

**REPORT TO: COMMUNITY PLANING BOARD ON 27 MAY 2010**

**SUBJECT: AREA FORUMS UPDATE**

**BY: THE MORAY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 This report is to advise the Board of the current status of Area Forums across Moray, to reconsider the review of the protocols and to seek the Boards advice on how to proceed with activity in the Laich and Keith Forum areas.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 That the Board;**

- **notes the current position of Area Forums**
- **agree that the protocols for local community planning are reviewed and incorporated into a proposed area forum handbook**
- **advise on the position of the Laich forum**

**BACKGROUND**

3.1 In 2008 protocols were agreed under the previous partnership structure for the operation of Local Community Planning. Area Forums are recognised by the MCPP as the main means of engaging local people in the Community Planning process.

3.2 Area Forums were established and a set of protocols were accepted by the forums and the Community Planning Partnership in 2008. These protocols require to be updated to make note of the structural changes in community planning and in particular community engagement.

3.3 Area Forums have suggested that a simpler version be created and that it should be seen more as a useful handbook for forum members.

3.4 Area Forums have become established as a key part of the community engagement scene in Moray. Eight forums were established initially and there are currently six forums. Please see Appendix 1 for a brief position report on the six active forums

3.5 There has been speculation that the Laich Forum is now defunct, however the dissolution of an Area Forum is the responsibility of the Moray Community Planning Partnership

3.5.1 The Laich Forum is currently not meeting. At the AGM on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009 the officer bearers resigned from the Forum and the meeting failed to elect new office bearers. At an EGM, the forum, once again, was not supported by those present. At a meeting held to discuss the Moray Councils budget consultation in the Laich area in December 2009, the Chairs of Burghead and Cummington Community

Council, Hopeman Community Association and Lossiemouth Community Council re-confirmed the view that it would be useful to come together to discuss common issues relating to the Laich area and look at how the various groups and organisations in the area can work together to find joint solutions.

- 3.5.2 Keith Area Forum does not currently operate and there are a number of issues of concern about possible duplication with the Keith and Strathisla Community Regeneration Partnership. This group made an approach offering to become the Area Forum for the purposes of delivering local outcomes. The Moray Forum view was that they would have to change their name and constitution in order to do that so that the community were clear about membership and accessing the forum. There is currently no activity in the Keith Areas to resurrect the forum.

## **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan**

This initiative will contribute to National Outcome 11 in the Single Outcome Agreement; *“we have strong resilient communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others”* and to National Outcome 15; *“our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people’s needs”*.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

The Local Government Scotland Act 2003 requires that the Community Planning Partnership engage with community bodies and organisations as part of the Community Planning process. In April 2008 the Scottish Government (SG) and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) issued a joint statement of commitment to community empowerment. The local Community planning protocols agreed by the Community planning Steering group state that; "The dissolution of an Area Forum will be the responsibility of the Community planning partnership"

### **(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

There are no immediate cost implications arising from this report. The Community Support Unit of the Moray Council is available to provide support to groups in both the Keith and Laich areas.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 **The Area Forums have established themselves in the community engagement scene in Moray and are playing an important role in most of the eight school catchment areas. The protocols are now overdue for review and it is proposed that a more practical handbook is produced. There has been difficulty in maintaining forums in the Laich and Keith area. The Board should decide on how best to progress the situation in Keith and the Laich Area.**

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Background Papers: