

COMMITTEE: AREA COMMITTEE BOARD

DATE: THURSDAY 8TH JULY 2004

SUBJECT: AREA COMMITTEE PROGRESS

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE (AREA COMMITTEE
SUPPORT OFFICER)

CONTACT OFFICER: GARY J. ROBERTS 01582 546985

IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL COMMUNITY SAFETY

EQUALITIES ENVIRONMENT

FINANCIAL CONSULTATIONS

STAFFING OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the progress of Area Committees and to apprise them of how issues, which have been raised through this arena and the Area Committee Board, are being resolved.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. The Area Committee Board is recommended to note the report and make recommendations on further action where required.
3. It is further recommended that the Area Committee Board support the proposal made in paragraphs 9–14 and request that their officers report back to the next meeting of the area committee board on the options available.

BACKGROUND

4. This report encapsulates the progress of the area committees since the implementation of the initiative in October 2001. In addition it includes information on projects and activities supported by the committees and how by liaison and mediation with both internal and external service areas, pursues the concerns raised by both the local community and Members of the council.

REPORT

AREA COMMITTEE ISSUES

5. There is an updated Action Plan attached to this report as **Appendix A**. Many of the past issues, which have now been resolved, have been removed and the original action plan retained for reference purposes.

AREA TOURS

6. All the area tours have now been arranged up to April 2005 and have been circulated to all Members of the Council and Corporate Directors on the 22nd June 2004. A copy of this, which also embraces the new structure of the area committees, is attached to this report as **Appendix B**

AREA PROJECTS

7. A list of the Area Projects, which have been funded by the respective Area Committees, is attached as **Appendix C**.

AREA COMMITTEES - BUDGET

8. This is covered in a separate report being presented by the Finance Manager (Corporate Finance)

AREA COMMITTEES – WARD FORUMS

9. Following the recommendation of the Area Committee Board on the 30th March 2004 and the endorsement of the Council's Executive on the 13th April 2004 the 'Mini Ward Forums' prior to the start of each area

committee have now been implemented with the first one taking place at the Dallow, Farley & South Area Committee on the 27th May 2004.

10. The new approach seems to be well supported and the majority of people in favour of the scheme. However there are some issues that are already arising and will need to be addressed sooner rather than later.
11. Due to the approach we are now pursuing we have no choice but to use venues that can provide us with adequate space to accommodate not only the area committee but also at the least three and in the future five community forums. Inevitably these will in the main be schools, but we are quickly realising that where classrooms may be available not all the premises have adequate size rooms, furnishing or equipment to cater for the number who attend. However it is fair to say that some venues are better than others and if we are to continue to encourage attendance, fully engage our communities and maintain a good standard both in presentation and performance we have to ensure that our venues are adequate for the purpose.
12. In the past we have sited the idea with the Area Committee Board of identifying one venue for each area committee, which can be used as a regular meeting place. This would need to be as central as possible to the wards concerned and at the same time offer the committee accommodation that will enable a more professional delivery. However it must be noted that the type of establishments required are not always available in the area where we require them and as a result some flexibility will be needed.
13. The theory of moving the area committee from both ward to ward and to different venues within the area is fully understood and appreciated, however the practicalities are becoming far more difficult and if we are to improve the delivery of the service the adoption of a static quality venue will in the long term be more effective in the delivery of these two consultative mechanisms and enable officers to have some continuity as this new approach develops.
14. There has often been the argument that determining a permanent venue does make travelling to and from a venue more difficult for those who live furthest away. However, members are reminded that the Council do provide door-to-door transport, free of charge for those who need and wish to take up this service. Everyone who appears on our database is informed of this facility and an easy to complete form giving full details are enclosed with every notice of our meetings.
15. Should this proposal be accepted it is suggested that this be effective from the January 2005 cycle of meetings, giving officers time to identify

venues and report back to the Area Committee Board at their meeting on the 21st September 2004.

AREA COMMITTEE ATTENDANCES

16. The following are up to date attendances of our area committees, but exclude the extra meetings, which took place during the November 2003 and February 2004 period.

Area Committee	Oct 2001	Jan & Feb 2002	June 2002	Oct & Nov 2002	Jan 2003	May & June 2003	Oct & Nov 2003	Jan 2004	May & June 2004
Crawley, Stopsley & Wigmore	12	90	20	175	50	41	52	40	35
Bramingham, Northwell & Sundon Park	14	40	31	30	42	37	50	46	40
Barnfield, Icknield, Limbury & Saints	17	40	16	30	75	54	55	65	65
Challney, Leagrave & Lewsey	29	23	28	70	62	40	95	67	50
Dallow, Farley & South	27	43	19	30	40	51	35	76	60
Biscot, High Town & Round Green	23	30	30	70	41	53	60	70	Not held at time of writing report

AREA COMMITTEES & AREA COMMITTEES BOARD – DATES 2004 - 2005

17. The dates for all of the area committees and the area committee board for 2004/2005 were reported to this committee at their last meeting on the 30th March 2004. However, due to the change in the area committee structure a new schedule is now attached which encompasses the new areas. The dates for the Area Committee Board remain unchanged. See **Appendix D**.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

18. It is proposed that Members of the Area Committee Board note the report and make their observations in accordance with the recommendations outlined in paragraph 2 of the report.

19. In respect of the issues raised under paragraphs 9 – 15 Area Committee venues it is proposed that Members support the recommendation and request that officers seek suitable venues to accommodate future Ward Forums and Area Committees.

- (i) The alternative option would be to maintain a status quo and continue to identify venues by ward on a basis.

APPENDIX

20. Appendices are as follows:

- Appendix A Area Committees Action Plan
- Appendix B Area Tours
- Appendix C Area Projects Update
- Appendix D Area Committees & Area Committee Board dates
2004/2005

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

21. There are no background papers associated with this report.

