members and extending the wider communities engagement in decision making	<p>“keeping up attendance is hard”</p> <p>“particularly young people”</p> <p>“BME communities”</p>
Political divisions can lead to stalemate	<p>“Keep party politics out”</p>
Early involvement in decision making and scrutiny	<p>“not convinced that mainstream budgets will be “bent” “</p>

### 3.3 Stage 2 of the Consultation

This second part of the Township Forum consultation focused on a debate on the proposals.

<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Comments/feedback</b>
Townships Forums begin to focus on the big issues; provide local leadership; produce and monitor local plans.	With the right kind of supporting information - and services getting operational delivery right - this was felt to be achievable.
There are minimum standards that all Forums work to.	All agreed this was necessary but that we should engage Forum chairs in setting these.
That local plans are produced that inform mainstream service and budget planning in all agencies	With the right kind of supporting information - and agencies being fully behind the proposals - this was felt to be achievable. However they are not convinced agencies will stand behind these proposals.
Forums begin to scrutinise and hold to account all public services in their area.	With some capacity building, advice and support many felt this was achievable. However they are not convinced agencies will respond positively to these proposals.
A Director is allocated to each Township. This should come from the partner agencies as well as the Council.	Welcomed in principle but clear lines of accountability needed and relationship to existing Township Managers needs setting out.
Township Forums influence local decision making	This was welcomed but Forums recognise that significant cultural changes are needed to move many agencies from a tokenistic approach.

### 3.3.1 We then explored the outline of a set of minimum standards

Minimum standards	Comments/feedback
Township Forum will have balanced membership of local people, Elected Members & partners.	This was welcomed as it reflected the existing Terms of Reference but concerns were raised about the current poor attendance from some.
There will be clarity on who can vote and make decisions and represent the Forum.	Strong feeling that this was necessary but a divergence of views emerged across the Forums. Ranging from only Elected members can vote through to any Forum member having equal rights. And whether officers had a right in decision making
The Forums' Terms of reference will be linked to Council constitution.	In principle this was agreed however not all could see what benefits it would bring. Concerns it would add a bureaucratic layer.
There will be a stronger role for Township Forums in the Local Strategic Partnership.	This received a mixed response ranging from a positive – through to how would it happen – through to “why bother they won’t listen anyway.”
There would be a requirement for the Township Forum to produce and monitor its annual plan	Many already do this and those that had not been as robust recently recognised the need to do so and the value it would bring if agencies responded appropriately.

**3.4** A very strong theme that emerged in every session was how the Township Forum would interface with the PACT process. In some areas this was due to the fact that Forum members had not yet seen PACT in operation. The general feeling that was raised was that the Forum’s role in the future would be to take the broad strategic planning and scrutiny approach with PACTs dealing with the operational issues.

#### **4.0 Looking ahead – strengthening proposals and principles of working.**

- 4.1** This section looks at strengthening the proposals we consulted elected members and Township Forums on. We also explore how these structures will work with Wigan Borough Partnership; the Council's new approach to Overview and Scrutiny and how they will be recognised in the Council's constitution; and with new legislation like the Councillor Call for Action and Petitions.
- 4.2** 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 the Forums.
- 4.3** Discussions have led us to conclude that a broad set of minimum standards for Forums should be included in the next review of the constitution. This will be one step in demonstrating our commitment as a Council.
- 4.3.1** These standards would be as follows;
- a. We will retain the existing 10 Township Forums and each will work within the same Terms of Reference.
  - b. It will be a key role for all Elected members and Council officers to support the effective working of Township Forums. This will include attendance, the provision of information and facilitating an effective local scrutiny role. This will need further clarification of the terms of reference, codes of behaviour and roles and responsibilities of members of the Forums and officers. A work programme for this is detailed in the implementation plan contained in section 8 of this report.
  - c. Wigan Council will align business processes and planning cycles across the Council to locality and neighbourhood structures. This will include financial and business planning. This will be fully operational by March 2010. The Council will use its influence at Wigan Borough partnership to seek partner commitment to the same to enable more effective delivery of LAA priorities.
  - d. Township Forums are the key facilitators of both "bottom up" and "top down" engagement and involvement at the strategic, locality level. They have a critical role to play in the Council's scrutiny processes and strong links and procedures will be required to enable this to be effective.

- e. Township Forums will have a key role to play with local elected members in addressing Councillor Calls for Action (CCfA)<sup>1</sup> - as part of their local scrutiny role

#### **4.4 Township Forums and their role in Wigan Borough Partnership (WBP).**

A significant aspect of the relationship of Township Forums to Wigan Borough Partnership is how we connect local delivery plans with partnership wide policy and strategy so that locality issues influence policy, strategy and resourcing.

We have concluded that,

- a. Township Forum views are best represented at the WBP board through their Joint Chairs and we make recommendations at 4.5 about how this may be achieved.
- b. PACTs and Townships Forums must be clearly aligned. This means that Forums have a clear link with PACT delivery plans and local strategy and priorities. Point 4.6 describes how this can happen.
- c. Wigan Borough Partnership demonstrates its commitment to Township Forums through the visible alignment of partnership wide, business planning and commissioning processes; and through the allocation of a lead senior manager from all key agencies (at Director level) to work with each Township. Point 4.7 describes our proposed model for locality planning.
- d. The Wigan Borough Partnership Forum will provide opportunities for sharing and learning across and between townships, PACTs, thematic partnerships, Wigan Borough Partnership Board and Local Strategic Management Group.
- e. Township Forums need to be clearly identified as the key to engaging with communities and the way for localities to influence wider strategy, policy and funding decisions.

#### **4.5 Forum of Chairs**

**4.5.1** The Co-chairs of all Township Forums have met periodically over the past 5 years as an ad-hoc group. This group has dealt with strategic issues affecting all areas and has also contributed to policy debate and development with the WBP Board. We recommend that this is established on a more formal footing.

**4.5.2** The WBP board has recently agreed a revised membership model that includes 2 representatives from the group of Township forum chairs: one place for a Community sector chairperson and a second for an elected member Chairperson. It enables a simple route to

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<sup>1</sup> CCfA is a new process that puts local councillors at the forefront of dealing with issues of concern in local communities. Appendix 2 provides more background detail.

achieve consistency and coordination of approach across Township forums as well as a clear mechanism for ensuring a strategic voice from localities at LSP Board.

**4.5.3** We recommend that the Council also makes a clearer connection between this group and the Council's constitution. One option may be to convene this group of co-chairs with community representatives co-opted into roles alongside elected member counterparts. Such an approach might in fact provide a more explicit route to support the local accountability and governance. It might also help to address concerns from some Forum members about the need for a formal structure but not a bureaucratic one.

#### **4.6 PACTS and Township Forums**

There is widespread debate at Forums about the nature and function of the PACT process and how this will interface to the Township Forum's new strategic role – some of this is because PACT has not yet had a major impact in an area. In others it's because it is seen as highly effective and should not be undermined by, what is seen by some to be, an additional layer of bureaucracy. It is important therefore that we use this report as further opportunity to clarify the message and to link together the full implementation of PACT's with the revised role for Township Forums.

At a local spatial level we use the term **PACT** to describe work that goes on at a neighbourhood level and **Township** as the identified strategic, geographic area of the township. There may therefore be a number of PACT processes taking place within a Township.

**4.6.1** These processes at the PACT level are supported by a Neighbourhood Management officer structure known as the Area Manager Group (AMG) and aim to focus on bringing partners together to achieve Local Area Agreement outcomes. At present these focus on outcomes that sit within the remit of the Building Stronger Communities (BSC) Partnership and include things like for example,

- Safer, Cleaner, greener issues
- Diversionary activities for young people to reduce the impact of Anti-Social Behaviour
- Community Engagement and cohesion

However it is not restricted to these areas and the PACT process will also support the delivery of Local Area Agreement outcomes for all Partnerships.

**4.6.2** There will be one Area Manager Group in each of the five twinned Township areas listed below: with each area also having an associated Officer Group comprising front line officers focussing on day to day delivery.

1. Wigan North/ Standish, Aspull & Shevington
2. Wigan South/ Orrell, Billinge & Winstanley
3. Hindley & Abram/ Ashton & Bryn
4. Atherton/ Tyldesley
5. Leigh/ Lowton & Golborne

**4.6.3** This officer structure brings partners together to focus on the local delivery of Local Area Agreement outcomes and needs identified by communities as a priority. It also serves to bring partners together in a regular and structured way to delivery co-ordinated responses where needed to any issue identified from any source and is intended to provide a means for planning, co-ordinating and delivering the services aligned to community need in each locality.

**4.6.4** There will be a clearly defined performance management and reporting framework agreed but in essence this will include the Area Manager/ Officer Group providing performance management information on a quarterly basis in line with the Local Area Agreement targets and a summary of PACT action plans to the Local Strategic Partnership through the Township Forums .

## **4.7 Locality Planning**

**4.7.1** Some development work has begun, led by the Township Managers, to establish a model for how Township Forums can be involved in the planning and delivery of services in localities and propose the following approach shown in the diagram below.

By way of explanation the strategic priorities can be about issues (e.g. Building Schools for the Future, reduce ASB in the locality), individuals (e.g. increase the number of young people

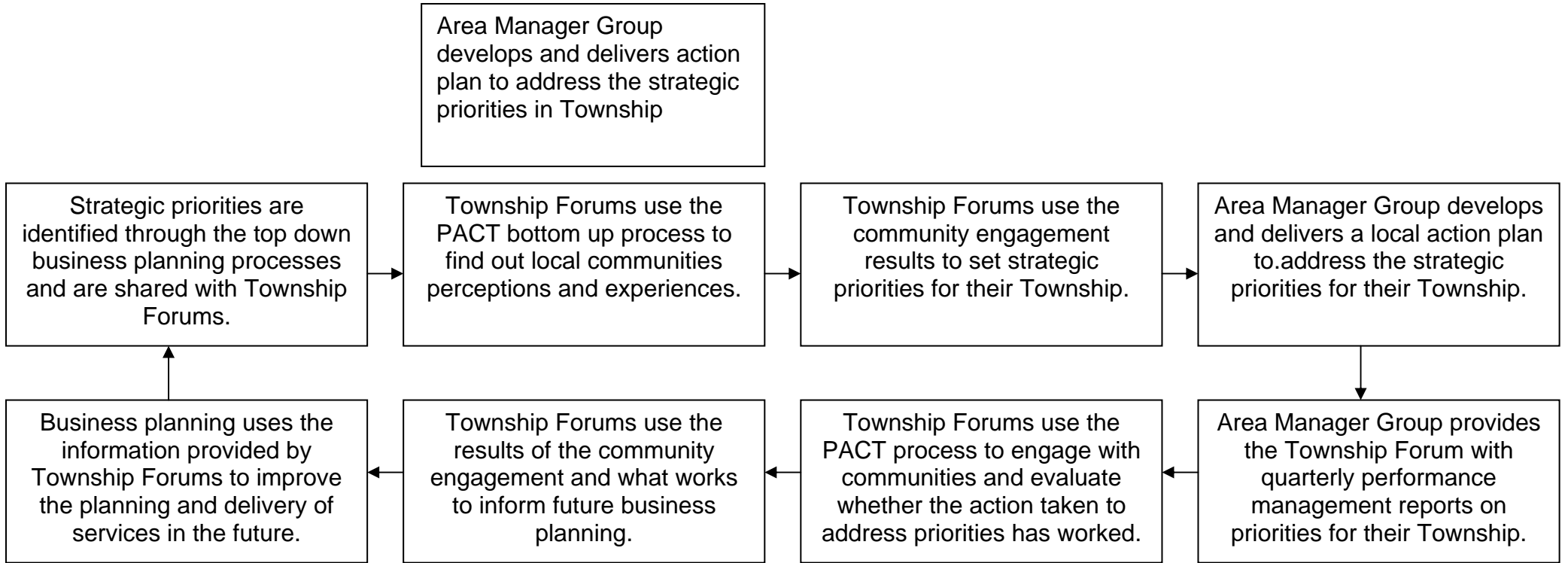
engaged in positive activities in the locality) and projects (e.g., successfully implement the play pathfinder initiative in the locality).

**4.7.2** It is important, that even with the support from the Forums themselves, adequate time must be given to develop Forums into their new strategic role. One way we could do this is by taking an incremental approach to the way in which Township Forums will influence business planning as follows and in piloting the new approach. Township Managers have suggested that,

Year 1 = Township Forums influence priority-setting. Year 1 will begin in November 2009.

Year 2 = Township Forums influence priority-setting and resource allocation

Year 3 = Township Forums influence priority-setting, resource allocation and service specification



**4.7.3** The final area of process we considered was how Township Forums can fully engage with the scrutiny processes of the Council and Wigan Borough Partnership. 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.

**4.8** We suggest that based on our consultation with Forums that accountability and scrutiny processes are key measures of an effective Forum. This can and will take place at many different levels. For example,

- Identifying key issues that may be referred to Overview and Scrutiny for further investigation (where clearly they have borough-wide implications) – for example congestion; demands on services like podiatry
- Playing a leading role in arrangements for dealing with CCfA
- Providing a locality level view on issues referred to them by the thematic scrutiny committees – for example feedback on the operation of PACTs, preventative services for older people
- Scrutinising locality plans and activity like Mini Local Area Agreements, for example how local schools are demonstrating improvements in attainment at Key Stages.
- Wigan Borough Partnership has reduced the number of partnerships to four, which provides alignment with the Council's revised structure of four thematic scrutiny committees.

**4.9** A new scrutiny model for WBP should therefore include the following,

- Township Forums scrutinising Mini LAA's – with specific targets agreed with each Forum.
- The thematic scrutiny committees to scrutinising partnership delivery of local priority outcomes as set out in the LAA, along with their other roles.

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

## 5. Principles of working together

So much has been learned from the work of the Townships so far and from our consultation exercises. This has helped to highlight those elements that are the key ingredients for success, upon which we can now build into our revised approach. Some of these are the processes that we have described above, others are principles.

<b>Outcome focused on performance management and delivery</b>	Even though some results can take along time to deliver and the role of the Township is to take a strategic long term view – it is still vital for members of the Township Forum and local people to see that the joint work and effort is delivering results.
<b>Influencing</b>	Township Forums need to be able to influence organisations and organisations need to open themselves up to this.
<b>Bottom up</b>	The focus for a Township Forum should be to ensure that local people with their elected members have a strategic voice – influencing decisions that affect their areas and shaping the priorities for local action and resources. The Forum is simply a consultation device. It will be a genuine partnership with mutual respect between local people, councillors and the senior managers and services with whom they work.
<b>Accountability</b>	Local people and Elected members feel strongly about the need for all public services and local partners to be accountable to the Township Forum. Scrutiny is part of this – but it is also about mutual trust where public services recognise the importance of being held to account by the local Forum.
<b>Keep out party politics</b>	Township Forums are a key place for the expression and exercise of community leadership. The role of elected members is critical for effective local democracy. But successful working must be built on mutual respect with members of township forums realistic about the role of politics (and party politics) within local democracy. And that Elected members acknowledge that Forums are not a political setting and that overtly party political behaviour is inappropriate.
<b>Mutual trust and respect</b>	We value and respect the contribution of all members of the Forum

## **6. Aligning Township Forums with locality service delivery**

- 6.1** The principles described in section 5 clearly place the Township Forum at the heart of the process for understanding and setting local priorities. Delivering results in localities will be driven in part by clear action plans in each locality.
- 6.2** In order to be effective these local action plans need to be embedded with the mainstream thinking and service management and delivery arrangements of all the key public services. In simple terms, needs and priorities that form the core of a local action plan – need to be developed and documented in such a way – and at the right time in order to inform the business / service planning – and then resource allocation of all core services.
- 6.3** There may be some key dates in the year when budgets are set and decisions made about priorities and workload. However our approach in localities needs also to be flexible and responsive. We need to see Township plans and borough wide service plans as connected and inter-related.
- 6.4** Over time the two processes should move closer to one another – and the job of the WBP and Council is to help manage the relationship between the two layers. By providing leadership; get the timing right and support the right conversations that lead to improvement.
- 6.5** At the heart of the action planning alignment is a recognition that a Township Forum with strategic clout will help to deliver real innovation in the way that the Borough works. The answers to the key local needs may be provided by the current public sector – but the move to greater efficiency, diverse commissioning and co-production will lead the Forums to find new ways of making things happen.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1** In making recommendations to Elected Members we recognise that on some aspects the Council has the power to fully implement them if it is so inclined.

This is because on some aspects the recommendations relate purely to Council business.

**7.2** However in other areas they relate more specifically to the business of Wigan Borough Partnership (WBP) and within this context we recommend the Council uses its leadership influence to bring these issues to the attention of WBP and requires a response from them.

**7.3** If these recommendations are agreed section 8 contains a draft implementation plan allocating responsibilities, timescales etc.

### **Recommendation 1**

That the minimum standards described at 4.3.1 are developed and implemented by the Council by June 2009.

### **Recommendation 2**

That the Council uses its leadership role at WBP to embed the recommendations as described at 4.4.

### **Recommendation 3**

That the Council supports the establishment of a formally constituted "Forum of Chairs" as described at 4.5.3 by June 2009.

### **Recommendation 4**

That the Council supports the definition of the interface between PACTs and Township Forums as described at 4.6 and communicates this effectively across key partners.

### **Recommendation 5**

That the Council supports the further development of an integrated approach to locality planning and requires this to be implemented within the Council by Autumn 2009 for the 2010/11 planning cycle.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Council supports the proposals for more effective local scrutiny as outlined at 4.8 and 4.9, to be integrated with the Council's other new scrutiny processes.

**8. Implementation plan 2009/10**

<b>Workstream/Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Performance target</b>	<b>Resources needed</b>
<b>What ?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Measured by?</b>	<b>People/money needed?</b>
Develop a revised terms of reference for Forums that includes a clearly defined set of roles and responsibilities	Council officers and Township Forum chairs work together to produce document	Led by Democratic Services Team	By June 2009	Terms of reference in place from new municipal year. Agreed as part of constitution	Peter Hassett Nick Lamper Simon Dale Ian Harrison Forum Chairs
Council's new scrutiny arrangements are developed to include clear role for Township Forums	Clear roles and responsibilities and functions identifies for Township Forums	Led by Democratic Services Team	By June 2009	Scrutiny protocol demonstrates clearly the role of Forums	Peter Hassett Nick Lamper Simon Dale Ian Harrison Forum Chairs
Establish formally constituted forum of Chairs	Agree approach Build into Council constitution Implement	Led by Democratic Services Team	By June 2009	Terms of reference in place Agreed as part of constitution	Peter Hassett Nick Lamper Simon Dale Ian Harrison Forum Chairs

<b>Workstream/Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Performance target</b>	<b>Resources needed</b>
<b>What ?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Measured by?</b>	<b>People/money needed?</b>
Establish agreed partnership approach to business and financial planning and Township Forum role in this.	Agree approach Deploy and test with Forums and partners. Full implementation	Led by LSP Advisory Group	By November 2009	Approach agreed by June 2009 Piloting July-August. Full implementation from November 2009	Simon Dale Vicky Sharrock Julie Ridgway Township Forum Chairs LSP Advisory Group
Communication programme established for partners and Forums to introduce new approach.	Establish programme	Led by Township Team with support from the LSP support officer	By May 2009	Programme agreed May 2009 Deployment throughout May and June 2009	Julie Ridgway Media and Comms Team
Establish "job description" for officers supporting Forums	Identify key skills and requirements for officers from all partner agencies supporting Township Forums	Led by LSP Advisory Group	By May 2009	Job description produced	Steve Peddie Simon Dale Ian Harrison

<b>Workstream/Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Performance target</b>	<b>Resources needed</b>
<b>What ?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Measured by?</b>	<b>People/money needed?</b>
Implement locality induction programme Include modules for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Directors</li> <li>• Area Managers</li> <li>• Local fieldwork teams</li> <li>• Community and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector stakeholders</li> </ul>	Develop structured locality induction package	Led by LSP Advisory Group	By September 2009	Deployment of partnership locality induction package	Steve Peddie Simon Dale Ian Harrison  External, skills package eg., group facilitation methods
Develop local information systems fully so that Township Forum's can plan effectively	Wisdom Local Spending reports	Business Intelligence team Support from partnership analysts and outreach teams	Staged development during 2009. Live performance reporting in localities by summer 2010	Area and thematic reports utilised in each Township Forum Registered users for WISDOM system	Some investment already agreed by LSP via the Performance reward Grant

<b>Workstream/Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Performance target</b>	<b>Resources needed</b>
<b>What ?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Measured by?</b>	<b>People/money needed?</b>
Support the development of Township Forums so that they can fully implement their new role	Develop training/development package for officers and Forum Members covering relevant aspects of implementation plan	Led by Township Teams	By September 2009	Delivery of training/development sessions	Ian Harrison Julie Ridgway Township Managers Simon Dale
Implement pilot in participatory budgeting	Develop agreed system for deployment of capital programme model	LSP Advisory Group	Scheme agreed Oct 09 System operational Dec 09	Increase performance in NI4 – local people feeling they can influence decisions in their own area Independent evaluation	Support from National PB unit (Manchester office) Simon Dale Lynn Kay
Develop local profiling to report local spend and resource allocation within each area	Pilot report format in specific area	Led by LSP advisory group Township Team		To be agreed	Steve Lyon Mark Rotheram

**Wigan Council**  
**Chief Executive's Department**  
Chief Executive : Joyce Redfearn

**Our reference:** DS/KF  
**Your reference:**  
**Please ask for:** Katherine Fairclough  
**Extension:** 2095  
**Direct line:** 01942 827095  
**Date:** 8 September 2008

**(Fill in area) Township Forum Meeting**

**(Fill in date)**

Dear Township Forum member,

**Discussion on the subject of: Township Forums and Participation in Council and Wigan Borough Partnership Decision making**

First of all, thank you for agreeing to make time on your agenda for us. I hope this note sets out the reason for our visit and the background to the issues we would like to discuss with you.

**Background – why we would like to meet with you**

Over the last few months the Council has been bringing together a range of information as part of a review of Democratic Services responsibilities. One part of this has been to look at how Township Forums can play their full part in decision making. This work came together in a report to the Council's Cabinet on 14 June 2008.

Since this time we have discussed this report at various Council meetings and at an Elected Members seminar in late August 2008. Council officers have also briefed Township Forum chairs on the main aspects of the report and how we can best work with Township Forums to improve our proposals.

Forums have suggested that the best way to do this is through two, separate and short sessions as part of your regular Forum meetings. These will take place at two of the Forum meetings before Christmas 2008.

**In the next section I set out the kinds of issues we would like to discuss with you and how,**

As I mentioned earlier we are hoping for two sessions with each Forum,

- (1) Session 1 aims to get a feel for how things work at the Forum and the challenges you face; set out the proposals and seek feedback from the Forum on our suggested approach and how they can be improved.
- (2) Session 2 will be the opportunity to identify minimum standards, what is required for effective working at Forum level, membership and rights and responsibilities and so on.

We have produced a summary of the main issues we are proposing and how these link into the Council and Wigan Borough partnership. I have attached this with this letter. Alongside of this summary note I also wanted to set out the major proposals we would like to discuss with you and I have noted these below.

**What is proposed in the report?**

- That Townships Forums begin to focus on the big issues; provide local leadership; produce and monitor local plans.
- There are minimum standards that all Forums work to.
- That local plans are produced that inform mainstream service and budget planning in all agencies
- Forums begin to scrutinise and hold to account all public services in their area.
- A Senior Manager is allocated to each Township. This should come from the partner agencies as well as the Council. In the Council this would be a Service Director. Their role would be to coordinate the strategic activity; ensure issues are dealt with and responded to; and that the Township's agreed priorities are fed into the Council's and Partners' decision making
- Township Forums influence local decision making

**Minimum standards could include things like,**

- Township Forum will have balanced membership of local people, Elected Members & partners.
- There will be clarity on who can vote and make decisions and represent the Forum.
- The Forum's Terms of reference will be linked to Council constitution.
- There will be a role for Township Forums in the Local Strategic Partnership.
- There would be a requirement for the Township Forum to produce and monitor its annual plan

**Feedback and reporting**

We will take notes at each session and feedback a summary of these to each Forum in turn.

We will then begin to draw together all that we have learned into a report. The steps to achieving this are described below,

- In December 2008 we will draw together all the comments, feedback and suggestions and begin to draft a report.
- In February and March 2009 we will report back the findings and draft proposals to Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Governance and Improvement Committee.
- In March 2009 we will report back to Township Forum's on these proposals.
- In May 2009 we aim to implement new ways of working.

We really do appreciate the time you are giving up to help us improve our proposals and we look forward to seeing you in the near future.

Kind regards



Katherine Fairclough

**Service Director, Wigan Council on behalf of the Democratic Services Review Group**

## **A Guide to Councillor Calls for Action**

### **What is a Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)?**

CCfA is a process which puts local councillors at the forefront of dealing with issues of concern in local communities. It gives councillors a central role in calling to account the work of council services and other agencies at a local level. When concerns are identified (either as a result of information from individuals, community groups or a councillor's own observations), councillors should be able to trigger a response from service providers and help ensure the concerns are dealt with. **As a last resort**, when a problem cannot be solved the CCfA can enable councillors to trigger a local scrutiny review.

The CCfA, alongside proposals which will require a much wider range of agencies to formally co-operate with scrutiny in the future, is intended to provide greater emphasis to the vital work undertaken by councillors in their communities as community advocates and champions, and to further increase the accountability of public service providers to local communities.

### **Where does the idea come from?**

In the 2006 Local Government White Paper, 'Strong and prosperous communities', the Minister for Communities and Local Government said:

"Local communities are represented by their democratically elected councillors. We want to strengthen the ability of local councillors to speak up for their communities and demand an answer when things go wrong. We propose that this role should be exercised by individual councillors through a '**Community Call for Action**' or collectively by councillors through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee."

Since that time, the concept has evolved (including a change in terminology from Community Call for Action to Councillor Call for Action), and also featured in the 2008 white paper "Communities in control".

The main provisions relating to CCfA are contained in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, with provisions around CCfAs relating to community safety in the Police and Justice Act 2006. Guidance has just been issued jointly by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), setting out proposals for the way in which CCfAs are dealt with, and work is under way to put in place the appropriate processes. This will be dealt with in more detail in the forthcoming seminar(s) for members on the council's revised scrutiny arrangements.