

Subject:	Neighbourhood Forums - changes from April 2018	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	14 th March 2018
Report of:	Director of Communities	Portfolio Holder:	Health and Housing
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached: Yes
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
Contact Officer:	Sam Plum	Telephone:	01706 252428
Email:	samplum@rossendalebc.gov.uk		

1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Cabinet approves the proposed changes to Neighbourhood Forum arrangements and Neighbourhood Forum Grants from April 2018 as outlined in this report
1.2	That £15,000 is allocated from the Living Well Living Better budget to supplement the Neighbourhood Forum grants for one year
1.3	All future minor amendments to the Neighbourhood Forums to be delegated to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To outline the proposals for changes to the Neighbourhood Forums and Neighbourhood Forum Grants from April 2018

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **A clean and green Rossendale:** our priority is to keep Rossendale clean and green for all of Rossendale's residents and visitors, and to take available opportunities to recycle and use energy from renewable sources more efficiently.
 - **A connected and successful Rossendale that welcomes sustainable growth:** our priority is to ensure that we are well connected to our residents, key partners and stakeholders. We want to make the most of every pound we spend and we are always looking for new and innovative ways to make the resources we do have, work harder for us.
 - **A proud, healthy and vibrant Rossendale:** our priority is to ensure that we are creating and maintaining a healthy and vibrant place for people to live and visit.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- 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 Neighbourhood Forums promote engagement and partnership working at the community level. Rossendale's Neighbourhood Forums were reviewed and refreshed in 2014 in response to the significant financial savings being made by both RBC and LCC. Neighbourhood Forums became informal community meetings, outside the Council Constitution but with closer working arrangements with LCC's 3 Tier Forum. This ensured the strong links that had been developed through the Neighbourhood Forums with and amongst local community members could be maintained whilst also providing a mechanism for Lancashire County Council to engage constructively with the wider community in Rossendale. The arrangements also provided members of the community with the opportunity to influence strategic priorities for both the Borough and County. Three Tier Forums no longer take place.
- 5.2 Initially Neighbourhood Forums influenced local service delivery through developing and implementing local Neighbourhood Plans that aimed to deliver the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy, the overarching strategy for Rossendale. Many Neighbourhood Plan priority actions were delivered through joint working and seed funding from the Forums, and new initiatives have emerged and been taken forward e.g. Bacup THI, civic pride groups and town centre events. Forums have continued to successfully engage local communities in local issues and there is now the opportunity to engage local communities in the delivery of priorities in the new Corporate Strategy.
- 5.3 Forums are well attended by both Borough and County Councillors. They have helped to promote community leadership roles for local elected members.
- 5.4 Community input to Neighbourhood Forums now varies, with some attracting many community members and representatives of community groups, while others are made up mainly of councillors and agency representatives.
- 5.5 Forums no longer focus on the delivery of a Neighbourhood Plan. They work well as networking and information sharing forums and there is often a focus on anti- social behaviour, or other issues of local concern. Community members who attend forums, however, are often there to ensure the council and other agencies are responding to local issues and there is seldom discussion about what communities could and should be doing for themselves.
- 5.6 Neighbourhood Forum Grants are managed by the Forums. However the grant criteria still refer to the original area Neighbourhood Plan priorities, and there is a need for these to be updated.
- 5.7 Health has been a growing agenda in the area. The Rossendale Strategic Health Partnership is developing and engaging with GPs to address health issues locally and the community focussed Rossendale Health and Wellbeing Partnership (RHWP) has grown and is embracing the wider determinants of poor health including housing, education, access to transport, social

isolation etc. Many of the priorities of the RHWP have to involve communities and very local action to achieve success.

5.8 Funding challenges across the statutory sector are driving the need for partnership working to deliver local solutions to local issues.

5.9 Proposals to move Neighbourhood Forums forward:

- Re-launch Neighbourhood Forums as 'Community Partnerships' from June 2018. Communities can take ownership of their local Community Partnership and shape its form and priorities. Partnerships do not have to be council driven, but would be supported by Rossendale Borough Council Communities Team.
- Develop a Neighbourhood Profile for each Community Partnership area that includes local information on health, crime, economic data and loneliness and social isolation issues.
- Encourage each Community Partnership to develop a new 'Neighbourhood Plan' that addresses these and other local issues, taking an asset based approach building on the existing strengths, skills and opportunities within the community.
- Develop a stronger role for community members with communities and individuals leading on prioritising local issues in their plan and owning solutions to these issues.
- Develop a Neighbourhood Charter for each area that gives information about who is responsible for different community issues, which could also empower communities by highlighting what communities can do for themselves instead of just relying on other organisations. The charter will encourage community members to report issues immediately rather than wait to bring them to Forums.
- Neighbourhood Grants will be targeted at delivering local solutions to issues in the Neighbourhood Plan at a community level. All Neighbourhood Grant panels will include at least one community member.
- During 2018/19 for one year, Neighbourhood Grants will be supplemented by £15,000 from the Living Well Living Better budget (external funding) to allow Community Partnerships to 'commission' projects to deliver their local priorities.
- Meetings will continue to be 3 a year, but can call for task and finish groups or arrange community consultation events to complement meetings.
- All local residents are welcome to attend community partnership meetings which will be publicised and promoted including on key local social media sites.

Community Partnership / Neighbourhood Forum Grant funding

5.10 A budget of £15,000 for Neighbourhood Forum grants in 2018/19 was agreed by Cabinet in November 2016. It is proposed that this be matched by £15,000 from the Living Well Living Better project legacy funding for one year.

5.11 Community Partnership / Neighbourhood Forum grants will continue to be available up to a maximum of £500.00 and will be focussed on delivering Corporate Strategy priorities at the local level, and local priorities as these are developed by the Partnerships. The additional

£15,000 will be available to the Community Partnerships, split pro rata, as a Community Investment Fund to commission projects and activities that deliver their agreed priorities. Each commissioned project can receive up to £1000.00 funding and the decision to award such funding will be made by the full Partnership. This can be extended in exceptional circumstances with the full agreement of the Community Partnership.

- 5.12 Priority will be given to applications which show how the project or activity will bring people together and attract new people, including new management group / committee members, and reach out to people who don't normally get involved. This will encourage wider participation and ensure that the objectives of the Living Well Living Better Project, which is about addressing social isolation and loneliness, are met.
- 5.13 If there are funds remaining in the grant funding budget (£15,000), towards the end of the financial year, the Partnerships may use any remaining funding to commission projects through their Community Investment Fund.
- 5.14 An updated terms of reference for the Community Partnerships is attached at Appendix 1.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 6.1 Financial matters are noted within the report.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

- 7.1 All relevant comments are contained in the body of the report.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 8.1 An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix 2. 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 Partnerships will enable the strong partnership working and community engagement currently in place to continue.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Neighbourhood Forums continue to play an important role as a mechanism for the Council to engage with local groups and residents and for residents to influence service delivery. In the current economic climate working effectively with local communities and empowering them to take ownership of local issues and solutions is key. The proposed changes will enable the Neighbourhood Forums to refocus as Community Partnerships identifying and addressing local issues. The additional funding will provide a boost to the Forums supporting them to do things for themselves, whilst providing a legacy from the Living Well Living Better project and embedding its aims.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Neighbourhood Forums - changes from April 2014	www.rossendale.gov.uk
Rossendale Council and Neighbourhood Forum Grants 2017/18 and 2018/19	www.rossendale.gov.uk
Appendix 1 Terms of Reference Community Partnerships	Attached
Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment	Attached