

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL
REPORT
of the
HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
to
THE GATEWAY AREA PANEL

THE GATEWAY AREA FORUM MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13TH JULY 2011

1. Introduction

The Chairman of the Area Forum and Community Representative, Mr Philip Dunne welcomed members of the community to the meeting. He introduced his co-panel Members, Councillors Blackburn and Coleman (Brunswick Ward), Councillors Taylor and Mrs Taylor (Claremont Ward), Councillors Smith and Riding (Talbot Ward) and Council officers in attendance at the meeting.

He advised the Forum that the purpose of the meeting was to consult with residents regarding the future of Area Forums and how the community could be better engaged in the process. Residents had an opportunity to consider a number of questions regarding the existing operation of Area Forums in the meeting, followed by time for one to one sessions with Councillors and Council representatives.

2. Context

The Area Panel at its meeting held on 15th June 2011 received a presentation from Neighbourhood Services regarding new localised working arrangements and the role of the Neighbourhood Manager. In addition, the Panel was invited to comment on the existing format and operation of the Area Forums and in particular, how the community could become better engaged. The Panel agreed that the theme of the July Forum meeting would be a consultation exercise with residents, similar to that undertaken by the Area Panel, to gather further feedback and comment. All views would be collated and considered by the Council's Executive following review.

3. Theme

The Chairman invited comments from residents regarding the existing format and operation of the Area Forums. He explained that a questionnaire had been included in the publication 'Your Blackpool' to gather feedback and that there would be the opportunity for individuals to complete a similar questionnaire during the one to one sessions. Key issues raised by residents included:

What would make you more likely to take part in an Area Forum meeting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on key local issues of community concern.• Know when they would take place – eg 3rd Wednesday of the month so people could diarise them.• Knowing that feedback on action taken would be provided promptly and to individuals where appropriate.• Use of Forums as key mechanisms to consult on issues• Spreading the word – using community events in parks to promote Forums
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Why do you attend the Area Forum meetings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To talk to Councillors to get things done in local area. • Opportunity to speak to Council Officers to raise issues / queries and concerns • Find common ground on issues with other residents • To receive feedback 'of sort's on issues raised previously • Opportunity to use Forums as a platform to tackle issues on a local scale such as deprivation
Would you like to be notified about future meetings? If so – how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater use of email distribution – save money and notify residents of meetings more quickly • Use a range of methods including email and mail to ensure residents without access to ICT find out about Forums. • Greater co-ordination of Forum dates with Your Blackpool so that could be used in addition to / instead of leaflets • Leaflets do work – recent improvements in delivery had helped
What issues are important to you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houses in Multiple Occupation within Holiday Zone • Community Safety – including CCTV • Anti-social behaviour • Issues affecting the local area and the whole town • Employment / jobs and the local economy • Regeneration • Major planning and licensing applications – Forum should be consulted
What aspects of Forum meetings could be improved and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater co-ordination with Police and Community Together Meetings (PACT) • Use PACT to announce Forum dates and distribute leaflets • Minutes produced in conjunction with an action plan and progress updates

In addition to the issues captured during the main part of the meeting, a number of residents completed the questionnaire on an individual basis and their comments highlighted below:

- Use of local newspapers to promote Area Forums
- Good mixture of group session and opportunity for one to ones with officers and councillors
- Ensure venues used were close to main bus routes to ensure all residents could attend should they wish.
- Local community issues of concern also included vandalism, alley-gating and access to St John's Square for disabled residents and visitors
- Forums should proactively engage with young people to ensure their views were heard.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of the meeting was to provide residents with an opportunity share their views on the existing format and operation of Area Forums. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman sought final views from residents on key priorities arising from the meeting. Those included the requirement for residents to receive feedback on issues raised at Forum's quickly and receive regular progress updates, involvement of

young people and the structuring of Forums to include opportunity for both group and individual discussion.

In response to a question regarding access to St John's Square, Councillor Blackburn explained that a review of the closure of the area to traffic would be undertaken in October 2011. A range of views were expressed on traffic access to the area, use of the space for events, access issues to the theatre/ restaurants in the square for disabled people and potential access for taxis through the square to service the night time economy.

The Chairman thanked residents for their participation in the meeting.