

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE – COMMUNITY FORUMS**

### **1 Purpose and Aims of the Community Forum**

- 1.1 To develop the Councils' community leadership role.
- 1.2 To help improve the quality of local services.
- 1.3 To improve communication and strengthen the links between local people, the County and Borough Council, Police, Primary Care Trust and voluntary and statutory agencies working within the area.
- 1.4 To encourage the people living in the area to be involved in their community.
- 1.5 To promote equality of opportunity within the community.
- 1.6 To provide information to residents on matters which affect their community.
- 1.7 To co-ordinate the work of partners to address local issues and needs.
- 1.8 To complement, not replace, existing consultation and communication networks especially with Parish Councils.

### **2 Functions of the Community Forum**

- 2.1 To act as an advisory and consultative body within the area.
- 2.2 To help scrutinise the impact of the Borough Council's policies and services, and those of other organisations, in the local area.
- 2.3 To consider and raise issues of concern raised by local residents. Produce action plans and feedback to local statutory and voluntary agencies.
- 2.4 To assist in the process of consultation with residents and community representatives on Borough Council or other agencies' proposals.
- 2.5 To convey local priorities to the Council and other agencies on the needs of the community.

### **3 Membership**

- 3.1 Membership will be all Borough Council Members from the relevant Wards covering their own forum area, together with the County Council Member(s) for the electoral division. Members from other wards not covered by the forum should not attend unless specifically invited by the forum.
- 3.2 All attendees that are residents in the forum area will be classed as members. Efforts will be made to ensure the following groups of people are encouraged and enabled to become members:
  - BME
  - LGBT
  - disabled
  - faith groups
  - community groups
  - tenant and resident groups
  - parish council (where relevant)

- 3.3 The Forum may invite Officers or representatives of other agencies to meetings where items relevant to that agency are being discussed.
- 3.4 Local ward members who are also Members of the Council Executive will be entitled to attend Community Forums in their capacity as ward representatives. They will act strictly in that capacity unless they are attending as a Lead Executive Member concerning a specific issue. Additionally, Members who live outside the ward they are elected to represent are also able to attend the Forum in the area where they are resident.

#### **4. Procedure at Meetings – including elections**

- 4.1 A facilitator will be elected annually by the Forum. No member of the Borough Council or County Council will be eligible to serve as a facilitator.
- 4.2 Meetings will be held at local, accessible venues within the area of the Community Forum. The timing of meetings may be alternated between daytime and evening to maximize opportunities for community access.
- 4.3 All meetings will be open to the public and press to attend. Only in very exceptional circumstances, where the nature of business involves confidential information, would the meeting be closed, for that part, to the public and press.
- 4.4 Members of the public attending the meeting will have a right to speak on items under discussion, subject to any general directions by the facilitator.
- 4.5 For reasons of both practicality and confidentiality, the Community Forum meetings will not discuss individual/personal cases. It is expected that such matters will be dealt with through the surgery session or by direct referral to an appropriate agency.
- 4.6 It is expected that Forums will meet three times per annum. A schedule of venues, dates and times will be agreed and publicised widely in the area of benefit.
- 4.7 Local residents will be provided with an opportunity to meet on a one to one basis with councilors, and other service providers before, and in some cases after the main meeting starts.
- 4.8 Action notes from the meeting will be posted on the Council's website and individual responses to surgery session queries will be provided by relevant agency within 10 working days. This may include a holding reply if a more detailed investigation is required.