

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 2 June 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Area Forum Annual Report 2008/9

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform members of the spending by the Area Forums for 2008/09.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Area forums were set up in 2001 as a way of bridging the gap between key agencies working within the Borough. Each Area Forum is led by local councillors and supported by a senior officer from the Council. Other partner organisations such as the Police, Fire Service, Housing Associations, Youth and voluntary sector bodies also attend Area Forums to keep the community informed of local developments and to respond to local concerns.

3.2 Funding was allocated to the Area Forums to spend on small-scale projects that are identified by the community. In 2008/9, a total of £600,000 was allocated to the Area Forums, made up of £300,000 WNF and £300,000 from Halton Borough Council Priorities Fund. It is allocated on a per capita basis across the seven Area Forums that cover the Borough.

3.3 The local community are invited to raise ideas for neighbourhood projects, which would help improve their local area. The Forum then considers these ideas, and an action plan agreed. Actions must have community support and not result in a long-term financial commitment.

4.0 AREA FORUM EXPENDITURE

4.1 The projects funded through the Area Forums are wide and varied.. They have been categorised into a number of key areas, which are listed below. . The proportion of the overall budget spent on each category is indicated in brackets after each heading.

4.2 **Landscape (24%)**

This covers a wide range of projects such as increased planting, improved allotments and provision of dog bins

4.3 **Safety (7%)**

This category includes road safety improvements, traffic calming and speed surveys.

4.4 **Youth Facilities (20%)**

Improvements to youth and community centres including facilities, lighting, creation of kick about areas, contribution to positive futures for local young people, and purchase of sporting equipment,

4.5 **Improved Parks (18%)**

This initiative puts gardeners into parks at the weekends, which helps deter vandalism, improves public reassurance and the general appearance of the parks. Funding has also been made available for improvements such as additional planting and seats..

4.6 **Pedestrian Access (4%)**

This funding has been used to make improvements to the local infrastructure, such as improving paths.

4.7 **Security (11%)**

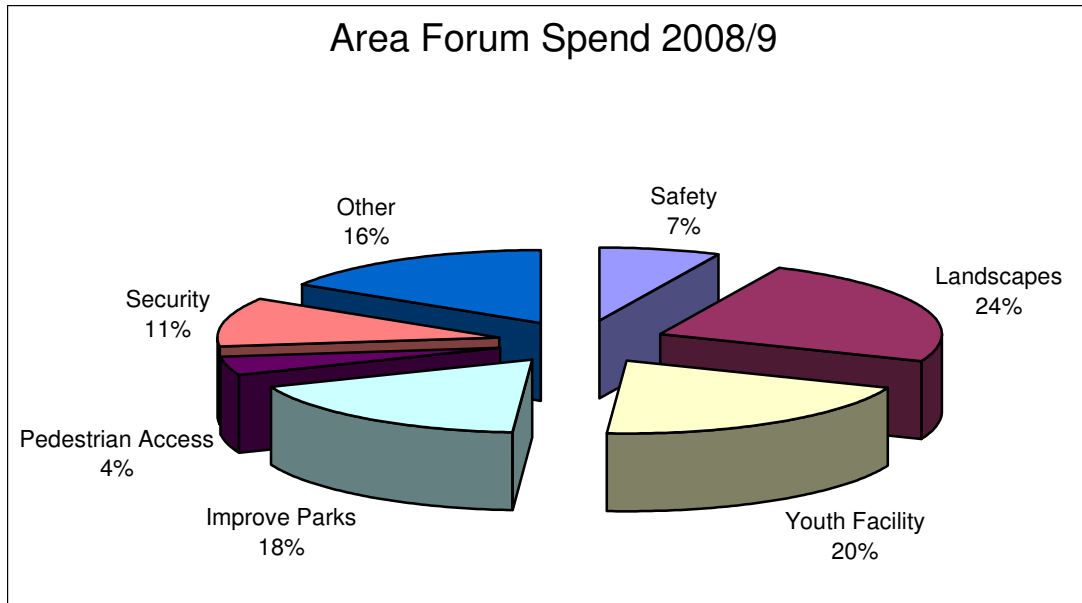
Area Panel funding has been used to continue the successful and highly valued Alley gating initiative as well as providing additional fencing.

4.8 **Other (16%)**

This includes general support for local initiatives for Community groups and Centres, local amenities, Parish Councils and facilities for older people

5.0 **BREAKDOWN OF FUNDING**

5.1 The graph illustrated in Appendix 1, show the breakdown of funding allocated across the above categories for 2008/09. The largest proportion of funding has been spent on Landscaping and youth facilities.



6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Area Forums are a key tool in engaging with local residents, and the budget provides a means of funding minor schemes in response to local needs. The projects funded are all required to demonstrate a contribution to priority areas such as safety, health and so on. There are no ongoing financial implications, as it is a strict criterion that area forum projects should not incur ongoing costs.

7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There are no significant risks associated with this report which is for information only.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Efforts are made to ensure that all sections of the community can benefit from Area Forum funding. For example participation by young people is encouraged through the youth forum

10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 10.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**
- Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**
- A Healthy Halton**
- A Safer Halton**
- Halton's Urban Renewal**

10.2 The eligibility criteria for Area forum Funding requires the projects should support one or more of the Council's priorities.

11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Minutes of Area Forums	3rd floor Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes	Rob MacKenzie Operational Director Policy and Performance, 0151 471 7416 Rob.mackenzie@halton.gov.uk