

THE BEECHES LOCAL AREA FORUM PROPOSED CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members are asked to consider this draft constitution and terms of reference.

The following is drawn from the detailed proposals contained in the resolution of the County Council on July 10th 2008 Appendix F – Terms of Reference. Copies of the Council resolution, draft constitution and terms of reference will be available at the meeting on the 12th August 2009 or can be viewed on the County Council website <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/moderngov/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1035>

LOCAL AREA FORUMS – TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Capturing Priorities for the Area

Agreement about the key local priorities for the area - drawn from Parish Plans, County and District Community Plans, the Local Area Agreement plus other consultation and community engagement in the area and the local knowledge of the LAF members - will enable a shared understanding of local issues and priorities for improving the quality of life of the area to be used as the basis for collective action.

LAFs will provide an additional mechanism by which to engage local people and local stakeholders on the priorities and policies of local service providers, including the desired level and range of services and major service developments affecting the area and annual budget proposals e.g. waste, major development proposals, school closures.

There is also the opportunity to consider the effectiveness of all public services within the community area in meeting local needs, informed by residents' feedback, and to recommend changes to service policy as appropriate.

2. Decision Making and Funding

LAFs will take decisions on matters devolved from the County Council, District Council and other partner organisations, including Town and Parish Councils. They will also take decisions on budgets allocated by the County Council, District Council and other partners.

3. Community Issues

LAFs will provide the chance to co-ordinate County Council consultation and community engagement at a local level; to promote and extend community empowerment in the area and to ensure feedback on County issues raised. Other issues of local concern will be referred to the relevant organisation or partnership for attention. The LAF will have a role in the monitoring action and negotiating the resolution of issues.

Joint Forums (LAFs)

The LAFs will be joint forums of the County Council with the District Council, Local Councils and other partners.

4. LAF Meetings

The LAF will normally meet quarterly within its local area.

Additional meetings or workshops/conferences can be convened as required outside the normal cycle of meetings.

5. Membership

All County Councillors, District Councillors and representatives of Parish and Town councils will be invited to be members.

Representatives of police, fire and rescue and health, voluntary and community sector and other key local organisations (e.g.: local businesses) may also be invited to attend the LAFs. This is a decision for each LAF to make although it is hoped that LAFs will wish to engage as widely as possible.

The LAF will also be free to invite representatives of organisations or individuals to meetings as appropriate for specific topics.

6. Chairing

The Chairman will be a County Council Member elected by the LAF membership.

The Vice-Chairman will normally be a member of the District Council, again elected by LAF members.

7. Decision Making

Decision making will normally be by consensus.

In the event that voting is required, the principle of one vote per member (in the case of parishes, their appointed representatives) will apply.

It is assumed that twin or triple hatted County Councillors for the Local Area will vote as County Councillors at these meetings. It is therefore expected that Parishes will wish to appoint someone other than a County or District Councillor as their representative, in order to maximise their capacity to influence the forum

The LAF may extend voting rights to representatives of other regularly attending bodies if it chooses.

With respect to decisions relating to County Council services and budgets the LAF decision is advisory with the final decision resting with the appropriate Head of Service (This is the same procedure that worked well at Local Committee)

A Head of Service decision not to follow the LAFs advice would require a report back to the LAF by the Head of Service

8. Public engagement

The LAFs will be open to the press and public. (There may be rare occasions, when the business is defined as confidential in which case the Chair will have to request non-LAF members to leave the room.)

All LAFs will allow a 20 minute period for public questions and comment during each meeting. Members of the public should be encouraged to submit their questions in advance of the meeting to facilitate a full answer. In addition, members of the public may comment on other items on the agenda during the meeting at the Chairman's discretion.

Forums are encouraged to promote public attendance and engagement e.g. Allowing members of the public to present petitions and speak on particular agenda items.

9. Petitions

Petitions may be received by the LAF.

In the case of petitions relating to the County Council, the LAF will refer the petition to the relevant service. If the LAF considers the petition to raise issues of serious priority or countywide significance the County Councillor(s) for the Division concerned may choose to present the petition to Full Council. The County Council's response will be reported back to the LAF and the Cabinet Member may also report progress to Full Council.

Petitions relating to the District Council, or other bodies, will be passed to the District Council and a formal response reported back in due course.

10. Officer support for the LAFs

Regular officer support for the meetings will be provided by the County Council's Area Coordinator and Lead Area Officer, supported by a representative of the County Council's Democratic Services, who will provide administrative support to the Forum and constitutional advice.

In addition, officers from either the County or District Councils (or other bodies) may attend in support of particular agenda items.

11. Agenda and minutes

An agenda will be prepared for each LAF meeting under the guidance of the Chair. However all LAF members are invited to nominate items for the agenda.

Formal agendas will be issued in advance of the meeting and notes will be circulated following the meeting.

It is the responsibility of each Council's representative at the meeting to ensure that they report back to their organisation, with the aid of the minutes, to ensure that decisions are actioned and information flow maintained.