
Brierley Hill Area Committee – 19 January 2006

Report of the Liaison Officer

Area Committee Community Plan/Agenda

Purpose

1. To update Members on discussions of the Working Group and to consider the need for a local community plan and the structuring of agendas with key theme items given priority in the Committee Agenda.

Background

2. The Area Committee's terms of reference as set out in the constitution include "to develop and introduce a local community plan for their area if appropriate"
3. During 2002 and 2003 extensive consultation and community participation took place to develop the Brierley Hill Area Committee Community Plan. The plan was approved at the Area Committee Meeting on 2 September 2003.
4. The plan was based on the wider Community Strategy but with a stronger emphasis on areas such as young people and priority neighbourhoods. The plan has not been reviewed or been the subject of specific reports to the Area Committee. Reports have however been presented on many of the key themes, young people, priority neighbourhoods, community safety and crime prevention, transport and road safety, leisure, environment and education.
5. At the Area Committee Working Group on 7 December 2005, Members discussed the work involved in the production of a Community Plan, the potential benefits and the need to structure the Area Committee Agendas to properly reflect the priorities of the Committee and local community. The discussion revolved substantially around the question as to whether a Local Community Plan was the best vehicle for getting the key themes and items on the Area Committee's agenda for discussion.
6. It was considered that provided the agendas properly reflected the key themes that a Local Community Plan would add little, however, it would be very important to ensure that the cycle of items on the agenda reflected Members' priorities. There was some discussion concerning what key themes should be given priority at the Area Committee, the main ones highlighted were **community safety, youth, priority neighbourhoods, health and leisure.**

7. Members were clear that if one of these themes was the subject of a report to an Area Committee it should be given sufficient time to reflect its importance both in the presentation of the report and the time available for discussion.
8. The conclusion drawn was that one way of achieving this would be to have a cycle of items of priority on the agendas, e.g., with 5 meetings in each municipal year, each of the five priorities listed earlier could be the prime agenda item at one meeting or the priority items could be in a cycle of 2 per year. If such a process was approved by Members it would be important to ensure that detailed reports were presented to Members in advance and that sufficient time was allowed in each Area Committee to allow for discussion. This would put significant pressure on the first meeting in a municipal year as there tends to be a backlog of reports and a number of administrative reports which need to be presented to that Area Committee.
9. It was agreed to recommend to the Area Committee that a Community Plan is not required and that the Area Committee agendas should be structured around key priorities the first issue is for Members to confirm the key priorities and then to agree the frequency of their reporting to the Area Committee.

Finance

10. There are no direct financial implications in this report.

Law

11. Section III of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything calculated to facilitate or which is conducive to or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions. This would include the production of a Community Plan.

Equality Impact

10. It will be important to ensure that the structure of the agendas and the priority themes within those agendas properly reflect the Council's commitment to equal opportunities.

Recommendation

11. That the Committee considers the content of this report and agrees a way forward on a Community Plan or a structure for the Committee's Agendas.



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List of Background Papers

- 1 Report to the Working Group on 7 December 2005
2. Report to Brierley Hill Area Committee on 2 September 2003, titled Brierley Hill Area Committee Local Community Plan