

Report of the Bradford East Area Co-ordinator to the meeting of the Bradford East Area Committee to be held on 18th February 2014

AC

Subject:

Neighbourhood Forums and other community engagement activity in the Bradford East Area.

Summary statement:

This report suggests proposals in respect of planning future Neighbourhood Forums. It also proposes a greater commitment to using a variety of methods of engaging communities, in order to involve a more diverse cross section of our population in dealing with issues and priorities.

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Overview and Scrutiny Area:

Corporate



1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report suggests proposals in respect of planning future Neighbourhood Forums. It also proposes a greater commitment to using a variety of methods of engaging communities, in order to involve a more diverse cross section of our population in dealing with issues and priorities.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of Neighbourhood and Customer Services is to work with local Councillors to encourage personal responsibility and active citizenship amongst residents, working with them to help improve their neighbourhoods. Forums can help with this by:-
- a) Providing a way of giving information to a group of residents;
 - b) Sign-posting and linking residents to other support and services that can help them;
 - c) Encouraging active residents, supporting positive behaviour and attitude change.

Bradford East Area Co-ordinator's Office is aware that scheduled Neighbourhood Forums engage a very small proportion of the population and attendees are often of a similar demographic in terms of age, social background and ethnicity, even though a wide range of methods are used to encourage attendance at Forums. These are promoted by circulating flyers through mail outs, local schools, businesses, medical centres, community centres and other places the community use. Residents who provide the Area Office with an email address can be sent the agenda for their local Forums. People have many opportunities to engage with the Council through their councillors, the Council Wardens, by using online Council services, ringing the Council Contact Centre on 431000, by texting on 07786 208100 and through neighbourhood-based projects and networks facilitated by Ward Officers.

We need to ensure that the Neighbourhood Forums we organise are better able to respond to local issues and priorities, for example by running single issue / special Forums that are of interest to a larger number of people, by having the flexibility to organise Forums in response to emerging local issues and concerns instead of pre-scheduled Forums, as well as holding them in venues the community feel happy using and offering them at times of year when people are happy to leave their homes (not dark winter evenings). We need to get better at working with other organisations and services to avoid duplication, and continuing to attend and having input at meetings other organisations already hold with residents and service users.

Some of the issues we need to raise with residents are unlikely to draw people to attend Forums in large numbers. So, we need to consider that whilst we run some Neighbourhood Forums, we augment these with other means of engaging residents.

Neighbourhood Forums are held in all six wards across the Bradford East area

(See Appendix A – list of Forums).

2.2 Owing to these issues the Area Co-ordinator's Office is proposing to focus on working broadly to target community engagement activities which actually draw in a much more diverse cross section of residents. For example:

- Exploring using electronic media more; through e-mails, social networking and online "live" meetings;
- Working with young people in schools, on educational awareness projects such as Junior Warden schemes, poster competitions, visual audits, litter picks, a variety of practical activities such as "what's in your recycling bin?";
- Working with parents of young children and other resident groups including school gate surgeries, parent's evenings and other fun / participatory events taking place in schools, community centres and with services.
- Working with older peoples groups in promoting environmental awareness, what's on offer locally and linking in with community safety advice.
- Working with businesses; engaging them on environmental and parking issues.
- Undertaking Days of Action / PACTs (Partners and Communities Together) which focus on education / information giving / sign posting people to services and finding out more about key local issues and how these can be tackled through street-by-street door knocking and face-to-face contact;
- Fostering good relations with faith communities to provide information to their congregations, undertake environmental and other projects which provide wider community benefit.
- Working with Friends of Parks and Cemetery groups and more informal groups of individuals on issues that matter to them.
- Consulting a broad range of stakeholders in developing the Ward Assessments and Ward Plans.

2.3 Bradford East Area Co-ordinator's Office is proposing changes to the way Neighbourhood Forums are organised and delivered across the area because:-

- Attendance is reducing at Neighbourhood Forums despite increased promotion. Forums are not sustainable if not many residents attend them..
- Council Wardens work across all Wards and pick up environmental and parking issues, referring and dealing with these in a timely fashion.
- Holding Forums on winter evenings does not always work as some people are understandably reluctant to come out of their homes on dark cold evening nights and in adverse weather conditions.
- We need to create time to reach out to people who don't traditionally engage through Neighbourhood Forums
- Having a pre-set schedule of Forums with dates agreed up to a year in advance can lead to an agenda that does not always seem particularly relevant to local people.
- Setting Forum dates as needed would create flexibility to deal with issues as they arise.
- We can use staff time to carry out projects in neighbourhoods which help encourage active citizenship and create positive behaviour change.
- We need to encourage people to report issues in a timely fashion, rather

than them waiting until their next Neighbourhood Forum comes round. e.g. residents reporting issues through the Council website, by ringing 431000 or reporting by issues by text.

- We use Ward Partnership Teams to work in a joined up way with other services to deal with priority issues.
- We need to take greater advantage of consultation opportunities offered to engage residents by other agencies to avoid duplication of effort.

2.4 In order to facilitate an increase in community engagement activities in the context of reduced staffing levels, it will be necessary to run a streamlined programme of Neighbourhood Forums in each Ward (see Appendix A).

2.5 Each Ward may want to take a different approach based on their local priorities within their own Ward and neighbourhoods. This could include:-

- Holding Ward Forums – these enable people from across the ward to come together, help services plan for the future of the Ward and district, provide information for the Area Plan and create focussed discussions about ways to address priorities across the Ward.
- Holding Scheduled Forums – dates set in advance as needed.
- Holding single issue/ Special Forums – set up as and when the need arises allows us to respond to specific issues in specific areas;
- Doing less Forums and undertaking other community engagement work – working with a broader range of people living in local streets and neighbourhoods (see 2.3 above).
- Doing a mixture of the above - but with fewer Neighbourhood Forums, in order to facilitate a wider range of community engagement and projects.

In responding to key local issues it could be more beneficial to have a stronger focus on street, neighbourhood and small group based projects.

3.0 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

There are no considerations.

4.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There are no other considerations.

5.0 OPTIONS

5.1 The Area Committee can decide to approve the recommendations as detailed in this report, or amend them, or suggest alternative recommendations.

- a) To plan a schedule of Neighbourhood Forums up to 6 months in advance, as needed to respond to issues relevant to local residents.
- b) To focus on the targeted engagement of residents by street, neighbourhood and community group across the Wards and Area, running Neighbourhood Forums and Special Forums as needed to deal with new and emerging issues.
- c) Deliver Neighbourhood Forums, with no pre-set dates, allowing a focus on the key and emerging issues in neighbourhoods and Wards. Dates set as

- needed in consultation with Ward Councillors and partners.
- d) Trial 'Ward Forums' for consulting on issues affecting the whole Ward, such as Ward Plans and other services planning.
 - e) Plan a Forum schedule a year in advance, alongside other broader forms of community engagement outlined in this report.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 6.1 Neighbourhood Forums and other community engagement activities will be provided within existing financial resources from the Neighbourhood Service.

7.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no significant risks arising from this report.

8.0 LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 8.1 There are no legal implications for Bradford Council arising from this report.

9.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 LINKS TO BRADFORD EAST AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN 2011 – 2014

- 9.1.1 The Bradford East Area Committee Action Plan includes a commitment on the part of the Bradford East Area Committee to continue to support community engagement and to develop partnership-working to identify local solutions to local problems. The work of the Area Co-ordinator's Office is underpinned by the priorities within the Area Committee Action Plan. Issues raised at Neighbourhood Forums and through other community engagement activities help in the development of future Ward, Area and District planning.

9.2 EQUAL RIGHTS

- 9.2.1 Efforts are made to ensure that Neighbourhood Forums and other community engagement activities are accessible to all sections of the community. This report suggests changes to broaden the number and diversity of people engaged.

9.3 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.3.1 Public consultation and involvement in decision-making leads to more sustainable solutions to local issues. This report seeks to ensure that this is sustainable.

9.4 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

- 9.4.1 There are no impacts.

9.5 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.5.1 Crime and community safety issues are discussed frequently at Neighbourhood Forums and raised through other community engagement activities, which regularly include West Yorkshire Police staff.

9.6 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

9.7 TRADE UNION IMPLICATIONS

There are no Trade Union implications arising from this report.

9.8 WARD IMPLICATIONS

The information in this report is relevant to all Wards in the Bradford East Area. Ways of engaging communities vary by ward as appropriate to the residents needs.

10.0 NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

10.1 There are no not for publication documents.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 That the Area Committee notes the commitment to do more innovative and targeted community engagement activities and to plan Neighbourhood Forums to respond to emerging issues as shown in Appendix A.

12.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Proposed Neighbourhood Forums during 2013 / 2014.

Appendix B: Proposed approach to community engagement 2013/2014

13.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

There are no background documents.

PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS

WARD	Proposed number of forums and neighbourhoods each year
Little Horton	1 x Parkside 1 x West Bowling 1 x Marshfields 1 x Canterbury
Bolton & Undercliffe	1 x Kings Park & Swain House 1 x Bolton 1 x Undercliffe
Bradford Moor	1 x Thornbury 1 x Bradford Moor 1 x BD3
Bowling & Barkerend	1 x East Bowling and Fenby 1 x Barkerend and Pollard Park
Eccleshill	1 x Eccleshill 1 x Fagley 1 x Ravenscliffe
Idle & Thackley	1 x Idle 1 x Thackley 1 x Thorpe Edge

Ward	Proposed approach to community engagement
Little Horton	Forums will link into community events and consultations by local groups and services, including Bradford Trident, with school parents evening and door-to-door work with Wardens and Police. The Ward Officer and Wardens will get involved in a range of residents meetings in local centres, as well as undertaking street-based and neighbourhood work tackling local concerns and priorities and educating residents on socially responsible behaviour.
Bradford Moor	1 Forum for the Maze area, 1 for Thornbury, 1 for Bradford Moor. A Special drop-in Forum is planned for March to consult on the cycle track and other specials could focus on health and environmental issues which are priorities in the Ward Plan. Ward Officer and Wardens to attend and have input at a range of residents, parents, older peoples meetings in local centres, as well as through undertaking street based and neighbourhood work, such as the 'Proud of BD3' work including clean up and other resident, school and group work.
Bowling and Barkerend	Joint East Bowling and Fenby Neighbourhood Forum and joint Barkerend, Pollard Park and Undercliffe Neighbourhood Forum. Deliver days of action with partners, bringing resources to areas of need, carrying out door step work, giving out information and gathering information. Continue with fun days, health events, drop ins, talks at community centres, faith centres, schools and school gate surgeries. Support resident networks such as Neighbourhood Watch and Community Champions, support 'Friends Of' groups, community centres and others to build capacity and improve links with service providers to improve outcomes. Continue with the BD3 initiative, Young Ambassadors Programme (CBC), rolling out Cold Calling Zones and work with Bradford College students, developing active citizens projects.
Eccleshill	Agreed to do one Forum in each main neighbourhood (Fagley, Ravenscliffe\Greengates, Eccleshil). Supplemented by regular meetings of Eccleshill Village Steering Group, Fagley residents meeting, Ravenscliffe residents meeting and Thorpe Edge community forum, in addition to engagement through team door-knocking, patrolling, and events such as Eccleshill Fair, Thorpe Edge Community Festival and proposed Fagley Gala.
Idle and Thackley	A drop-in Forum is planned for Thorpe Edge, at a parents evening. Thackley Forum will be on a Saturday linked to a community event, Idle Forum will be at the day care group at the Church. A special Forum for Greengates\Apperley Bridge, when information is available about the new station. Other work will include supporting organisations and services working locally connect to local residents as well as street based work and projects by staff as needed to address concerns.
Bolton and Undercliffe	Additional community engagement events to be co-ordinated through the Ward Partnership Team meetings, focussing on putting resources in areas of need. Use alternative approaches to engage with those who don't attend Neighbourhood Forums but have issues that they want to

	<p>raise. This can include door step work, drop-in's, links with community hubs, schools, road safety and environmental educational work targeting parents, children and wider community. Deliver programmes such as Eco Schools, E-Safety and Road Safety packages. Build on Cold Calling Zones and developing capacity of Neighbourhood Watch Groups with partners.</p>
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