

Report to BEACONSFIELD FORUM

Title: LOCAL AREA FORUMS

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Electoral Divisions affected; Beaconsfield

Summary

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 Members are asked to **note**
- a) The purpose of Local Area Forums
 - b) The proposed terms of reference and constitution for the Beaconsfield Forum (see Appendix A)
- 1.2 Members are asked to **agree**
- a) That elected members of Buckinghamshire County Council, South Bucks District Council and Beaconsfield Town Council meet as a fully constituted Local Area Forum, titled Beaconsfield Forum.
 - b) The proposed terms of reference and constitution for Beaconsfield Forum

2. Background

- 2.1 Local decision-making has been part of the County Council's policy since 2000 when the County Council received a clear message from Parishes that they saw the County as remote and unapproachable. Four Local Committees were established by the County Council to help address this and over the following eight years these committees successfully worked to evolve local decision making.
- 2.2 As a next step in July 2008, Buckinghamshire County Council approved its Locality Strategy. The implementation of this strategy included a package of measures to support closer working with town and parish councils, the District Councils and other key service providers within localities.

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- 2.3 One such measure was the establishment of Local Area Forums to provide collective civic leadership for a local area. The establishment of 19 Local Area Forums will enable devolution of influence and decision-making to a much more local level.
- 2.4 To start the process during 2009/10 the County Council devolved approximately £44,000 funding to each of the 19 Local Area Forums. This was made up of funding for Positive Activities for Young People; Grants for Early Years Provision; Existing delegated highways/transport budget; and a discretionary revenue budget.
- 2.5 The County Council will also seek to work with the Local Area Forums as building blocks to plan and deliver its services. Through the Local Area Forums, Parishes will be encouraged to bring for discussion their own priorities and influence service delivery in their local area. Forums are also strongly encouraged to get involved in a wide range of local consultation on matters affecting their specific communities
- 2.6 In law, Local Area Forums are unincorporated associations with written constitutions. In simple terms, the legal status of the Forums is that they are informal meetings convened by the County Council, to which all County Councillors, District Councillors and representatives of each Parish and Town Council within a Local Area are invited to participate. The County Council is also keen that Forums encourage participation from other organisations - statutory or voluntary which have the interests of the local area at heart i.e. Police; PCT; VCA.
- 2.7 The County Council has offered some guidance on the operation of Local Area Forums but has left it up to each Forum to determine its own detailed operating arrangements (e.g. frequency of meetings, voting and membership). As the convenor of the meetings, the County Council has reserved the position of Chairman to a local area County Councillor.
- 2.8 The decisions of Local Area Forums are not binding on the County Council. However where the County Council has delegated budgets or decisions to the Forum, it is with the firm intention that the money will be spent or the decision acted upon in accordance with the wishes of the Forum unless there is an exceptional reason why this should not be so.
- 2.9 The County Council is now seeking to move to the creation of a formal Local Area Forum for this area.

Report ends