

Time commenced - 6.00 pm

Time finished - 8.25 pm

COMMUNITY COMMISSION 29 AUGUST 2007

Present: Councillor Bayliss (in the Chair)
Councillors Berry, Gerrard, Jennings and Troup

In attendance: Councillors Afzal, Banwait, Care, Carr, Chera, Graves, Grimadell, Higginbottom, Ingall, S Khan, Latham, Lowe, Marshall, Poulter, Rawson, Richards and Wood

29/07 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jackson, Redfern, Tittley, Webb and Williamson.

30/07 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items

31/07 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Items for Discussion

32/07 Neighbourhood Working

The Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director of Corporate and Adult Services, setting out the proposed arrangements to transform Area Panels into Neighbourhood Boards and Forums.

The process was currently looking at amendments to the Constitution and to the Good Practice Guide for the new Neighbourhood Boards and Forums. The report addressed the previous comments from the Commission and it was noted that there were still discussions taking place to ensure that the integration of the Children and Young People Commission work was included.

It was reported that the Chair of the Neighbourhood Board would be appointed annually by Full Council and that the Board would have the same delegated powers as the Area Panels for dealing with petitions..

It was noted that it would be necessary for Council to amend the Constitution to replace Area Panel references for Neighbourhood Boards and Forums and to enable minor changes to be made to the working practices without needing to amend the constitution each time.

The Good Practice Guide was proposed by the Commission to enable the process to

be brought together for Councillors, residents and service providers; this would be shared with partners to provide a clear set of arrangements with flexibility at a local level.

The final round of Area Panels would be in September/October 2007 and dates of the Neighbourhood Forums would be provided, along with a report presented by the Chair, for the residents. It was noted that all existing issues would be taken forward by the Neighbourhood Manager who would co-ordinate the transition period.

It was reported that the remaining Area Panel funding budget would be equally distributed between the 17 Neighbourhood Forums. The Commission raised concerns about the level of funding available to the Boards as it was felt this was insufficient to address all their local priorities, but that a mechanism be established that would enable Neighbourhood priorities be fed up to the City Council and partners to ensure that Neighbourhood Priorities were reflected in partner budgets. Members felt the existing criteria was too restrictive and that, for example, religious organisations should be eligible to bid for funding providing they do not spend the money on promoting religious activities.

There were concerns raised that the procedure for appointing resident members on to the Board was too bureaucratic and should be made simpler, as requiring each nominee to be nominated by a minimum of ten residents from different households was excessive.

It was noted that The Good Practice Guidance was unclear about how resident members of the Board would be selected in the first year. It was suggested that for the first year resident members be appointed by the Neighbourhood Forum, of which a minimum requirement of 50% of resident and community representatives were to live in the neighbourhood. There was concern raised over the number of people to sit on each Board, it was suggested that membership should be set at a maximum of 20, to include the 3 ward members.

Some members asked for clarification of the number of forums that would be held per ward.. It was suggested that the Council Cabinet should take into account whether there was an administrative capacity to support more than one forum per ward.

Members felt that there had been occasions when relevant officers had not attended Area Panel meetings and consequently issues could not be progressed as quickly as they could. It was suggested that the relevant officers and/or Council Cabinet member be required to attend the Board meetings when requested and that this would be a requirement in the Good Practice Guide.

Resolved

To ask Council Cabinet to consider the comments of the Community Commission and amend the Good Practice Guide accordingly.

Minutes End