

## **SECTION 7 - LOCAL ENGAGEMENT FORUMS**

The Local Engagement Forums were established by the Council on 3rd December 2008, to run as a pilot for one year.

This section contains:

Appendix 1 - Vision Statement

Appendix 2 - Governance Arrangements

Appendix 3 - Procedural Rules

## Swale Local Engagement Forums Vision Statement

### 1. Purpose

- To help create a partnership for the borough where everyone feels they belong, knows how and where to make their voice heard, make a difference and create a cohesive active and sustainable community. The need to understand and measure outcomes for local communities is an important aspect of the new KA2 framework.
- To enable locally elected representatives, as leaders of their communities to engage with and respond to local communities needs. The Government is introducing numerous initiatives to ensure councils raise their community empowerment profile including the new duties to promote democracy and involvement of the community, to be more responsive to citizens' views through initiatives such as participatory budgeting.
- To create opportunities for residents to gain a greater voice and influence over local services, to improve the quality of their lives, their neighbourhoods and the borough. An increased focus on localism is becoming increasingly important for all organisations, particularly as we prepare for the comprehensive area assessment which will be in place from April 2009

#### **Specifically we will;**

- develop, as the basis for collective action a shared understanding of local issues and priorities for improving the quality of life of the local people.
- refer issues of local concern to the relevant organisation / partnership, to monitor action and negotiate the resolution of issues
- maintain and enhance strong and robust links with local communities
- maintain an overview of all local partnership arrangements across the borough supporting information dissemination
- approve applications for funding within current budgets
- consider a joint funding arrangement for the allocation of resources.
- encourage mechanisms/frameworks to support community engagement in the design and evaluation of services
- contribute to budget preparation as appropriate
- enhance local democracy and community cohesion by identifying and providing opportunities for meaningful community consultation and participation in a constructive and inclusive manner.
- advise and consider potential development of joint service provision, facilities and resource allocation
- support the implementation of local plans and strategies
- represent a cross section of interests

### 2. Values and Quality Expectations

- The LEF will provide an opportunity for genuine dialogue and open discussion, enabling and encourage an informal, participatory and innovative approach to community engagement;
- Feedback on outcomes and actions resulting from LEF meetings should be promoted and communicated to all participants;

- The format of each meeting will encourage bottom-up decision making and involvement of all members of the community in the running of public meetings;
- The meetings will be non-political and represent all the residents in Swale Borough;
- The LEF will deliver tangible outcomes and benefits for residents and for the community;
- Wherever possible, practical and lawful, each Council represented will not withhold from discussion among members of the LEF, matters of service delivery or local concern that are of genuine public interest;
- As elected representatives of the community, members of County, Borough and Parish/Town will have the primary role of leading the LEF and taking delegated decisions/recommendations to their appropriate Cabinet/Executives on behalf of the community;
- To run efficient and accountable decision making processes for the funds that take into account the aspirations of the community in the decisions.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Kent County and Swale Borough Councils**

- Members and Officers will work together in a partnership that recognises parity of esteem between all councils/tiers of local government, to seek the very best for the communities and residents of Swale within the vision, aims and terms of reference of the LEF;
- To commit resources as necessary to run successful LEF, either officer time, financial or in-kind support;
- To encourage Parish/Town and voluntary/community sector participation wherever possible;
- To agree targets for the LEF for example on public attendance and actions arising from the meetings.

#### **Parish/Town Councils**

- To work with County and Borough for the benefit of the local community;
- To agree representatives who will have voting authority, on behalf of each Parish/Town Council at the LEF;
- To commit financial or in-kind support or other resources for the successful running of the LEF, wherever possible.

#### **Voluntary and Community Sector**

- To agree to work together through the LEF, with local residents and all tiers of local government, for the benefit of the local community.

#### **All Elected Members – County, District, Parish/Town**

- Through the LEF, to ensure they seek out and listen to the needs, voices and inspirations of local people and communities that they serve;
- To do all they can within the terms of reference of the LEF to meet those needs and aspirations;
- To support citizens to engage with and take advantage of the opportunities for community betterment the LEF offer;
- To empower local communities to improve the places in which they live;
- To not bring party politics or rivalry between elected members or tiers of local government into the public meeting;

- To ensure the success of the LEF, including delivering outcomes for local communities and improvements in services.

#### **Nominated Representatives from County/District/Parish/Town On Each Forum**

- To encourage civic participation and involvement at the LEF;
- To be the Champion for the respective Council or LEF area;
- To work together in partnership to overcome any issues that may arise;
- To ensure LEF are run in line with the Vision Statement; meeting aims and objectives;
- To identify actions where this is not happening;
- To attend all public meetings;
- One representative from each of the three tiers to attend any pre and post meetings, as appropriate;
- To be responsible for agenda recommendations and circulation of all LEF papers within own organisation;
- To publicise the LEF, meetings and funding availability within their respective LEF area;
- To ensure two-way communication between the LEF and their respective organisation;
- To consider funding applications and making recommendations in a timely manner;
- To provide communities with funding application forms;
- To ensure relevant links are made to their own organisations' Corporate Plans.

#### **Chairman/Vice Chairman**

- To be inclusive, promote dialogue and the Vision Statement aims and objectives of the LEF;
- Agree agendas, venues, presenters and format of meetings in consultation with supporting officers and other nominated representatives;
- To ensure the accountability of presenters whilst remaining neutral and suitably supportive;
- To ensure all views are heard at the meetings;
- To ensure a strategic overview at County and Borough level and to act as a conduit with other statutory bodies.

#### **Officers – County and Borough**

- To support citizens to engage with the LEF and take advantage of the opportunities to improve their communities that are provided through the LEF;
- To provide advice to elected members on the running of the LEF;
- To liaise with the Chairman/Vice Chairman to ensure proper and smooth running of the meetings;
- Between the Borough and County officers, to support meetings.

**Swale Local Engagement Forums  
Governance Arrangements**

**1 Governance**

- The Local Engagement Forum (LEF) shall be constituted under principles contained within the Local Government Act 2000 [i.e. similar principles to those of the Joint Transportation Boards and will be a non-statutory body].
- The LEF reflects the wishes of the respective Executive/Cabinet of Swale Borough Council (SBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) to co-operate and work together on local public service issues within their remits;
- The proposal is to create three Local Engagement Forums for Swale as a trial for a period of one year and is voluntary on the part of each Council;
- The LEF is accountable in an advisory capacity to KCC's Cabinet for KCC responsibilities and to SBC's Executive for SBC responsibilities;
- Each council shall bear its own costs incurred in the operation of the LEF

**2. Membership**

- All KCC Swale Division Members and SBC Members will have voting rights on the Local Engagement Forum that covers the area in which they are elected.
- Votes will be split as follows;
  - Faversham - 12 District votes/2 County votes/2 KALC votes (it may be appropriate for one these to be a representative that also represents the Town Council), 1 each for LSP Partners
  - Sheppey - 14 District votes/2 County votes/ 2 KALC votes, 1 each for LSP Partners
  - Sittingbourne - 21 District votes/4 County votes/ 2 KALC votes, 1 each for LSP Partners
- The Chairman and Vice Chairman shall be from differing councils, be appointed by respective group leaders and shall rotate as set out below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Vice Chairman</b>
1	SBC representative	KCC representative
2	KCC representative	SBC representative
3	Repeat cycle from year 1 etc.	

- Co-options are at the discretion of the LEF and can be general or for specific meetings; all co-options are non-voting, e.g. representatives of KYCC, Youth Forums, etc.
- All partners from the Swale LSP will be encouraged to nominate a representative to become full members, with a single vote allocated to each partner organisation.

**3. Meetings**

- Full meetings of the LEF shall be in public. The LEF will generally meet four times during each year at times and venues agreed by the LEF members
- There will be no substitutes for representatives under these arrangements

- For voting situations, the quorum shall be as follows shall be a minimum of one County Council representative and one SBC representative.
- Procedural Rules for LEFs shall apply as set out below in **Appendix 3**
- Copies of all agendas and discussion papers will be sent to LEF members at least seven working days before the meeting.
- There will be an opportunity for the public to ask questions at all full meetings of the LEF (via a public session).
- There may also be private meetings for the purposes of agenda planning and briefing of LEF members.
- The Access to Information principles shall apply to the LEF as if it were a KCC or SBC committee.
- All Councils will be responsible for publicising the LEF meetings and will advertise as widely as possible.

#### **4. Terms of Reference**

- The LEF will consider matters relating to:
  1. Provision and performance for services provided on a statutory basis by all councils;
  2. Services provided by other public bodies, including the Police, Fire and Rescue and Health Authorities where these impact upon local communities;
  3. Input to, and outputs from, the Local Strategic Partnership;
  4. Input to, and output from both Borough and County scrutiny panels;
  5. The LEF will also be a forum for consultation between the councils and with the public on policies, plans and strategies;
  6. The LEF may also review performance of services and service providers and, as a consequence, make recommendations in an advisory capacity to the Executive Bodies of the respective councils.

**Separate Terms of Reference will be produced for Funding Recommendations for financial year 2009-10**

## Swale Local Engagement Forums Procedure Rules

### **1 Appropriate Behaviour**

- 1.1 If a member of the public interrupts a meeting or otherwise behaves irregularly, improperly or offensively, the Chairman may request that they leave the room or order that they are removed. In the event of a general disturbance, the Chairman may suspend the meeting or direct that the public be excluded from it. No-one so removed or excluded will be permitted to return to the meeting.

### **2 Discussion of Individual Officers**

- 2.1 No discussion shall take place in a meeting about the terms or conditions of employment or the performance, or conduct of any officer of any Council or other agency.

### **3 Members' Interests**

- 3.1 All Members are expected to consider whether they have a personal and/or prejudicial interest in any matter under discussion on the agenda and declare it accordingly at the relevant part of the meeting.

### **4 Attendance List**

- 4.1 Members attending LEF meetings must sign the attendance list or ensure the Clerk records their presence.

### **5 Meeting planning**

- 5.1 The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Officers will liaise to prepare the agenda for the next meeting and a work programme for future meetings. The LEF may also hold pre-meetings to consider business related to the LEF (e.g. planning agendas, venues, actions) where the public/press are not invited.

### **6 Local Engagement Forum meetings**

- 6.1 The meetings of the LEF will take place at venues in the local areas, in public, in general four times a year, on dates and at times agreed by each LEF.
- 6.2 The Democratic Service Officer/Community Liaison Manager will invite all voting and non-voting Members to a LEF meeting by sending an agenda and accompanying papers to each member's nominated address and normally be sent out at least seven clear working days before the meeting.

### **7 Agenda**

- 7.1 The agenda for each meeting of a LEF will normally include:
- minutes of the previous meeting for approval and signing;
  - reports seeking a decision from the LEF [if appropriate];
  - any item which a member of the LEF wishes to be included on the agenda, provided it is relevant to the terms of reference and notice has

been given to the Democratic Services Officer/Community Liaison Manager at least nine working days before the meeting.

- any item which a Member of any constituent Council, its Cabinet/Executive or Cabinet/Executive Member wishes to be included on the agenda, provided the prior approval of the Chairman has been given, it is relevant to the terms of reference and notice has been given to the Democratic Service Officer/Community Liaison Manager at least nine working days before the meeting.

7.2 The Chairman may decide that there are special circumstances that justify an item of business, not included on the agenda, being considered as a matter of urgency. The reasons for urgency must be stated at the meeting and the Clerk shall record them in the minutes.

7.3 LEF normally considers items in the order that they appear on the agenda. The Chairman may vary the order if it is thought appropriate and will explain their reasons to the LEF.

## **8 Voting**

8.1 If any Member requests, the Chairman will call a vote on any recommendation or a motion or amendment. The vote will be by a show of hands by voting Members of the LEF present.

8.2 If the votes for and against are equal, the Chairman does not have a casting vote and, therefore the recommendation, motion or amendment falls.

8.3 Voting Members of the LEF will only be permitted to exercise a single vote.

## **9 Rights to Attend and Speak**

9.1 Any Member of any constituent Council or partner agency are encouraged to attend any meeting of a LEF, including those parts of the meeting from which the public and press are excluded. They do not have a right to vote or move a motion or amendment, but may speak on matters with the consent of the Chairman (such consent to be sought before the meeting and should not normally be withheld).

## **10 Attendance of officers at meetings**

10.1 Cabinet/Executive Members and Council officers will be expected to attend any LEF meeting when asked to do so by the Chairman or on their behalf by the Democratic Services Officer or Community Liaison Officer. Such requests must be reasonable in terms of notice, demand and expectation.

10.2 A supporting officer from KCC and SBC will always be present at all LEF meetings. They will help plan, manage and co-ordinate the business for the LEF; provide procedural and constitutional advice; and will take notes of and actions arising from the meetings.

## **11 Actions**

11.1 It is expected that LEF Chairman will take the lead in pursuing actions resulting from meetings.

## **12 Issues of interest to more than one LEF**

- 12.1 Any follow up work on issues involving more than one LEF will be the responsibility of all Chairmen and Officers involved.

## **13 Links with the public**

- 13.1 The LEF will include a public session as part of the meeting, this will enable the public to raise oral or written questions on any matters falling within the remit of the LEF. A summary of the questions asked and answers (if appropriate) given will be included in the LEF minutes.
- 13.3 In the half hour before the start of the meeting, LEF Members and officers will be available to discuss informally, either collectively or on a one-to-one basis, any matters that may be raised by the public present.
- 13.3 Meetings will be promoted as widely as possible to encourage involvement of the community in each LEF area

## **14 E-Government**

- 14.1 Copies of agendas, agenda items, notes and actions are published on the KCC and SBC websites and will be shared with members of the Swale Local Strategic Partnership and local Parish/Town Councils.