

Neighbourhood Forums

(Report by Head of Democratic & Central Services)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 22nd April 2009, the Council approved arrangements, subject to consultation, for the introduction of neighbourhood forums in Huntingdonshire as a means of improving community engagement and informing, consulting and involving local people in the exercise of the functions of the Council and its partners.

2. Proposed Arrangements

- 2.1 Consultation is continuing on the precise detail of the arrangements. An initial draft of the terms of reference for the new forums and panels is attached as an annex to this report. This has been considered at a meeting of the Huntingdonshire Local Strategic Partnership when general support for the proposals was expressed by partners.
- 2.2 Following further discussion with the Divisional Commander of Cambridgeshire Constabulary, it has become apparent that the initial idea for six panels in Huntingdonshire as envisaged by the Structure Review Working Party will create significant logistical and administrative problems for the Police. A model based on the Police Safer Neighbourhood Panels appears the preferable solution with five neighbourhoods as set out in the attached annex with the smaller policing panels at North Huntingdon and Eynesbury being absorbed into the larger areas.

3. Representation

- 3.1 The model envisaged by the Council provided for a panel to be established of up to ten representatives of local authorities and other public and voluntary bodies in each forum area. Each panel is intended to include one representative of the District Council who represents a ward in that neighbourhood, although all ward councillors are encouraged to attend the meetings. It was intended that forums and panels be chaired by the District Council representative but following discussion at the LSP meeting, the proposal is now for the initial chairmanship only to be held by a District Councillor with subsequent chairmanship being a matter for each panel.
- 3.2 The panels will replace the Police Safer Neighbourhood Panel meetings already programmed after the beginning of the new calendar year. In the interim an initial forum meeting will be held for the southern neighbourhood at the Priory Centre, St Neots on 28th September as a pilot to enable valuable lessons to be learnt.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 A further report will be submitted to Cabinet on the final outcome of the consultation arrangements with partners.
- 4.2 In the interim, views are invited on the draft terms of reference attached and the Cabinet is invited to appoint representatives to the five forum areas who will become the initial chairmen of those forums and panels.

5. Recommendations

5.1 It is therefore

Recommended

- (a) that the Cabinet comment on the draft terms of reference of the proposed neighbourhood forums and panels; and
- (b) that the Cabinet appoint representatives to the five proposed forums and panels from the wards situated in each neighbourhood.

Contact Person

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Background Papers

Report of the Structure Review Working Party.