

<b>Subject:</b>	Neighbourhood Forums - changes from April 2014	<b>Status:</b>	For Publication
<b>Report to:</b>	Council	<b>Date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> March 2014
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Business	<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Leader of the Council and Communities and Partnerships
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	Required: Yes	Attached:	Yes
<b>Biodiversity Impact Assessment</b>	Required: No	Attached:	No
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stuart Sugarman	<b>Telephone:</b>	<b>01706 252440</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATION(S)</b>
1.1	That Council approves the proposed changes to Neighbourhood Forum arrangements from April 2014 as outlined in this report, to be reviewed annually.
1.2	That the £20,000 allocated to support the continuation of Neighbourhood Forum grants in 2014/15 be allocated pro rata by size of Forum, with a maximum grant available of £500.
1.3	That all appropriate changes to the Council Constitution regarding Neighbourhood Forums be put in place.
1.4	That all future minor amendments to Neighbourhood Forums be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

**2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

2.1 To outline the proposals for changes to the Neighbourhood Forums from April 2014, including administration and management of the Neighbourhood Forum Grants, and closer working arrangements with the 3 Tier Forum.

**3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting sustainable investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
  - **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.
  - **A Clean and Green Rossendale** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centres and well managed open spaces, whilst recognising that the Council has to work with communities and as a partner to deliver this ambition.

**4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- 4.2 Not reviewing the arrangements for the Neighbourhood Forums could result in the Council working less efficiently and effectively within the resources it has. Not having effective Forum arrangements would reduce the Council's ability to engage with local communities and respond to their needs.

## **5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS**

- 5.1 Rossendale's Neighbourhood Forums were reviewed and refreshed 3 years ago, when 3 year action plans were developed, and a 3 year funding agreement was put in place to support the delivery of the plans. Both the plans and agreement are to come to an end in March 2014, and, therefore, the future of the Forums has been reviewed.
- 5.2 Lancashire County Council are also reviewing their Three Tier forums and are keen to develop arrangements that are worthwhile, add value, and which all stakeholders feel they genuinely own.
- 5.3 Both Rossendale Borough Council and Lancashire County Council are having to make significant financial savings, and the resultant reduction in staffing and other resources means that both councils need to ensure that they are working efficiently and effectively with what resources they have.
- 5.4 Rossendale's four Neighbourhood Forums have worked effectively to build strong links with and amongst local community members over the last three years. Community membership of the Neighbourhood Forums has been a particular strength and has increased with new community members continuing to join the Forums. The networking and information sharing opportunities are cited as a great strength and Rossendale Borough Council and forum members value this mechanism and wish it to continue.
- 5.5 The Neighbourhood Forums have influenced local service delivery, particularly through implementation of the Neighbourhood Action Plans. Successes include the establishment of a calendar of regular town centre events, development of community groups actively engaged in supporting the Council in cleaning, maintaining and developing town centres, parks and open spaces, new and expanded activities for children and young people and actions to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- 5.6 3 Tier Forums were established by Lancashire County Council who would like to fully realise the potential of forum arrangements as a vehicle to be used as much by district councils as by the county council. Wider service providers who attend forums and actively contribute are also facing significant changes and reductions in resources and struggle to support a high number of meetings.
- 5.7 Discussions have taken place at all Neighbourhood Forum meetings in September / October 2013 and January 2014 about the future shape of the Forums and their views have been incorporated into the following proposals. Discussions have also taken place with LCC regarding the development of the Three Tier Forum.
- 5.8 It is proposed that the Neighbourhood Forums continue as informal community meetings, outside the Council Constitution but with closer working arrangements with the 3 Tier Forum. This would allow the strong links that have developed through the Neighbourhood Forums with and amongst local community members to be maintained whilst also providing a mechanism for Lancashire County Council to engage constructively with the wider community in Rossendale. The proposed arrangements will also provide members of the community with the opportunity to influence strategic priorities for both the Borough and County.

5.9 The proposals regarding the 3 Tier Forum are subject to formal approval by LCC. Discussions have taken place with LCC officers who are supportive of the proposals which are currently awaiting final approval from the Cabinet Member.

5.10 Proposals for combined arrangements are as follows:

5.11 Neighbourhood Forums

- Informal community meetings, to allow networking and information sharing and agreed action points.
- Frequency of 3 times a year per Neighbourhood Forum
- Rossendale Borough Council to arrange the venues and establish standard agendas for all meetings to aid and focus discussion. Agenda to include issues to be raised at the Three Tier Forum and feedback from the 3 Tier Forum.
- Meetings to be chaired by a Borough Councillor with membership comprising ward councillors and community members with representation from partner agencies such as the police, health and housing providers where relevant and their capacity allows. Borough Council staff will not routinely attend the Neighbourhood Forum meetings, but can attend if relevant to the issues being discussed.
- No formal minutes will be taken of the Neighbourhood Forum meetings which will no longer be a formal part of the Council Constitution, but members may take informal minutes if required. Council officers will no longer undertake an administration / co-ordination role for the Neighbourhood Forums, other than for grant funding.
- Meetings would be timed to link in with the new 3 Tier forums to enable communication between the forums and allow for issues to be fed into the agenda for the 3 Tier Forum.
- A representative of the 3 Tier forum would attend the Neighbourhood Forum (if they don't already) to help strengthen the link between the two.

5.12 Neighbourhood Forum Grant Funding

It is proposed that the current 3 Elected Member funding panels, plus a community observer, continue, with the option for grant applications to be considered by email. The sum of £20,000 has been allocated to Neighbourhood Forums (pro rata by size of forum area) for 2014/15. Amended Neighbourhood Forum Grants Policy and Guidance Notes are attached at Appendix 2.

5.13 Due to the reduced amount available for Neighbourhood Forum Grant funding, it is proposed that grants be limited to a maximum of £500, with individual Neighbourhood Forums having the discretion to limit it to a smaller amount if Forum members agree, and that project funding for larger amounts ceases to be available from April 2014. Details of the grants awarded would be publicised on the Council website and could be announced at the 3 Tier Forums.

#### 5.14 3 Tier Forums

- Joint business meeting of County, District and Parish Councillors, open to the public, as detailed in the Rossendale 3 Tier Forum Terms of Reference.
- Business meeting format to allow for constructive discussion and actions on issues that are of joint interest across the three levels of local government in Rossendale.
- Community members of the Neighbourhood Forums encouraged to attend to facilitate 2 way communication between councils and local communities.
- Neighbourhood Forums to put forward agenda items via the nominated representative (a Borough / County Councillor).
- Clear priorities for meetings and a focused agenda e.g. based around theme(s) / area(s) / both
- Relevant local service providers invited to meetings where theme appropriate
- Frequency of 3 a year, held in the early evening, with meetings located at different locations in the borough throughout the year
- Lancashire County Council Officers would book venues for the Three Tier forums, invite members, publicise meetings, prepare agendas and minutes / action points from meetings.
- Trial period of 12 months and reviewed thereafter, using the following measures of success: clear priorities / focus identified; actions agreed; Neighbourhood Forum issues are included on the Three Tier Forum agendas; an element of / all of a strategic direction or policy has changed; level of community attendance throughout the year to indicate community engagement.

5.15 For the initial period Borough Council staff would provide advice and support to the Three Tier Forums to assist with the transition and to help to ensure the effectiveness of the forums such as helping to set the agenda, suggesting venues, attending meetings and setting the room out to facilitate discussion.

#### **COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

#### **6. SECTION 151 OFFICER**

6.1 Financial matters are noted within the report.

#### **7. MONITORING OFFICER**

7.1 The constitution will need to be amended to reflect the changes outlined in the report

#### **8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT**

8.1 Discussions regarding future arrangements for the Neighbourhood Forums have taken place at the last 2 rounds of Forum meetings including discussions on these specific proposals at all 4 Neighbourhood Forums in January 2014. The proposals incorporate the views of Forum members who are supportive of them. Discussions have also taken place with Lancashire

County Council who are supportive of the proposals which are currently awaiting final approval from the Cabinet Member.

8.2 An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix 1. This has identified that there are no negative equality impacts on any protected equality groups as a result of the proposed Neighbourhood Forum arrangements. The continuation of Neighbourhood Forums as informal community meetings and closer working arrangements with the Three Tier Forum will enable the strong partnership working and community engagement currently in place to continue, whilst increasing the opportunity for local residents to engage with both RBC and LCC at a Borough wide level.

8.3 The reduction in grant funding was agreed by Cabinet in October 2104 and details of the consultation carried out regarding grant funding and the Equality Impact Assessment were included with the Cabinet report.

**9. CONCLUSION**

9.1 The proposed arrangements for Neighbourhood Forums would enable the strong partnership working that has developed over the last 3 years to continue whilst also ensuring that the Council is working efficiently and effectively with the resources available.

9.2 Rossendale’s heritage is unique and its people have a distinctively strong sense of connection to the area in which they live. This strong sense of belonging to place and the different social, economic, health and wellbeing challenges each community faces have shaped the development of the Neighbourhood Forums and these proposals will enable them to continue to be shaped by their community whilst also providing the opportunity for members of the different communities to come together to address issues of common concern through the Three Tier Forum, which will be strengthened by the links with the Neighbourhood Forums.

9.3 The arrangements re-affirm the Council’s commitment to empowering residents to work with Elected Members and partners to ensure that local services are effectively focussed on local need.

9.4 Council are asked to approve the proposed arrangements for the Neighbourhood Forums from April 2014.

**Background Papers**

Document	Place of Inspection
Grants Review - Rossendale Council and Neighbourhood Forum Grants 23 October 2013	<a href="http://www.rossendale.gov.uk">www.rossendale.gov.uk</a>
Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment	Attached
Appendix 2 - Neighbourhood Forum Grants Policy and Guidance Notes	Attached

## **Neighbourhood Forum Grants Policy and Guidance Notes (updated February 2014)**

### Introduction

Neighbourhood Forums can give grants of up to £500 to external organisations that can provide added value to the residents of the Borough. The work that the grants will fund must fit in with or complement the priorities identified by the Neighbourhood Forums.

The Neighbourhood Forums delegate authority to consider and allocate council grants to a Working Group of three Rossendale Borough Council Members for each Neighbourhood Forum and an observer from the community / voluntary sector.

The Council, when producing its end of year accounts will also publish details of all grants given by the Forums in that year, which organisations received the funding and for what purpose.

### Advertising of Grant availability and distribution of application forms.

The Council will publicise on their website and through the Neighbourhood Forums the fact that there is funding available through the Forums. The deadline for the receipt of applications is two weeks before each Neighbourhood Forum meeting. Dates of meetings are included on the grant application form.

Each Neighbourhood Forum will publish details of grants given at the end of each financial year.

### Criteria for Grant Giving

Grants will be given to local community, voluntary and not for profit groups that are able to demonstrate their ability to add value to those services which are needed by the communities of Rossendale, and who provide services which fulfil an important social, economic or cultural role which is not fulfilled by other statutory or not for profit organisations in the area.

Grants will only be given for projects or activities that have wider community benefit.

Grants may be given to organisations which are operating in a wider area than Rossendale as long as there is a specific benefit to the people of Rossendale.

Grants will not be given to organisations that have in the past been found to be unable to manage finances effectively unless new management and procedures are demonstrably in place.

Grants will not normally be given to organisations from which money has had to be clawed back in previous years due to impropriety or malpractice.

Rossendale Borough Council is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality. Grants will not be given to groups who do not operate in line with these values.

Grants will not be given to party political groups.

### Amount of grant available and how to apply

Grants are limited to a maximum of £500, with individual Neighbourhood Forums having the discretion to limit it to a smaller amount if Forum members agree. An application form will need to be completed and all organisations that receive a grant will be required to provide monitoring information and receipts when requested, usually three months after the grant is awarded. This will include information on who has benefitted from the grant.

### Criteria for assessing grants

The Neighbourhood Forums have identified the following priority areas:

Town Centre Improvements	Supporting children and young people
Increasing Tourism and Leisure	Improving the environment
Helping the Economy	Supporting families
Improving access to service and transport	Tackling rural issues
Improving living conditions	Supporting older people
Improving people's health and wellbeing	Providing better facilities
Tackling anti-social behaviour	

Applications must clearly link the activity of the applicant to these priorities, or any priorities that succeed them.

Rossendale Borough Council is keen to see local groups working together collectively to provide better links and ties and to achieve economies of scale. Applicants should show how they are working with partner organisations in the public, private and not for profit sector to deliver services.

### Determining of grant applications

All grant determining decisions will be final. Each application will be considered by the Neighbourhood Forum Working Group who will make a decision and advise the members of the Neighbourhood Forum of their decision.

If a consensus cannot be reached, by the Neighbourhood Forum Working Group a summary of the discussion and view of the working group members will be captured by the Locality Manager and referred to the Portfolio Holder for Communities and the Director of Business for a decision.

### General

All organisations working with children and young people or vulnerable groups will be required to have in place appropriate policies in respect of safeguarding of their clients. This will include appropriate levels of Criminal Records Bureau checks for volunteers and staff.

All organisations which employ staff will be required to demonstrate that they have in place appropriate employment and management policies, including a health and safety policy (where required) and a diversity or equal opportunities policy.

The Council retains the right to refuse funding to any organisation who it feels does not meet the criteria set out, any organisation which it feels may bring the Council or Neighbourhood Forum into disrepute or any organisation which it believes to have been involved in any racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory practices.

The Council recognises the good work and potential work that the voluntary and community sector can provide and would encourage groups to apply for Neighbourhood Forum funding.

### Further information

For more information, or if you require assistance completing the application form, please contact the Health, Housing and Regeneration Team on Tel: 01706 252593 or Email [communitiesteam@rossendalebc.gov.uk](mailto:communitiesteam@rossendalebc.gov.uk)

February 2014



### INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<b>Name of Policy, Decision, Strategy, Service or Function, Other: (please indicate)</b>	Neighbourhood Forums - changes from April 2014	
<b>Lead Officer Name(s):</b>	Alison Wilkins	
<b>Job Title &amp; Location:</b>	Locality Manager	
<b>Department/Service Area:</b>	Health, Housing and Regeneration Department	
<b>Telephone &amp; E-mail Contact:</b>	01706 252593 / <a href="mailto:alisonwilkins@rossendalebc.gov.uk">alisonwilkins@rossendalebc.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Date Assessment:</b>	<b>Commenced:</b> 24 January 2014	<b>Completed:</b> 24 January 2014

We carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to analyse the effects of our decisions, policies or practices. The EIA should be undertaken/started at the beginning of the policy development process – before any decisions are made.

#### 1. Overview

<b>The main aims/objectives of this policy<sup>1</sup> are:</b>
To outline the proposals for changes to the Neighbourhood Forums from April 2014, including administration and management of the Neighbourhood Forum Grants, and closer working arrangements with the 3 Tier Forum. It is proposed that the Neighbourhood Forums continue as informal community meetings, outside the Council Constitution but with closer working arrangements with the 3 Tier Forum.
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(Refer to **EIA Guidance** for details)

Is the policy or decision under review (please tick)

New/proposed

Modified/adapted

Existing

<sup>1</sup> Policy refers to any policy, strategy, project, procedure, function, decision or delivery of service.

<b>Responsible Section/Team</b>	Health, Housing and Regeneration	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Responsible Author</b>	Alison Wilkins	<b>Due for review</b>	
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## 2. Equality Impact

Using the table below please indicate whether the policy/strategy/decision has a positive, negative or no impact **from an equalities perspective** on any of the protected equality groups listed below. **Please also give consideration to wider equality of opportunity and community cohesion impacts within and between the groups identified. If you have identified any negative impact and mitigating actions are not sufficient, you will need to complete a Full Equality Impact Assessment.**

Equality		Positive Impact (It could benefit)	Negative Impact (It could disadvantage)	Reason and any mitigating actions already in place (to reduce any adverse /negative impacts or reasons why it will be of positive benefit or contribution)	No Impact
Age	Older people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Combined arrangements for the Three Tier Forum and Neighbourhood Forums will enable the strong partnership working and community engagement currently in place to continue, whilst increasing the opportunity for local residents to engage with both RBC and LCC at a Borough wide level. Community groups representing all sections of the community are encouraged to join the Forums and will be encouraged to engage with the Three Tier Forum. Funding grants will continue to be available to support all sections of the community. The impact of the reduced level of grant funding was covered in the EIA accompanying the Grants Report in October 2013.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Younger people and children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Many of the projects undertaken through the Neighbourhood Forums support children and young people and will continue to do so.
Disability	Physical/learning/mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender Reassignment	Transsexual people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and Maternity		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Race (Ethnicity or Nationality)	Asian or Asian British people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Groups representing minority ethnic groups are members of the Forums.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Black or black British people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Irish people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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<b>Equality</b>		<b>Positive Impact</b> (It could benefit)	<b>Negative Impact</b> (It could disadvantage)	<b>Reason</b> and any mitigating actions already in place (to reduce any adverse /negative impacts <u>or</u> reasons why it will be of positive benefit or contribution)	<b>No Impact</b>
	White British	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	√ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Chinese people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	√ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Gypsies & Travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		√ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Other minority communities not listed above (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		√ <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Belief or Religion</b>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		√ <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender</b>	Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	√ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	√ <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Gay men, gay women / lesbians and bisexual people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	√ <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b> (employment only)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Contribution to equality of opportunity</b>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	√ <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Contribution to fostering good relations between different groups (people getting on well together – valuing one another, respect and understanding)</b>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	√ <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Human Rights</b> <a href="http://intranet/site/scripts/documents_info.php?categoryID=86&amp;documentID=251">http://intranet/site/scripts/documents_info.php?categoryID=86&amp;documentID=251</a>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any Council decisions will be taken in line with the Human Rights Act 1998	√ <input type="checkbox"/>

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