



Council	Tuesday, 05 December 2017	Matter for Information and Decision
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Title: **Review of the Oadby, Wigston and South
Wigston Residents' Forums**

Author(s): **Anne Court (Interim Chief Executive)**

1. Introduction

- 1.1. At the Council meeting on 5 September, Members were asked to provide policy guidance on the proposals contained within a report on the future administrative and governance arrangements for the three Residents' Forums ("the Forums"). This policy guidance and report was circulated at the next cycle of Forums for consultation.
- 1.2. As part of this review, Members asked that thought also be given regarding how to increase participation from local residents from within the three town areas.
- 1.3. This report sets out below the feedback from the consultation with the Forums.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. That Council notes the information in the report.
- 2.2. That the Interim Director of Services and the Monitoring Officer draft revised Terms of Reference for the Forums from the proposals within the report of 5 September 2017, taking into account the feedback received from Members and residents, and the draft Terms of Reference to be brought to the next Council meeting on 22 February 2018 for approval with further consultation on the draft at the Forums in February/March.
- 2.3. That Council considers the feedback from residents on how to increase participation from local residents' and give any further policy guidance as may be necessary.

3. Information

- 3.1 The report of 5 September 2017 set out proposals and options in relation to:
 - a. Clarity on the type of grants Forums can consider and the application process;
 - b. Chairing the Forums;
 - c. Constitution and Funding the Forums; and
 - d. Setting the agenda for meetings of the Forums.

As part of the policy guidance, Members felt that any changes agreed must be consistent across all three Forums.

- 3.2. In addition to the proposals and options set out in the report of 5 September, a consultation based on three questions had been circulated at the Forum meetings in July and September. The three questions were:-
 1. How is your Forum working for you?
 2. What could your Forum be doing differently?
 3. What more could your Forum do to make it more accessible to residents?

The feedback on these three questions is also incorporated below.

4. Grants

4.1. Members commended the clarification of "one-off" grants and financing in general, but agreed that the pro-forma application forms were too complex for the relatively small sums of money that the Forums distributed to local groups and individuals.

4.2. Members suggested that small grants (i.e. up to £200) could be awarded by Forums without the need to complete excessive amounts of paperwork.

4.3. Feedback from Oadby

- Oadby residents wished the Council to continue to fund the three Residents' Forums;
- Funding not to be accessible to businesses;
- Have the Council provide a clear and simple form filling process for organisations requesting large sums of money. This should include monitoring, evaluation and a check on the efficiency of the organisation including accounts, as part of the process;
- Funding for sums as small as £200 to £300 should have a shorter application form process made applications available;
- Questions on funding proposals be placed in writing with the Community Engagement Officer before the Forum meets and it be placed on the agenda; and
- Residents requesting a bin, bench or bus shelter should not be required to fill in a form as the money was Council money and was not being giving to an individual resident.

4.4. Feedback from South Wigston

- Money in the Forum funds needs to be accountable before being granted and afterwards;
- Funding applications in a range up to £500 have use of a more simplified form;
- Multiple funding applications for the same items and for the same sums should not be presented to the three Forums;
- Questions on making funding proposals should be placed with the Community Engagement Officer before the Forum meetings and be placed on the agenda for discussion; and
- All groups requesting funding should have accounts.

4.5. Feedback from Wigston

- Have a more formal procedure for spending requests without making it too difficult e.g. brief application form for sums up to £500;
- Applicant must speak at the meeting when making the request;
- Requests to be submitted three weeks before the meeting and clearly identified in the agenda;
- Publish rules about what activity/cost can be applied for and from which groups;
- If the application covers the whole Borough, applicants should be made aware that they should approach each Forum for a proportion of the money; and
- Questions on funding proposals are to be placed with the Community Engagement Officer before the Forum meeting in order that they can be added to the agenda.

4.6. A proposed structure, monitoring and governance arrangements for Forum grants is

incorporated within a wider report on “Third Sector and Community Support funding” as a separate item on the agenda for this Council meeting. The proposals take into account the common themes of the feedback, for example to make the application process simple for small funding sums.

5. Chairing of the Forums

5.1. Members general view was that the chairing of the Forums should continue to be by an elected Member rather than a local resident given the need for the Chair to understand the operations of the Council and to have easy access information and resources.

5.2. Members proposed that the Forum Chairs could, in future, be any elected Member, not necessarily one whose ward was within the geo-political area of the Forum.

5.3. Feedback from Oadby

Agreed that the Forum meetings should be chaired by an elected Member.

5.4. There was no specific feedback from the South Wigston and Wigston Forums on this.

6. Constitution and Funding

6.1. Members were happy that the financing of the Forums should be included in the Council annual budget-setting exercise.

6.2. Members felt the current Terms of Reference for the Forums as contained in the Council’s Constitution should be redrafted.

6.3. Feedback from Oadby

- The terms of the Forums be brought to the next meeting.

6.4. Feedback from South Wigston

- The Forum needs to fulfil its Terms of Reference. These should not under any pretext be changed.

6.5. Feedback from Wigston

- The Constitution/Rules for the Forum as incorporated in the Council’s Constitution be agreed in a meeting and published to all residents; and
- Have the same Constitution/Rules for all three Forums.

7. Setting the Agenda for Meetings of the Residents’ Forums

7.1. Members were keen to stress that the Forum meetings were non-political and that agenda items should not touch on political matters.

7.2. Members were happy that the agenda for Forums should continue to be set by either agreeing at the conclusion of a meeting what should appear on the next meeting’s agenda and/or by residents’ contacting the Chair of the Forum to agree an item.

7.3. Feedback from Oadby

- Have an accessible copy of the agenda and minutes placed in the library;
- Draft minutes be made ready within ten working days and placed online within fifteen working days;
- Fewer presentations, keep short; and
- Local police updates very important.

7.4. Feedback from South Wigston

- Draft minutes to be made ready within ten working days and placed online within fifteen working days;
- Minutes should not be verbatim but provide an essence of what was discussed with the actions;
- Residents and the Chair should set the agenda;
- Minutes taken in all three Forums are unsatisfactory. Employ a professional minute taker. Minutes should reflect criticism of the Council and elected members; and
- Presentations only where relevant.

7.5. Feedback from Wigston

- Too many unnecessary presentations leaving not enough time for residents' questions. Have less formal presentations - put them lower down the agenda. Is it necessary for the Police to report every time?;
- Make a clear distinction between "Capital Projects Update" and "Forum Budget Update". Have a separate item for spending requests as this currently gets mixed up with budget updates;
- Have items raised by residents and ideas for future items at the top of the agenda after the formal apologies and minutes of the last meeting; and
- Different views on the issue of draft minutes arose from the feedback to the questionnaire at the meeting. The response to the questionnaire was minutes to be available within three weeks of the meeting so that residents can recall what was said and check the draft minutes so that if necessary. At the meeting it was proposed draft minutes to be made ready within ten working days and placed online within fifteen working days.

8. **Residents' Feedback on Increasing Participation From Local Residents**

8.1. Feedback from Oadby

- In the main it works well – useful for getting information on what is happening in the Borough;
- Advertise more and for longer on the Bell Street notice board and in shops; and
- The Forum is too early in the evening; suggest a 7 pm start to attract younger audience, those who work in the day etc.

8.2. Feedback from South Wigston

- The Forum does not include the whole community - it is not working;
- Councillors need to listen to residents;
- Serious debate is not encouraged;
- Bring large issues from the Council to the Forum;
- Relevant officers, including the Chief Executive, should attend the Forum to answer questions; and
- Have more explicit use of working groups - have a working group in each Forum to plan specific ways to increase attendance.

8.3. Feedback from Wigston

- The Forum is working reasonably well;
- Advertise widely and in good time before meetings, use Twitter and Facebook;
- Allow people to submit comments/questions on line;
- Discussion on health provision in the locality;
- More discussion on major planning applications and presentations by applicants;
- More discussion on Council Finances and Council Tax;
- Check that those attending are local residents and if not, why they are attending; and;
- Replace the term "Forum" with "Residents' Meeting "

8.4. **Other Common Themes from Residents' Feedback**

- There needs to be more accountability for agreed actions and reporting back to the next meetings - requests take too long to resolve; and
- Voting systems need to be agreed

Background Documents:

Report to Full Council on 5 September 2017

Minutes of Meetings of the Forums between July and November 2017.

Feedback on the three question "Consultation Questionnaire" to the Forums.

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Implications Review of the Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston Residents' Forums	
Finance	Although there are no new direct implications from this report it is important that a robust system of financial governance is put in place for the forums so that the public can be assured that the Council is allocating public money appropriately.
Chris Raymakers (Head of Finance, Revenue and Benefits)	
Legal	The report is satisfactory.
Dave Gill (Head of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer)	
Corporate Risk(s) (CR)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decreasing Financial Resources (CR1)
Anne Court (Interim Chief Executive)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organisational/Transformational Change (CR8)
Corporate Priorities (CP)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An Inclusive and Engaged Borough (CP1)
Anne Court (Interim Chief Executive)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Service Provision (CP2)
Vision & Values (V)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "A Strong Borough Together" (Vision)
Anne Court (Interim Chief Executive)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accountability (V1)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teamwork (V3)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus (V5)
Equalities & Equality Assessment(s) (EA)	An EA will be completed once further consultation and policy guidance has been sought from resident and Members.
Anne Court (Interim Chief Executive)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable (EA)