

PART A

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

Date of meeting: Thursday, 24 November 2016
Monday, 5 December 2016

Report of: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

Title: Neighbourhood Forum Task Group - Final report

1.0 **Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet with the final report and recommendations of the Neighbourhood Forum Task Group. The report is attached as Appendix A.
- 1.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to review the report and recommendations prior to its presentation to Cabinet on 5 December 2016.
- 1.3 Cabinet is asked to consider the task group's recommendations for approval. An extract of Overview and Scrutiny Committee's minutes will be circulated at the Cabinet meeting.

2.0 **Recommendations**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.1 that the final report and recommendations of the Neighbourhood Forum Task Group be agreed and forwarded to Cabinet.

Cabinet

- 2.2 that the task group's recommendations be considered for approval –
- a. Continue Neighbourhood Forum funds and increase the amount to £3,000 per ward.
 - b. Focus future funding on local organisations, groups and charities.

- c. Rename “Neighbourhood Forums” to “Neighbourhood Locality Funds”.
- d. Relaunch the funds using the council’s communications team, providing links to all relevant forms and information on the council’s website.
- e. The Head of Democracy and Governance to review guidelines to clarify:
 - how often recipients can receive funding (normally not more than once a year, however the type of project, rather than the organisation, should be the guide)
 - proportionality criteria
 - declaration of members’ interests.
- f. Officers to investigate a feasibility of allocating money to individual wards to spend by a given date, e.g. mid-December. After this point, any remaining funds should be pooled so that all wards can bid for the available funds. At the end of the year, any remaining money in this pool should be allocated to the chairman’s chosen charities.
- g. Officers to look into the feasibility of requiring recipients to apply for funds directly, preferably using online forms.
- h. Encourage wards to minimise their administration costs for meetings in order to seek the most cost effective means, particularly in regard to advertising meetings.
- i. Require recipients to complete a feedback questionnaire on their completed projects. Any funds not used for the specific purpose granted should be returned to Watford Borough Council.

Contact Officer:

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Report approved by: Head of Democracy and Governance

3.0 Detailed proposal

3.1 In February 2016, the Head of Democracy and Governance, in conjunction with the Mayor, submitted a scrutiny proposal form requesting a review of Neighbourhood

Forums including the funding criteria.

- 3.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the proposal at its meeting on 3 March 2016. Following a discussion, it was agreed that a task group should be set up ready to start in the new municipal year. The review needed to include information about how other local authorities managed locality funding.
- 3.3 Due to the timing of the decision to set up the task group and the close proximity to the purdah period for the local elections in May 2016, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would seek expressions of interest from non-executive councillors after the local elections.
- 3.4 On 17 May 2016 the Committee and Scrutiny Officer emailed all councillors about the new task group asking them to contact her if they were interested in taking part in the review of Neighbourhood Forums. A further reminder was sent to all councillors on 3 June 2016. In total seven councillors expressed an interest in participating in the task group.
- 3.5 At the meeting on 16 June 2016 Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the following membership –
- Councillor Stephen Cavinder (elected Chair at the task group's first meeting)
 - Councillor Kareen Hastrick
 - Councillor Anne Joynes
 - Councillor Rabi Martins
 - Councillor Mo Mills
- 3.6 The task group has met on three occasions. The first meeting took place on 19 July 2016 and the final meeting was on 27 September 2016. As part of the review a survey was sent to all councillors asking for their views about Neighbourhood Forums. The results of the survey were considered by the task group and have helped with the formation of some of the recommendations.
- 3.7 The task group's final report and recommendations will be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December 2016 for consideration. Cabinet's comments and decisions on the recommendations will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in January.
- 3.8 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to review the report prior to it being forwarded to Cabinet.
- 3.9 Cabinet is asked to consider the task group's recommendation as set out in paragraph 2.2 of this report and the task group's final report.

4.0 **Implications**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Head of Finance (shared services) comments that an increase of £500 per ward in the funding would mean that budget growth of £6,000 p.a. would have to be added to the Council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS).

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that any legal implications are contained within the report.

4.3 **Equalities**

4.3.1 Councillors are reminded that any venues used for meetings need to be accessible for all residents.

4.4 **Potential Risks**

No direct risks have been identified as a result of the recommendations, which are proposing amendments to the existing Neighbourhood Forum arrangements and protocol.

4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 There are no additional staffing implications as a result of the task group's recommendations.

Appendices

Appendix A – Neighbourhood Forum Task Group final report

Background Papers

No additional papers were used in the preparation of this report.

File Reference

None