

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet

**MEETING DATE:** 12 November 2013

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Partnership and Services for Communities)

**SUBJECT:** Area Partnerships

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This report outlines and seeks approval for the framework to establish six Area Partnerships.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees to the establishment of six Area Partnerships as outlined in this report and Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.2 Cabinet notes that it will receive progress on the establishment and development of Area Partnerships.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The East Lothian Council Plan 2012-2017 states that:

*“The Council will give people a real say in the decisions that matter most and provide communities with the housing, transport links, community facilities and environment that will allow them to flourish*

*Communities need to be supported to ensure they have the capacity to flourish. The Council is committed to ensuring that communities are empowered to develop strategies and Local Community Plans tailored to their needs and that decision making is devolved to the most appropriate local level.”*

- 3.2 The Council Plan includes the commitment to: *“Establish Local Area Partnerships for all six areas of East Lothian to give local communities, Community Councils and local groups more say in local services and to*

*develop Local Community Plans that will influence the achievement of the Community Planning Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement."*

- 3.3 Six Area Partnerships will be established – one for each Council Ward, with the Musselburgh West and Musselburgh East and Carberry Ward being combined into one Area Partnership.
- 3.4 The framework for establishing Area Partnerships builds on the experience gained from the Local Area Forums initiative through which three Local Area Forums were established between 2009-2012. The framework sets out the objectives, role and remit and members of Area Partnerships and provides guidance on how they will operate.
- 3.5 Area Partnerships have twin objectives:
  - To fulfil the Council Plan commitments to establish Local Area Partnerships for all six areas of East Lothian and to devolve decision-making and budgets
  - To act as the local element of Community Planning enabling communities to influence the Single Outcome Agreement.
- 3.6 The roles and remit of Area Partnerships will be to:
  1. Develop an Area Plan based on a shared vision for the area and on the evidence from the Area Profile and local intelligence with a focus on reducing inequalities, prioritising prevention and early intervention and sustainability.
  2. Monitor the delivery of the Area Plan and its impact; reporting progress to the Safe and Vibrant Communities Partnership at least once a year.
  3. Show creative and active leadership to meet the challenges which people and communities face and to maximise the opportunities which arise.
  4. Oversee resource allocation devolved to the area in accordance with priorities established by the Area Plan.
  5. Act as the principal point of contact, consultation and engagement for the Council's Area Coordinators on the delivery of local services and service improvement and for the Health and Social Care Partnership's locality planning.
  6. Monitor the effectiveness of stakeholder and community engagement to develop, deliver and review the Area Plan and local service delivery; drawing on and building on existing activities of local groups and partnerships.
- 3.7 In summary, the proposed role and remit of the Area Partnerships would mean that they would have influence and power through determining local priorities set out in the Area Plan, scrutinising the delivery of local services and through showing active leadership. It is important to note that Area Partnerships will

not have direct powers to instruct council officers, make or amend council policy.

- 3.8 Area Partnerships would act as a forum for consultation on the Local Development Plan and other Council or Partnership strategies and plans such as the Local Housing Strategy and Police Ward Plans. They would also be the focus for public engagement to support the Health and Social Care Partnership's locality planning. They will work with, and could incorporate existing local co-ordination and consultative groups such as Community and Police Partnerships (CAPPs).
- 3.9 Once established, the membership, structure and method of operating of each Area Partnership will be determined locally, although they will be set up with a common structure. The precise membership and make up of each one will depend on local circumstances and experiences and the view of the local community.
- 3.10 Appendix 1 provides details of the proposed membership of Area Partnerships. The following 'principles' have guided the proposed membership of Area Partnerships:
- represent the geographic diversity of the area
  - recognise the role statutory groups are already playing in representing community interests and build on and strengthen their role
  - ensure a balance between the different interest groups across an area
  - provide opportunities for a diverse range of active groups to contribute
  - ensure that the interests of equality groups are represented.
- 3.11 Appendix 2 provides guidance on how the Area Partnerships will operate in respect of meetings, decision-making and communications.
- 3.12 It is recognised that Area Partnerships will draw heavily on the voluntary efforts of community leaders who are already involved in Community Councils, Tenants and Residents Associations, Parent Councils and other community organisations. The Chairs of the Association of Community Councils (AELCC) and Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) have been consulted on the draft framework for establishing Area Partnerships. Further consultation on the proposals, in particular the membership of the Partnerships, will take place with the AELCC and ELTRP. Before each Area Partnership is established there will be consultation with the ward Councillors, Community Councils, Tenants and Residents Associations and Parent Councils in each area.
- 3.13 It is proposed that the establishment of the six Area Partnerships should be phased over 6 - 9 months, starting with establishing the first Partnership in early 2014.

- 3.14 The East Lothian Partnership and Safe and Vibrant Communities Partnership, both of which have senior representation from the Council, the AELCC and ELTRP, will have a key role to play in supporting and monitoring the development of Area Partnerships. The success of Area Partnerships will be measured by whether people and communities feel they are listened to and can influence decisions that affect their quality of life.
- 3.15 It is envisaged that Area Partnerships, their role and remit could develop over time. Progress with the establishment and development of the Area Partnerships will be reported to the Safe and Vibrant Communities Partnership and the Council's Cabinet.
- 3.16 A toolkit for evaluating Partnerships is being developed for use by the Council and the East Lothian Partnership. The effectiveness of the Area Partnerships will be evaluated using the toolkit at an appropriate time but within three years of their establishment.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 This report provides the framework for establishing Area Partnerships which will fulfil the Council Plan commitment to establish Local Area Partnerships for all six areas of East Lothian and to devolve decision-making and budgets
- 4.2 Area Partnerships will also act as the local element of Community Planning enabling communities to influence the Single Outcome Agreement.
- 4.3 One of the ten outcomes in the Single Outcome Agreement is: *East Lothian has stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential and inclusive communities.* One of the contributory outcomes for this is that: *Our communities are well informed and everyone has the opportunity to influence decisions that matter in their local areas.* An indicator for this outcome is the % of residents reporting that they agree they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment was undertaken on the East Lothian Single Outcome Agreement which highlights the development of Area Partnerships as making a positive contribution to equality – in particular by offering increased opportunity for participation and inclusion and opportunities to promote good relations in the community between different equality groups.
- 5.2 It is recognised that in practice of the Area Partnerships will need to consider equal opportunities and the requirements of the Equality Act. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken on the proposed Toolkit for Evaluation to ensure that equality is given due regard in the partnerships future work and steps can be taken to address any gaps identified.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial – none. A further report to Council will provide details of devolved budgets
- 6.2 Personnel – none. Area Partnerships will be established and supported by existing Council staff
- 6.3 Other – none

## **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Membership of Area Partnerships
- 7.2 Appendix 2: Draft Operational Guidance

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## **Appendix 1: Membership of Area Partnerships**

### ***Principles behind proposed membership***

The selection of members for the Area Partnership should aim to:

- represent the geographic diversity of the area
- recognise the role statutory groups are already playing in representing community interests;
- ensure a balance between the different interest groups across an area;
- provide opportunities for a diverse range of active groups to contribute;
- ensure that the interests of minority groups are acknowledged.

### ***Proposed membership***

- All Elected Members for the area ⇒ between 3 and 6 per partnership
  - Councillors will be full voting members of the group
- 1 or 2 members from each Community Council ⇒ between 4 and 8 per partnership
- 1 or 2 representatives from Tenants and Residents Associations per partnership
  - There is currently large variation in the number of groups operating in each partnership area - ranging from 8 across Musselburgh to 1 in the Haddington & Lammermuir ward – which has led to the recommendation for a fixed number. It is proposed that their appointment could be co-ordinated through ELTRP to represent the interests of Tenants and Residents across the area rather than their particular local group.
- 2 representatives from Parent Councils per partnership
  - 1 from the Secondary School Parent Council
  - 1 representing Parent Councils from Primary Schools across the cluster – appointed through the East Lothian Association of Parent Council Members.
- Around 6 representatives from active community / voluntary sector / business groups through an appropriate, locally determined process. Consideration should be given to representation from established area based groups such as the Support from the Start cluster and the Community Sports Hub. Further, it is recommended that consideration should be given to appointing at least one youth representative (e.g. from the Secondary School Pupil Council). Consideration will also be given to ensuring that the health and social care sector is represented.

### **Process of appointing members**

- Reserved places (Community Councils, Tenants and Residents Associations and Parent Councils) – groups will be contacted directly and asked to identify a member and a substitute able to represent them on the Area Partnership

- Wider community places - selected groups will be initially contacted and invited to become part of the Partnership, identifying a member and a substitute able to represent them.
- At (or after) the first annual meeting of the partnership places that are not reserved for specific groups would then be filled through an appropriate method determined locally – e.g. election, application, co-option etc.

## **Appendix 2: Draft Operational Guidance**

### **Chair and Vice Chair**

- The interim Chair of the Partnership will be a senior East Lothian Council official. If the interim Chair is unable to attend the meeting it is his/her responsibility to delegate this role to a suitable officer.
- A Chair of the Partnership (not an East Lothian Council elected member) will be appointed by the Area Partnership at the annual meeting, which must be held within the first year of operation, and annually thereafter.
- The Vice Chair will be appointed by the Area Partnership at its first meeting and thereafter at the annual meeting.
- If both the Chair and the Vice Chair are not at the meeting a Chair for that meeting will be chosen by those present.

### **Quorum**

- The quorum for meetings is 50% of members +1

### **Meetings**

- The full Partnership should meet at least 4 times per year based on need – the frequency and venue will be agreed by each Partnership
- Sub-groups can take forward business between meetings, reporting back to the Partnership as appropriate
- Agendas will be based on the Area Plan and emerging local issues
- Members of the Area Partnership can request items for future reports and updates, through the Chair
- Any local person or group can contact the Chair in advance of a Partnership meeting to raise a matter they would like to propose for the agenda. The Chair will decide if the matter is relevant in relation to the Partnership's remit and agenda. If it is not relevant for this Partnership, the Chair should assist by signposting to the appropriate organisation or group
- Meetings are open to any local person or group as observers. The Chair can invite observers to speak if their input would be relevant to an agenda item
- The Chair can invite others outside of the Partnership to present a report or speak to an item at a meeting
- An Annual Meeting will be held which is open to anyone from the area where local groups and the general public can review progress on the Area Plan

### **Decision Making**

- Decisions should be taken in meetings wherever possible
- Decisions should be taken based on the views of the members and importantly the views of the community through active consultation and engagement processes outside of business meetings to ensure that wider views are heard



- Consensus should be reached wherever possible. In the event that the Partnership is unable to reach consensus in any matter a vote may be required
- Decisions may be taken outwith meetings on occasion e.g. emergencies or short deadlines. In these cases, the Chair should communicate with members of the Partnership by phone, email, post, etc., as appropriate, to make the decision and report the matter at the next meeting.

### **Communications**

- Agendas, reports and minutes will be publicly available on the Council E-gov system which can be accessed through the Council website
- Minutes of meetings will be distributed as soon as possible after meetings and within one month, to enable members to follow up on actions with their groups and enable input.
- Notice of agendas and reports will be distributed (normally by email) to the Partnership members two weeks prior to the meeting
- Members should report to the groups and organisations they represent on the business of meetings using the Partnership Feedback form.