OLDHAM COUNCIL

“GOING LOCAL”

CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL PEOPLE AND PARTNERS

The Council believes that local people have a right to receive high quality services and that they also have responsibilities to play their role as good citizens.

The Council therefore wishes to consult with local people about how it can increase the opportunity for local people to inform and influence how a range of Council services can be delivered in a way that better meets the different geographic circumstances across the Borough. The Council also wishes to encourage greater debate amongst local people about local issues of concern by providing public meetings that focus on smaller geographic areas than the current 6 Area Committee meetings.

This consultation is part of a wider debate within the Oldham Partnership about how all public services such as those provided by the Primary Care Trust, Police, Connexions, First Choice Homes, Housing Associations, the voluntary sector and the Council, might be improved by working together in a more co-ordinated way at a neighbourhood level.

WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED OPTIONS?

Option 1 – Create a Community Council for each of the 20 Wards and abolish Area Committees

Option 2 – Retain Area Committees

Option 3 – Other options?

OPTION 1 – Create a Community Council for each Ward

The purpose of the Community Council would be to -

- Enable local people and community groups to meet with their Ward Councillors to discuss and identify issues of local concern;
- Enable local people and Ward Councillors to be presented with options about how to resolve issues of local concern;
- Enable local people to influence how Council services are provided;
- Make recommendations on how Council services are provided by selecting options that suit the circumstances of their Ward;
- Enable local people or organisations to ask questions of the Council (and specified partners – to be confirmed);
- Enable local organisations to present reports or petitions about issues affecting them or their neighbourhoods;
- Provide information and consult about developments affecting the Ward;
- Make recommendations about how local grants are allocated in order to meet local priorities.
Each Community Council would consist of:-

- 3 Ward Councillors; and
- Representatives from 6 local community organisations working within the Ward e.g. Older people’s groups, community organisations, youth organisations, religious groups, Home Watch Schemes, Tenants and Residents Associations

All Community Council meetings would be open to the public and the agendas would be advertised locally to encourage as many local people to attend as possible. The meetings would be held in different venues around the Ward wherever possible to enable and encourage more people to take part.

Community Councils would meet at least 4 times per year. Where necessary, they could meet more often.

Community Councils could meet with other Community Councils once a year where there were issues of mutual interest e.g. Royton North and Royton South may wish to meet once per year to discuss Royton Town Centre.

The services that could be influenced by the Community Council would include:-

- Tackling neighbourhood nuisance, anti-social behaviour
- Improving community safety
- Street cleaning, gully emptying
- Environmental awareness raising
- Minor highway works
- Open space and parks maintenance
- Neighbourhood improvements – alleygating, greenspace, play facilities
- Youth outreach
- Community development
- Local events
- Management of youth centres and community centres

Community Councils would also act as a conduit for feeding information into the Borough Council so that services can be adapted to meet the real needs of the community and individual citizens. This will help the Borough Council to provide more robust leadership better focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for local people and communities.
OPTION 2 – Retain Area Committees

There are six Area Committees covering the areas of Chadderton, East Oldham, Failsworth and Hollinwood, Saddleworth and Lees, Shaw and Royton, and West Oldham.

The aims of the Area Committees are:
- To foster engagement and increase participation at a community level
- To promote community cohesion, build partnerships and provide local people with a forum to work together to improve their neighbourhoods
- To bring decision making closer to local people and provide an opportunity to influence key services
- To influence policy making by ensuring local needs are taken into account (e.g. Area Plans)
- To provide a forum for local people to discuss/comment on or question the Council and its Local Strategic Partnership on issues, services and proposals affecting their area

Area Committees are made up of all the Ward Councillors (Area Committees made up of three Wards have 9 Councillors, and those made up of four Wards have 12 Councillors). They also co-opt members from the community. (11 Co-optees for three Ward and 13 Co-optees for four Ward Area Committees). They offer a forum for residents and representatives of groups in the area to discuss, comment on, and question Councillors about decisions made and being proposed by the Council, which affect the Area. Issues of concern in the area will be reflected in the agenda that is set and in the discussions that take place at the meeting.

Instead of meeting at the Civic Centre like other committees, Area Committees meet every eight weeks at local venues within the community.

The Area Committees have a collective £120k between them where the Area Committee can award grants to local groups, to support their activities and work in the area or use the delegated budget for providing additional services.

Option 3 – Other Options?

The Council is keen to hear other suggestions about how it might enable local people to play a greater role in influencing decisions about the public services they receive.
WHAT ISSUES WOULD A COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING DEAL WITH?

Below is a sample agenda which helps to illustrate what sort of issues might be discussed at a Community Council. Failsworth East has been used as an example:-

FAILSWORTH EAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL

AGENDA

THURSDAY 20TH MARCH 2007

FAILSWORTH SCHOOL

MEETING BEGINS AT 6PM AND WILL CLOSE BY 8.30PM

SECTION 1

1. Apologies

2. Minutes from meeting held on 16th January 2007

3. Matters arising

SECTION 2: ISSUES ARISING FROM THE COMMUNITY

4. Questions and petitions from Failsworth East residents and community groups

5. Neighbourhood reports and representations from community organizations

SECTION 3: AGREETING RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Report on options for dealing with issues raised on 16th January 2007

7. Reports on options for service delivery in Failsworth East

SECTION: 4 INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

8. Consultation and information reports on key developments affecting Failsworth East
MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS SUPPORTING COMMUNITY COUNCILS

It is proposed that 6 Area Management Groups be established which reflect the groupings of Wards within the current Area Committee boundaries.

The Area Management Groups would meet soon after a cycle of Community Council meetings i.e. quarterly in most cases.

The Area Management Groups would be attended by all the Ward Councillors and Senior Managers from relevant Council services and also from partner agencies such as the Police and First Choice Homes.

The purpose of the meeting would be to enable :

- Ward Councillors to inform Officers of recommendations made at Community Councils about which service options are preferred for each Ward;

- Ward Councillors to bring any issues to the attention of service managers that have been raised at the Community Councils or in other ways such as Ward Surgeries, FCHO meetings, NDC meetings, HMR neighbourhood meetings etc. or simply via 1:1 contact with a citizen;

- Ward Members, Council Officers and partners to discuss competing priorities and agree which activities/issues to prioritise. Other information, data and intelligence will be used as required to inform this debate;

- The identification of issues where there is a need to develop options for consideration by a future meeting of the relevant Community Council(s);

- Agreement about which issues/neighbourhoods require a multi-agency approach and thus direct the work of the Area Action Teams*;

- Officers and partners to update Ward Members of action taken in response to issues raised at previous Area Management meetings.

The Area Action Teams will hold an annual public event in June/July in each of the 6 areas to report on progress in each area.

*For some services, membership of the Area Action Team and attendance at the Area Management Group is likely to be the same person. Area Action Teams are meeting monthly at the moment. It is proposed that the quarterly Area Management Group replaces one of those monthly meetings.
PROPOSED RELATIONSHIP OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS TO THE OLDHAM PARTNERSHIP SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS BOARD

INFORMATION FLOW

Identify local issues

Highlight key local issues that need to influence Boroughwide strategies and delivery plans

Use local information and other intelligence to agree and review Boroughwide strategies and delivery plans

20 COMMUNITY COUNCILS

6 AREA MANAGEMENT GROUPS

SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS STEERING GROUP

SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS BOARD

Develop options for solving local issues and providing neighbourhood sensitive services

Co-ordinate multi agency activity across the Borough

Agree how Oldham Partnership resources should be used across the Borough

DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS