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## Guidance Notes On The Structure And Rules For The Participation By The Public At Area Forum Meetings

### Introduction

1. As part of the Council's Modernisation of Local Government 9 Area Forums were established, each consisting of 2 or 3 individual wards.
2. Area Forums meet every 3 weeks.
3. They meet in public (with provision for private sessions - with explanation - where necessary) and are held in local areas rotating between wards where local venues are available.
4. Area Forums are always chaired by a Council Member. The Chair of each meeting will be a Councillor for the Ward in which the meeting is taking place. In the event of no Councillor for the Ward hosting the Forum being present, an Elected Member from another Ward in the Forum area will be appointed.
5. Area Forums may nominate to Council persons from local organisations within the Forum area to act as co-opted non-voting members. The approval of any such nominations lies with the Council.

### Role of Area Forums

6. The main aims and roles of Area Forums are to:-
  - a. encourage access and participation by local residents in the democratic process;
  - b. contribute to the development of area community plans;
  - c. scrutinise the impact and co-ordination of the Authority's policies and services and those of other organisations - in local areas;
  - d. to seek attendance by cabinet members and senior officers to answer questions as necessary;
  - e. consider issues of local concern and to produce reports to Cabinet on these;
  - f. indicate views on issues referred by Cabinet for comment;
  - g. indicate views on a range of issues to be raised at Area Forum by appropriate Officers which require local Member consultation.

### Public Question and Answer Sessions

7. Area Forums provide the opportunity for residents to raise questions on their own issues of local community concern with each agenda for an Area Forum

- containing an item "Public Question and Answer Session". The term "resident" will also apply to bona fide representatives of groups and associations who may or may not be based in the area but through their bodies' aims may have an interest in an item of local concern.
8. The Chairman will determine if any question is appropriate for submission to the Forum.
  9. If questions relating to individual cases under the Authority's regulatory functions - planning, licensing etc are asked, it is possible that discussions on such cases may adversely affect the appropriateness of members of a Forum sitting on the Regulatory Board when any case is considered. Members may, therefore, decline to deal with such questions.
  10. Any written questions which are submitted shall be read aloud by either the resident or the Borough Secretary's representative. It may be responded to by members of the Area Forum; appropriate Cabinet Member (if present); and/or appropriate Officers.
  11. The question and answer session item at Area Forum meetings shall not exceed 30 minutes in duration. Any questions not dealt with shall stand deferred to the next meeting or, if the questioner so wishes, shall be responded to in writing.

## **THINK** Area Forums **LOCAL**

There are [9 Area Forums](#), each covering two or three wards.

Each Area Forum consists of the local councillors plus some co-opted community representatives.

Each Area Forum develops a [Think Local Plan](#) which is based on consultation with local people and reflects the issues and priorities for the area.

Area Forums have a [Community Support Fund](#) budget to help local projects.

Area Forums meet 15 times per year (usually once every three weeks). Meetings are rotated around the wards and are held in a variety of local venues. They are chaired by a Councillor.

Area Forum meetings are Council meetings and are formally minuted by a council officer. The minutes are submitted to the Council via the Cabinet.

There is usually at least one main item for discussion at each forum meeting. Usually a guest speaker will give a brief presentation and then there will be debate and discussion on the item.

The Forum meetings are open and always have an opportunity for [public questions](#).

Area Forums scrutinise the impact and co-ordination of services provided by the Council and other agencies in local areas.

Area Forums help you to know what is happening in your community and offer you the

opportunity to get more involved in community issues.

Each Area Forum is supported by an [Area Forum Officer](#) who acts as an advocate for the area and interfaces with the Council and other agencies.



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## **Area Forums - Community Support Funds**

Each Area Forum has a Community Support Fund to provide financial assistance for projects which support the community planning process. This year the fund is £10,000 per ward.

### **The purpose of the Fund is :-**

- To ensure that low cost practical solutions to problems can be addressed.
- To facilitate work with existing community groups.
- To assist schemes and initiatives identified in the area community plan.

### **Eligible applicants can include:-**

- Voluntary and Community Groups.
- Official organisations - e.g. Community, statutory and voluntary agencies.
- Members of the Area Forum including co-opted members.
- projects administered on behalf of the Area Forum by the Area Forum Officer.

### **How much can be applied for?**

A minimum amount of £250 and a maximum of £2000.

## How can groups apply?

Contact your [Area Forum Officer](#) for an application form.

## Eligible spending will include:-

- Action : Priority One
  - Environmental improvement schemes
  - Encouraging involvement from young people
  - Supporting local community safety initiatives
  - Supporting the development of community/ sports groups
- Support : Priority Two
  - Match funding for small projects
  - Professional advice and/or research
  - Promoting access and equal opportunities
  - 10% contribution to landfill tax
- Equipment : Priority Three
  - Publicity and literature
  - Contributing to new group start up costs (Stationery, etc.)
  - Training, equipment and transport

## Spending cannot include:-

- The award will be spent on one-off costs NOT ongoing contributions to revenue costs such as rent or staffing.
- Funding projects that can seek funding elsewhere within the project time scale.
- Expenditure outside the statutory powers of the Council.

## Terms and conditions

Conditions for awards are:-

- a. Any award must be spent exclusively for the purposes set out in the application.
- b. Any equipment purchased will not be disposed of without the written permission of the Area Forum.
- c. Any amount of the award not spent within 6 months will be returned.
- d. All financial records, receipts etc. will be kept for at least 2 years following the award.
- e. Groups without a formal constitution can apply, however purchasing must be through a legitimate organisation.
- f. The award will be used for delivering priorities identified within the local area community plan.

## Financial arrangements:

1. Any applications for over £500 to purchase goods and materials will require 3 quotes (if possible) and all purchases must demonstrate 'value for money'.
2. The Area Forum Officer will be charged with processing applications to ensure that they are genuine.
3. All applications will be considered by the Area Forum.
4. On final approval of the award the Area Forum Officer will notify the applicant and request a cheque for the agreed amount through internal BMBC procedures.
5. Each ward will be issued with a separate code to identify spending. Schemes that cross ward boundaries will be proportioned appropriately.
6. Groups will be required to provide copies of receipts of expenditure within 6 months of issuing the cheque or evidence of action if an order is placed.
7. Groups receiving awards may be required to report to future Area Forums on the benefits received from the grant.

## Area Forums - Think Local

Research and consultation is carried out on a continuous basis and is used as a basis for Think Local plans.

There are nine [Think Local Plans](#). Each plan covers an area of the Barnsley Borough based on either two or in some cases three electoral districts.

The research for the 2004 Think Local plan was carried out in August / September 2003 and was based on a questionnaire circulated to 5% of all households.

A Summary of the results is available - [PDF Format \(110KB\)](#)

The full results will be available together with copies of the plans on this site. Printed copies of the plan together with a CD Rom containing all the results will also be available from January 2004 by contacting your local Area Forum Officer.