

**Chichester District Council**

**CABINET**

**3 June 2014**

**Community Forums**

**1. Contacts**

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**2. Recommendation**

**2.1. That Cabinet approve the suggested changes to the Community Forums as set out in Section 5**

**3. Background**

3.1. In October 2012 Cabinet agreed to proposals put forward by a members task and finish group which had considered and recommended the following changes to the Community forums (full version can be found in Appendix 1) :

- (a) The All parishes meeting should be held twice a year
- (b) Community forums should develop annual work plans
- (c) A training / development budget will be made available to the Community forums through the grants panel
- (d) Community forums will have a nominated district Council representative
- (e) There will be a requirement for minimum attendance at the community forums

3.2. It was agreed that the changes would be evaluated after they had been in place for a year. Terms of reference were developed for the forums that reflected these changes.(appendix 2)

3.3. The Community Forums members and officers group met on 19 February 2014 to review how the changes had been implemented, evaluate their

impact and make suggestions for any changes considered necessary. Members were asked to discuss the following questions with their forums and reflect the collective view.

- (a) Has your forum develop an action plan?
- (b) If yes has it been delivered?
- (c) What do you see working in the Forums?
- (d) How do you see the forums working in future?

The following is a summary of what was discussed:

### **Successes**

- 3.4. Not all the forums have developed action plans; however they have all developed agenda plans for future forum meetings. This is a successful change within the forums with the parishes taking the lead in setting agendas rather than CDC. In some areas, such as the North East, this has increased interest in the Community Forums and is reflected in improved attendance.
- 3.5. Having members taking a leading role within the forums has been successful and improved the communication between CDC and the parishes. The Lead members have been effective in leading the identification on local issues and actions arising from them. It has also removed the pressure from officers to develop agenda items.

### **Issues**

- 3.6. None of the forums have applied for the funding that was made available to them.
- 3.7. Three forum meetings have been cancelled over the past year due to lack of attendance and lack of agenda items. The decision to hold a meeting or not has been left with the forum officer and member.

### **Suggestions**

- 3.8. That all forums should hold a minimum of 2 community forum meetings a year. If forums wish to hold more they can. The two "All Parishes" meetings should be the main forum for Chichester District Council to disseminate information.
- 3.9. That the forums develop agenda plans for the year as a minimum. If a forum wants to develop an action plan this should be encouraged.

## **4. Outcomes to be achieved**

- 4.1. The overall outcome of the community forums is to improve engagement with the Parish Councils. The one year trial has shown that Community Forums are seen as an information source

and a place to discuss issues and are valued by the Parish Councils. Success will be measured by feedback from the Parish Councils.

## **5. Proposal**

5.1. Considering the review of the Forums their functions we propose updating their functions as follows:-

- The principal means for Chichester District Council and other partner organisations to engage with local communities on local issues.
- A place for parishes to share good practice and gather information.
- A place for parishes to jointly take action on issues agreed by the forum.

5.2. The progress of the forums will be evaluated on an annual basis by the members and officers group and significant changes will be brought to Cabinet for approval.

5.3. That the community forum terms of reference be changed to include the following:

- (a) That the community forums hold a minimum of 2 meetings a year. If the forums wish to hold more they can. Chichester District Council will only resource (admin support) up to four meetings a year.
- (b) For community forums to develop an annual agenda plan of issues that are relevant for their area. The forums will not be required to develop and deliver a local action plans but if they want to this will be supported.
- (c) The “All Parishes” meeting to be the main means of collective communication between CDC and the parishes.

## **6. Alternatives that have been considered**

6.1. Chichester District Council withdraw from Community forums – this will have a negative impact on our relations with Parish Councils

6.2. Combining forums with West Sussex County Local Committees (CLCs). CLCs work to larger areas with a focus on highway issues and grant giving and are not suitable for the discussions that parishes like to have at the Community forums.

## **7. Resource and legal implications**

7.1. Each forum will have one support officer and a Head of Service will attend when necessary. Support officers’ time is paid direct from their services.

- 7.2. Parish councils are encouraged to cover the cost of premises and refreshments.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1. Parishes were originally consulted on the changes in 2012 through presentations at the forums and the “All Parishes” meeting.
- 8.2. Support officers have discussed the suggested changes with their forums. General feedback has reflected what has been raised by officers and members.

## **9. Community impact and corporate risks**

- 9.1. The protocols and rules of engagement for community forums are not included in the Council’s constitution and therefore changes do not have to be made
- 9.2. To remove the forums would have a detrimental impact on our image and communication with Parish Councils.

## **10. Other Implications**

<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	None
<b>Climate Change</b>	None
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact:.</b>	None
<b>Safeguarding:</b>	None

## **11. Appendices**

- 11.1. Appendix 1 - Community Forums Changes October 2012
- 11.2. Appendix 2 - Community Forum Terms of Reference & Job descriptions 2013