



**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE – 26 MARCH 2009**

**DIFFERENT MODELS FOR THE ROLE & FUNCTION OF  
COMMUNITY FORUMS**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Purpose of the report**

1. To facilitate the committee in discussing and considering the direction of travel for enhancing and strengthening the way Members and the public are engaged in shaping their local area through community forums.

**Background**

2. At the meeting on 10 November 2008, the Committee considered a report entitled 'A snapshot of Community Engagement practice in other counties'.
3. This report contained examples of existing and emerging community engagement practice in other County areas, comparing mechanisms to enable Members and the public to be engaged in shaping policies and services at a sub-county level.
4. The discussion arising from this report highlighted the need to look in more detail at possible models that can apply to the practice of Community Forums in Leicestershire, where the committee considered direct engagement of residents and involvement of Members a key feature that needed to be retained.

**Community Forum Models**

5. This report sets out 4 models for community forums, each with a different emphasis regarding the role and function of the forums. The models are extrapolated from existing practice with community forums in Leicestershire and elsewhere.
6. The models are intended to stimulate discussion on the direction of travel for enhancing and strengthening the way Members and the public are engaged in shaping their local area through community forums.

**Resource Implications**

7. None arising from this report.

**Recommendation**

8. That the Committee consider the strengths and weaknesses of the attached models and discuss the key elements that the Council may wish to seek to retain and/or strengthen in its ongoing work with partners to review the future of Community Forums within the context of the wider community engagement framework.

**Equal Opportunities Implications**

None

**Environmental Implications**

None

**Background papers**

Report to the Community Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 'A snapshot of Community Engagement practice in other counties' – 10 November 2008

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

None

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## **DIFFERENT MODELS FOR COMMUNITY FORUMS**

### **Model A – The ‘Area Group’ Model**

In this model the focus is on Councillors of the 3 tiers (County, District, Parish) to work with service providers to give direction to policy & services in the area and to monitor progress on delivering agreed priorities in the local area.

**Actions:** The forum would operate on the basis of a work programme expressing priorities for action & desired outcomes, developed through the forum.

**Engagement:** Meetings would be held in public and public participation could be retained throughout most of the meeting. To inform discussion on particular topics, the forum could also invite local voluntary & community groups, businesses etc. to attend as appropriate. Making ‘decisions’ would be made by the Core Membership.

The Forum could however indicate when and where engagement activity was required within the forum area around key issues, developments and proposals, including engagement with particular groups or communities within the area. It would also consider the results, the intelligence gained from engagement activity in the area.

**Measuring success:** Improved outcomes achieved for the area. More people standing for District / County Councillor.

### **Model B – The ‘Have Your Say’ Model**

In this model, the focus is on giving residents a place where they can raise issues & queries about services and policies in their local area with service providers and Members.

**Actions:** a rolling Q&A action list along the lines of ‘You Said – We Did’

**Engagement:** focus on redress and opportunity for public to hold officers and Members to account over public service delivery in their local area. The Forums can be used as a consultative forum as well and to provide information about public services.

**Measuring Success:** Number of people attending the forums, number of queries answered within a set timescale, % of people satisfied with the response given/action taken.

## **Model C – The ‘Help the Community to Help Themselves’ Model**

The focus is on supporting community action by providing opportunities for local community groups, voluntary groups & Parish Councils to share how they are identifying and addressing the needs, issues and aspirations of their community and for service providers to consider how they can support, enable and facilitate the groups in achieving their aims.

Members would act as ‘champions’ to ensure issues are resolved and actions followed up.

**Actions:** Build on Parish Plans and other community consultation work expressing priorities for local communities. Focus on problem solving, removing obstacles and enabling and facilitating local action.

**Engagement:** Meetings would continue to be held in public, with members of the public invited to speak / comment on items as appropriate. This model would provide an enhanced role for parish councils and community & voluntary groups and could lead to devolving certain services and functions down to these groups directly.

**Measuring success** – Higher levels of social capital & cohesion, higher % of people involved in volunteering, more people standing for parish council elections.

## **Model D – The ‘Hybrid’ Model**

1) A model that combines elements of A, B and C – with the emphasis shifting from meeting to meeting, or even within meetings

Or

2) A model that allows several forum models to develop in different forum areas to match local circumstances and aspirations.