

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

12 APRIL 2012

SUBJECT:	AREA FORUM DEVELOPMENT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	CLLR IAN LEWIS
KEY DECISION?	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report makes recommendations to increase engagement with Wirral communities in regard to Council decision making, and resource allocation. This involves a programme of activity for 2012/13 as well as a proposal for the distribution of the funding available to Area Forums for the coming fiscal year.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Cabinet resolved in June 2011 to develop Neighbourhood Plans for each of Wirral's 11 Area Forums, which preceded a comprehensive consultation programme throughout July, August and September 2011. The results of this consultation are being used to develop plans for each of Wirral's 11 Area Forums. Council resolved in February 2012 that additional funding would be devolved to Area Forums to commission activity against the priorities contained within those plans. It is therefore important to agree a robust, accessible and appropriate method for increasing engagement and distributing funding.

3.0 AREA FORUM FUNDING

3.1 The following funding is available for each Area Forum to spend in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan priorities, with the 'Policy Option' funding available for 2012/13 only:

Funding	Per Forum	Total
Funds for You	£ 15,500	£ 170,500
You Decide	£ 20,000	£ 220,000
Integrated Transport	£ 20,000	£ 220,000
Budget Policy Option	£ 30,000	£ 330,000
Pavements Policy Option	£ 10,000	£ 110,000
Play Areas Policy Option	£ 4,000	£ 44,000
Fly tipping Policy Option	£ 5,000	£ 55,000
	£ 104,500	£ 1,149,500

3.2 Council resolved in February 2012 that 70% of this funding would be allocated across each of the 11 Area Forums on a pro-rata basis, with the remaining 30% being distributed according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

- 3.3 The policy options allocated for the cleaning of play areas and removal of fly tipping will be devolved to Area Forums. The communications and engagement team are working with colleagues from Technical Services to determine the method for distributing and commissioning this funding to achieve best value for the forum. A report will follow.
- 3.4 The remaining funding (£1,050,500) will be distributed among the 11 Area Forums on the basis outlined in 3.2, which gives each Forum the following funding allocation for 2012/13:

Area Forum	IMD Allocation	Pro Rata	2012/13 Total
BC	£ 14,353	£ 66,850	£ 81,203
BSTJC	£ 51,782	£ 66,850	£ 118,632
BTRF	£ 55,680	£ 66,850	£ 122,530
BE	£ 22,397	£ 66,850	£ 89,247
HPT	£ 8,928	£ 66,850	£ 75,778
LMSM	£ 28,903	£ 66,850	£ 95,753
LS	£ 48,671	£ 66,850	£ 115,521
NBW	£ 25,975	£ 66,850	£ 92,825
OP	£ 22,769	£ 66,850	£ 89,619
GFIU	£ 24,215	£ 66,850	£ 91,065
WW	£ 11,472	£ 66,850	£ 78,322
Total	£ 315,150	£ 735,350	£ 1,050,500.00

BC = Bebington and Clatterbridge, BSTJC = Bidston, St James and Claughton, BTRF = Birkenhead, Tranmere and Rock Ferry, HPT = Heswall, Pensby and Thingwall, LMSM = Leasowe, Moreton and Saughall Massie, LS = Liscard and Seacombe, NBW = New Brighton and Wallasey, OP = Oxton and Prenton, GFIU = Greasby, Frankby, Irby and Upton, WW = West Wirral

- 3.5 To achieve this IMD allocation, all of the IMD scores for Wirral's Local Super Output Areas (LSOA) are added together to a sum total of 5634.48. A percentage is then ascertained by dividing each LSOA's individual score by the total sum. The total sum of money to be divided up is then multiplied by each LSOA's % score to come up with the 'cash' value of deprivation in each LSOA. LSOAs are then aggregated up to Area Forum.
- 3.6 Aspects of this funding are still ring fenced for specific purposes. 'You Decide' funding is currently available for area forums to purchase additional Council services, with 'Funds for You' available for community and voluntary groups. It is proposed to remove that ring fencing and to combine the 'You Decide' and 'Funds for You' allocation with the £30,000 per forum Budget policy option to create one pot of funding that can be used by the Forum as freely as possible, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan priorities and the Cabinet decision of November 2011.
- 3.7 It is further proposed that the ring fencing around the funding available for road safety repairs (through the Budget Policy Option and Integrated Transport Block funding) are kept, and that this funding is used by the Forum to direct additional roads and road safety improvements in their area. This means that, in effect, each Forum's funding allocation is split 30% for roads and road safety improvements and 70% for commissioning additional activity from the community, voluntary, faith, private or public sectors in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan priorities.

- 3.8 Levels of funding per forum would therefore be at the following levels for 2012/13, with the Road Safety aspect available purely for the area forum to request additional road safety and maintenance improvements, and the 'Commission' aspect available for Area Forums to spend as they wish in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan priorities;

Area Forum	Total	Road Safety	Commission
BC	£ 81,203	£ 24,361	£ 56,842
BSTJC	£ 118,632	£ 35,589	£ 83,042
BTRF	£ 122,530	£ 36,759	£ 85,771
BE	£ 89,247	£ 26,774	£ 62,472
HPT	£ 75,778	£ 22,733	£ 53,044
LMSM	£ 95,753	£ 28,726	£ 67,027
LS	£ 115,521	£ 34,656	£ 80,865
NBW	£ 92,825	£ 27,847	£ 64,977
OP	£ 89,619	£ 26,885	£ 62,733
GFIU	£ 91,065	£ 27,319	£ 63,746
WW	£ 78,322	£ 23,496	£ 54,825
Total	£ 1,050,500	£ 315,150	£ 735,350

- 3.9 It is suggested that this will create a single 'Neighbourhood Fund' for each Forum to use flexibly according to the Neighbourhood Plan priorities and that this approach be adopted for the future distribution of all forum funding. We will therefore promote the Neighbourhood Fund across all voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, as well as giving Council and partner services the opportunity to bid to deliver activity to contribute towards the Neighbourhood Plan priorities.
- 3.10 Given that the Council has been, and will continue to, run the 'Neighbourhood Plan' consultation project, and additionally the numerous funding pots are proposed to be combined and renamed as the 'Neighbourhood Fund', it is further proposed that 'Area Forums' be renamed 'Neighbourhoods Forums', in an effort to make the promotion of these projects clearer and more accessible for communities.
- 3.11 The Youth Parliament and Older People's Parliament also receive funding in the amount of £20,000 per annum (each), which is currently ring fenced to purchase additional Council services. It is proposed that for unspent and future allocations of this funding the ring fencing is removed and the organisations are able to commission activity they feel would be of benefit to their groups as freely as possible.

4.0 AREA FORUM BUSINESS 2012/13

- 4.1 There are three rounds of Area Forum meetings planned for 2012/13; June 2012, October 2012 and February 2013. Given that the February 2012 area forum agenda was focussed on the 'Neighbourhood' aspects of the consultation findings, it is proposed that the Forum business for 2012/13 is designed as follows:
- 4.2 **June 2012:** This meeting will focus on presenting detailed consultation findings to the community, similar in format to the February meetings but focussing on 'Your Family' and 'Your Economy' responses. At this meeting we will also use the findings from 'Neighbourhood', 'Family' and 'Economy' consultation to produce, and agree

with Elected Members and the community, a list of key priorities for the area. These priorities will act as the basis of an action plan for the area, and the funding outlined above will be commissioned by the Forum in accordance with those priorities.

- 4.3 **June 2012:** Also in June 2012, we will seek to appoint 'Community Representatives' in each Forum area, a detailed specification and proposal for election will be agreed with all elected Members prior to the June meetings. The community reps will be allocated for an initial one year term, with the option of extending for a further two years. The process for appointing Community Representatives will be tailored to suit each individual forum area.
- 4.4 **July-September 2012:** The list of priorities for each forum area will be published and advertised throughout the community. Community organisations, voluntary groups, partners and Council services will be encouraged to supply expressions of interest to deliver services, activities and projects to have a positive impact against the identified priorities. Expressions will first be assessed by Council officers to ensure they meet the minimum criteria, with successful applicants being invited to attend the October Area Forum meetings. Expressions meeting the criteria will be published online prior to the area forum meeting for a limited period of public consultation.
- 4.5 **October 2012:** As in 2011, the October round of forum meetings will be utilised to agree and distribute area forum funding, through a participatory budgeting process, a detailed protocol for the participatory budgeting process is outlined in Appendix A.
- 4.6 **February 2013:** Organisations who successfully applied for Forum funding in October will be invited back to present to the forum their progress so far. This meeting will also serve as an opportunity to outline further activity for 2013/14.
- 4.7 It is further proposed that the Forum agendas will be driven by the process outlined above, with Forum Chairs having the opportunity to approve additional items as requested by partners and the public on a case-by-case basis. Partner involvement in the Area Forum meetings will be encouraged, but unless specifically requested or agreed to present by the chair, will consist of setting up stalls/stands at the venue and being available to answer questions during public question time and/or dealing direct with members of the public at the end of the meeting in a 'surgery' type approach. It is proposed that Merseyside Police and the Fire Service are still invited to every Forum meeting.
- 4.8 To maximise the amount of time the community engagement team can spend working with community groups, the proposal is to cease production of the existing 'Area Co-ordinators' report in its current form, and replace with an ongoing 'Area Action Plan'. This change will also involve stopping the production of verbatim 'minutes' being taken at the events, and replacing them with simple records of action points, questions and answers.
- 4.9 Council resolved in February 2012 to focus an additional investment of £400,000 on reducing child poverty in the borough. This work will be closely linked with the area forum funding and a joint project team will be established to monitor progress.

4.10 An amended Area Forum 'Constitution' is attached at Appendix B for consideration and agreement.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 The contents of this report seeks to mitigate the risk of the Council not listening to and engaging with residents in relation to service design and delivery and resource allocation.

5.2 A project team has been established with robust project planning and risk management in place. The risks in relation to this project are regularly reviewed to ensure that these are addressed through mitigating action.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Cabinet resolved in June 2011 to develop Neighbourhood Plans for each of Wirral's 11 area forums which:

- Accurately reflect the real challenges for the area based on engagement and consultation with local communities
- Set out a vision for a community and identify local priorities within the area
- Robustly influence the way the Council invests resources and delivers services in a local area
- Determine the future distribution of forum funding

The process outlined in this report is designed to implement this work and as such no other options were appropriate.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The consultation approach has been developed to initiate the widest possible consultation and engagement with local communities. Consultation plans were drawn up for each forum area and included consultation events and a targeted programme for engagement with Wirral's Communities.

7.2 Consultation has taken place on the draft findings with local residents and ward councillors at the October forum events and also made available on the Council's website and local libraries and One Stop Shops to provide a further opportunities for local residents to review and comment on the draft consultation findings.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 This report is designed to give approval to begin the process of distributing Council funding, giving opportunities to voluntary, community and faith groups to access funding.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 £1.05m in funding has been allocated to Area Forums, from core funding and a range of budget policy options for 2012/13 only, in order to commission activity towards their neighbourhood plan priorities. Existing staffing resources will be used during the continued development of the Neighbourhood Plans.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None arising directly from this report.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached – (*insert appropriate hyperlink*).

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None arising directly from this report.

12.1 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None arising directly from this report.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 It is recommended that the proposals in this report are agreed as the basis for the future development of the Area Forum engagement programme and the distribution of Area Forum funding,

13.2 The existing 'You Decide' and 'Funds for You' funding streams will be combined with the £30,000 p/forum policy option into one 'Neighbourhood Fund' and have the ring fenced elements removed. The funding allocated to Road Safety and pavement improvements will be added to this Neighbourhood fund, but ring fenced still for Road Safety and pavement improvements.

13.3 That forum members take into account particular areas of deprivation within their forum area when allocating funding, using the IMD criteria as a guide.

13.4 Funding will be distributed following the process outlined in Appendix A, with the October round of Forum meetings acting as participatory budgeting events in those areas meeting the requirements as outlined in Appendix A. Cabinet to retain final approval of all schemes recommended for approval by Area Forums.

13.5 The main agenda item for all eleven meetings in June 2012 and February 2013 will be linked directly to the Neighbourhood Plan project, with the option for each individual chair to request additional items be added to the agenda. Community Reps will also be appointed at the June meetings, if agreed with ward members.

13.6 The Area Forum Constitution at Appendix B is to be considered and accepted as guidance for Members.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 The Council has committed to engaging, consulting and listening to residents when allocating resources, making decisions and designing services. This report is designed to increase the level of influence a community is able to exert in this area.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participatory Budgeting Protocol
Appendix B: Area Forum Constitution

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	24 November 2011
Cabinet	23 June 2011