



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM TASK GROUP

Tuesday, 19th July, 2016

6.00 pm

Publication date: 11 July 2016

Agenda

Councillors S Cavinder, K Hastrick, A Joynes, R Martins and M Mills

1. Election of Chair

To elect a Chair for the Task Group

2. Apologies for absence

3. Disclosures of interest (if any)

4. Scope of review and background papers (Pages 3 - 16)

A number of background papers are attached:

- scrutiny proposal form, setting out the terms of the review
- Neighbourhood Forum protocol
- Neighbourhood Forum guidelines.

5. Next steps

Members to discuss how they wish to progress this Task Group, including, but not restricted to:

- review of previous spending
- review of other funding schemes, including Watford Borough Council's small grants scheme
- survey of members' views on the application for, and use of, Community Engagement budgets.

6. Date of next meetings

Selection of topics and issues for scrutiny by councillors, officers or members of the public

Anyone wishing to suggest a topic for scrutiny must complete Section 1 of this form.

1. Sources

The following are sources of ideas for the work programme:

- Performance indicators, both national and internal.
- Views of Cabinet and Leadership Team especially in relation to policy subjects.
- The Council's surveys, such as the annual residents' survey.
- The Complaints Report which is compiled annually by the Customer Service Centre.
- Service complaints more widely; although individual cases will not be taken up if a large volume of complaints is received about a single issue then it may be appropriate to pursue the topic.
- Reports of external inspections of services.
- The views of the Council's partners.
- Issues picked up by ward councillors in their locality.
- The Council's Forward Plan

2. Outcomes

Success indicators could include:

- Having identified local needs;
- Having evaluated alternative ways of working/how a service could improve and making recommendations to the Executive or the Council's partners;
- Having developed an awareness of any contractual, economic, legal or structural constraints on Council's or its partners approach.

3. Criteria

To qualify for consideration the topic must meet the following criteria:

- Affect a group or community of people. Scrutiny will not normally look at individual service complaints.
- Relate to a service, event or issue in which Watford Borough Council has a significant stake.
- Not be an issue that Scrutiny has covered during the last year.
- Not be a planning or licensing issue, or any other matter dealt with by another council committee.
- To match one or more of the Council's current priorities.
- To be feasible and able to be completed within the timescale projected for the work.
- There must be availability within the relevant department/service to support the review.
- Be a topic that members wish to scrutinise.

On completion please return to Sandra Hancock, Committee and Scrutiny Officer

By email – sandra.hancock@watford.gov.uk

By post – Legal and Property Services, Watford Borough Council, Town Hall, Watford, WD17 3EX

Suggestions for topics to be scrutinised – evaluation table

A Member, Officer or member of the public suggesting a topic for scrutiny must complete Section1 as fully as possible. Completed tables will be presented to Overview & Scrutiny for consideration.

Section 1 – Scrutiny Suggestion		A Review of the Neighbourhood Forums including funding criteria
Proposer: Councillor/Officer/Member of public Carol Chen/Mayor Thornhill		
<p>Topic recommended for scrutiny:</p> <p><i>Please include as much detail as is available about the specific such as;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>areas which should be <u>included</u> in the review.</i> • <i>areas which should be <u>excluded</u> from the review.</i> • <i>Whether the focus should be on past performance, future policy or both.</i> 	<p align="center"><i>Give details</i></p> <p>To review the operation of Neighbourhood Forums particularly the use of Neighbourhood Forum budgets.</p> <p>A review of the Neighbourhood Forum Community Engagement Budget criteria.</p> <p>Focus on historic spend and uses of the funding for the future.</p> <p>.</p>	
Why have you recommended this topic for scrutiny?	The Mayor would like the Funding Guidance to be reviewed.	

What are the specific outcomes you wish to see from the review?

Examples might include:

- *To identify what is being done and what the potential barriers are;*
- *To review relevant performance indicators;*
- *To compare our policies with those of a similar authority;*
- *To assess the environmental/social impacts;*
- *To Benchmark current service provision;*
- *To find out community perceptions and experience;*
- *To identify the gap between provision and need*

Give details

A clear understanding by all members of what they can and what they cannot use the budgets for.

<p>How do you think evidence might be obtained?</p> <p><i>Examples might include</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires/Surveys • Site visits • Interviewing witnesses • Research • Performance data • Public hearings • Comparisons with other local authorities 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Give details</i></p> <p>Past examples.</p> <p>Other councils (HCC) schemes and their criteria.</p> <p>Views from members including cabinet.</p>
<p>Does the proposed item meet the following criteria?</p>	
<p>It must affect a group or community of people</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Give details</i></p> <p>The Neighbourhood Forums are designed to be a focus for each ward</p>
<p>It must relate to a service, event or issue in which the council has a significant stake</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Give details</i></p> <p>Each Ward has a budget of £2500 to spend annually</p>

<p>It must not have been a topic of scrutiny within the last 12 months</p> <p><i>There will be exceptions to this arising from notified changing circumstances. Scrutiny will also maintain an interest in the progress of recommendations and issues arising from past reports.</i></p>	<p>Not reviewed in the last 12 months.</p>
<p>It must not be an issue, such as planning or licensing, which is dealt with by another council committee</p>	<p>Again is an appropriate area for scrutiny</p>
<p>Does the topic meet the council's priorities?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making Watford a better place to live in 2. To provide the lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth 3. Promoting an active, cohesive and well informed Town 4. To operate the Council efficiently and effectively <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Please confirm which ones</i></p> <p>1,3 and 4</p>

<p>Are you aware of any limitations of time, other constraints or risks which need to be taken into account?</p> <p><i>Factors to consider are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>forthcoming milestones, demands on the relevant service area and member availability:</i>• <i>imminent policy changes either locally, regionally or nationally within the area under review.</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">Include details</p> <p>I would suggest it is started if agreed in the next municipal year.</p>
<p>Does the topic involve a Council partner or other outside body?</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>Are there likely to be any Equality implications which will need to be considered?</p> <p><i>Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Age</i> • <i>Disability</i> • <i>Gender reassignment</i> • <i>Pregnancy or maternity</i> • <i>Race</i> • <i>Religion or belief</i> • <i>Sex</i> • <i>Sexual orientation</i> • <i>Marriage or civil partnership (only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination)</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Give details</i></p> <p>No. But will depend on any suggested new criteria</p>
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<p>Sign off <i>(It is expected that any Councillor proposing a topic agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee will participate in the Task Group)</i></p>	
<p>Councillor/Officer C. Chen</p>	<p>Date 17.2.16</p>

Protocol for Neighbourhood Forums.

The Council will establish 12 Neighbourhood Forums (the Forums).

The Area comprising a Forum will be the Local Electoral Ward.

Membership of the Forum will comprise the 3 elected councillors for the electoral ward.

Terms of Reference of the Forums.

- To engage with local residents, businesses and other community groups in their Ward.
- To promote the business of the Council and to undertake as they see fit consultation on Ward related matters.
- To manage a budget as allocated from time to time by the Council, for the purposes of meeting with residents, businesses and other community groups, and facilitating the enhancement the area and amenities of those living and working in the Forum area. This could include providing grants for community projects, match funding, or carrying out small projects.

Calling of Meetings.

A meeting of a Forum may be called by no less than 2 elected councillors for the Forum area signing and sending to the Head of Democracy and Governance formal notice of the calling of the meeting.

The notice will specify the name of the lead councillor for the purpose of organising the meeting and the proposed date, time and venue of the meeting, the intended subject matter and the estimated cost. If not signed by all 3 elected councillors for the area it will confirm that the third councillor has been notified of the intention to call the meeting and the date of that notification.

All notices must be given to the Head of Democracy and Governance no less than 10 working days before the date of the meeting to allow time for the meeting agenda to be published within the timescales under the Local Government Access to Information Regulations.

The lead councillor will be responsible for ensuring that any intended officers or outside representatives who are deemed necessary to attend the meeting are notified of the date and time and what they are expected to do, all appropriate publicity for the meeting and for the taking of the minutes of the meeting and that any reports are provided to the Head of Democracy and Governance for publication with the agenda no later than 7 working days before the date of the meeting,.

It must be clear on any publicity that the meeting is a meeting organised by Watford Borough Council.

The lead councillor will also be responsible for arranging the booking of the venue for the meeting and notifying the Head of Democracy and Governance who he/she will be receiving an invoice from and the anticipated amount.

The lead councillor will after the meeting supply the Head of Democracy and Governance with a copy of the minutes for publication no later than 7 working days after the date of the meeting.

All Forum meetings will be open to the public.

It will be for the elected councillors to decide how the business of the meeting is conducted.

Budget.

Each year Council will allocate a budget to each Forum.

It will be for the elected councillors to decide how the budget is spent subject to any specific instructions from Cabinet or Council.

The Head of Democracy and Governance will hold the budget for each Forum and will send to each councillor a statement at the beginning of each month setting out what has been spent to date, any commitments the Council has been notified of affecting the budget and how much budget remains. The statement will only reflect items that have been reported to the Council, the onus is on councillors to tell the Head of Democracy and Governance as soon as practicable all items of expenditure.

Once the allocated budget has been expended no subsequent requests for expenditure will be approved and any activities the Forum wishes to carry out will be at the expense of the elected councillors.

Should any money remain unspent at the end of the financial year then it will be lost, unless the elected councillors can make a case for carry forward for a specific project which will be subject to the approval of the Head of Finance.

Payment for meetings:

The lead councillor responsible for making the venue booking will notify the owner of the building to send an invoice to the Head of Democracy and Governance quoting the name of the Neighbourhood Forum and date of the meeting.

On receipt of the invoice the Head of Democracy and Governance will confirm with the lead councillor the amount agreed for the hire fee and that the date of the hiring is correct.

The Head of Democracy and Governance will then pay the invoice.

Payment for other items:

Prior to committing the Council to spending any of their Forum budget on items other than meetings the councillors must submit a proforma to the Head of Democracy and Governance or approval.

The pro forma must be signed off by no less than 2 of the councillors for the Forum area.

No project should be instigated if it will lead to the Council incurring ongoing revenue costs, unless previously discussed with the relevant Head of Service who has agreed that the ongoing revenue expenditure can be met from their existing budget.

The proforma will be forwarded to the Head of Service with responsibility for the provision of service most affected by the proposal for information, or approval where ongoing revenue expenditure is likely to be incurred.

In the latter case the Head of Service will notify both the elected councillors and the Head of Legal and Property Services of whether they can commit to the ongoing revenue costs within 21 working days of receiving it.

In the case of the project being likely to incur ongoing revenue costs the Head of Services decision will be final.

The Head of Democracy and Governance will raise an order and any invoice will be submitted to him/her for payment.

Should any invoice exceed the amount stated in the pro forma by more than 10% the Head of Finance and the councillors will be notified. If the final cost exceeds the amount left in the Forum budget the councillors who signed off the pro forma will be required to fund the excess equally from their remuneration allowance.

If the proforma is only signed by 2 councillors the 3rd councillor will be sent a copy of the proforma by the Head of Democracy and Governance for their information.

Councillors are advised to discuss any proposed projects with the relevant Head of Service at the earliest opportunity to avoid disappointment and managing community expectations.

The Forum must not be used for party political purposes.

Please refer to the 'Neighbourhood Forums – Guidelines for expenditure of Community Funds' for further guidance about using funds for projects.

Annual Report:

At the last Council meeting of the municipal year each Forum will present a report of its activities of the year, including details of its spending, meetings and projects.



1. Before agreeing a project the following factors need to be considered:
 - Is there sufficient budget available? (figures should be checked with Democratic Services)
 - Is the project likely to incur any ongoing revenue costs?
 - Has the relevant Head of Service been consulted if appropriate?
 - Is the cost of the project proportionate to the number of people who will benefit from it?
 - How long will it take for the project to be completed?
2. Once at least two ward councillors have agreed on a project (and the third has been informed) quotes for work must be obtained. To comply with the Council's purchasing requirements, where the value is **£2,000 or under**, one oral quotation must be obtained (confirmed in writing where the total exceeds £500). Where the value **exceeds £2,000**, three written and meaningful quotations must be obtained.
3. Consideration should be given to aggregating orders with other wards, where appropriate, to obtain best value. Councillors will also be required to explain how their project demonstrates value for money.
4. An application must be submitted to Democratic Services using the relevant 2016-17 application form. **No work must be commissioned or funds committed until approval has been obtained.**
5. Application forms submitted retrospectively will not be processed and any councillor expenditure incurred on the procurement of goods and services without prior approval will not be reimbursed.
6. To comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, all orders need to be accompanied by an official order number which means that all orders for goods and services must be placed by officers using the electronic procurement system
7. Councillors must not make any direct verbal or telephone orders for goods, materials or work.
8. Councillors should be aware of the Code of Conduct when commissioning work and should advise Carol Chen, Head of Democracy and Governance, if

they think they may have a conflict of interests. If a councillor does have an interest they should not be a party to the application. Any application signed off by a councillor declaring they have an interest will not be approved and will be returned.

9. In order to ensure that expenditure comes from the current financial year, councillors are encouraged to submit all applications for projects by the end of February 2017. Whilst actual spend up to the end of March will still be considered, funds cannot be carried over and there is therefore the risk that expenditure may have to be taken from the following year's budget.
10. Financial statements will be completed and forwarded to councillors in April in time for the Neighbourhood Forum Annual Report to be presented to Council.
11. The amount spent needs to be proportionate to the number of residents benefiting from the project, i.e. it would not be appropriate to spend a large proportion of the funds on a small group.
12. Funds should not to be spent on:
 - Catering (other than refreshments at meetings)
 - Outings
 - Projects which will involve ongoing revenue costs/maintenance, except where approved by the appropriate Head of Service and the councillors are satisfied that there are other budgets in place that will meet those costs
 - Party political purposes
 - As a reward.
13. A separate form is available for meetings. This must be completed and forwarded to Democratic Services before arranging Neighbourhood Forum meetings. The form must include the date, time and location of the meeting and an approximate cost. This form should be submitted before the meeting and before any costs have been incurred.
14. Subject to agreement by the ward councillors affected, funds can be combined and used across ward boundaries where the project will benefit more than a single ward.
15. Whilst it is acceptable to publicise projects in ward leaflets or newsletters it must be made clear that the funding has come from the Neighbourhood Forum budget. It must not be attributed to any political party.
16. Councillors are required to adhere to the Protocol for Neighbourhood Forums and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules during each stage of the procurement of goods or services.