

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 22nd January 2014
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Communities
PORTFOLIO: Neighbourhood, Leisure & Sport
SUBJECT: Local Area Forums
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide Members of the Policy and Performance Board with additional information on the decision making process for Local Area Forum funds.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The board received an annual report on Local Area Forum expenditure in October 2013. Following discussion on the report, additional information regarding the allocation of funds was requested.

4.0 IDENTIFYING LOCAL AREA FORUM PROJECTS

4.1 Local Area Forum projects requiring funding are generated by either:-

- Application forms submitted from local residents and community groups.
- Members exploring solutions to community identified issues or improvements within their wards.
- Requests received via Halton Direct Link or the Contact Centre for initiatives (such as alley gates) to be put in place to address community safety concerns.

5.0 DECISION MAKING

5.1 Project ideas are received by the Area Forum Projects Co-ordinator who maintains project lists and up to date budgets for each of the seven area forums.

5.2 Each Area Forum has a nominated Lead Officer who supports the

delivery of Area Forums and collaborates with Council Members on the programme of projects.

5.3 Project information is circulated to Members for their consideration ahead of Project meetings and supporting information or additional project detail is prepared. Project meetings are held three times a year alongside Area Forum pre-agenda meetings. Decisions can be reached outside of Project meetings if required, for example, due to the need to release funds before planned meetings in order to meet particular project timescales.

5.4 Each Local Area Forum has varying numbers of Wards and Members to be considered in decision making as follows:-

- **Broadheath, Ditton, Hough Green & Hale**
10 Ward Members
- **Riverside, Appleton & Kingsway**
8 Ward Members
- **Birchfield, Farnworth & Halton View**
9 Ward Members
- **Grange, Heath, Mersey & Halton Brook**
12 Ward Members
- **Halton Castle, Norton North, Norton South & Windmill Hill**
10 Ward Members
- **Beechwood & Halton Lea**
5 Ward Members
- **Daresbury**
2 Ward Members

5.5 Members consider projects and make recommendations for approvals in liaison with Lead Officers. The Area Forum Projects Co-ordinator progresses decisions made, providing feedback to applicants, co-ordinating project delivery and administering the funds.

5.6 In considering projects, match funding and leverage of external funding into the Borough is a key consideration, In 2012/13 for every £1 of Area Forum expenditure a further £1.36 of match was drawn into Halton, investment of £821,908 in Area Forum Projects.

6.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Local Area Forums are a key tool in engaging with local residents and the budget provides a means of funding both small and medium scale schemes in response to local needs and aspirations. In

addition, Area Forum grants often provide much needed 3rd party funding to support larger schemes, helping to lever in much larger pots of external funding from outside the Borough.

6.2 This mechanism provides a platform for community engagement at neighbourhood level which can be utilised to inform policy development and contribute towards the setting and achievement of strategic objectives.

6.3 The projects support safer neighbourhoods generating an increased satisfaction for local residents with their area and a willingness to participate in community life. Local Area Forums contribute towards building cohesion in Halton's communities through projects and initiatives that encourage community connectedness.

7.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

7.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Local Area Forums project expenditure has allocated a significant proportion of funding to supporting pre-school, youth activities and sports. Since 2003, 19% of the total expenditure through Area Forums has been on youth facilities.

7.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Local Area Forum Project expenditure supports community initiatives that include accessing learning & skills opportunities through locally delivered courses. Many of the community initiatives supported provided volunteer opportunities either with the committees, supporting engagement activity or as part of delivering activities i.e community cafés.

7.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Many of the community initiatives supported have a well-being impact supporting the ethos of a 'whole area' approach to healthy living. Positive impacts on Health & Wellbeing are a key consideration in supporting projects.

7.4 **A Safer Halton**

A sense of community and community connectedness reduces residents' fear of crime where they live. Residents are likely to feel a stronger sense of belonging and safety in an environment where the communities know each other, are active and there are established links to other stakeholders like police, housing, community wardens, etc. Local Area Forum projects contribute to building community resilience.

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Local Area Forums provide a mechanism for local people to be involved in making decisions that impact on place shaping for their local area. Local people can influence expenditure to improve their local environment and work jointly with the Council towards the communities' aspirations.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1 There are no significant risks associated with this report.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

9.1 The Local Area Forums and grant support are open and accessible to all members of Halton's community.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Minutes of Local Area Forums	Municipal Building, Widnes	Janice Weston