

Procedure for Designation of Neighbourhood Forum

1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduces the concept of neighbourhood planning. The Act enables groups of individuals, businesses, or organisations to form themselves into neighbourhood forums with a view to seeking the designation of neighbourhood areas by the Local Authority and the development of neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders. The Local Planning Authority has to determine whether applications for the designation of a neighbourhood forum or of a neighbourhood area meet the necessary criteria. Set out below is the Council's procedure for dealing with such applications and the acceptance criteria in the case of both neighbourhood forums and neighbourhood areas.
- 1.2 The Council has a role in bridging the gap between the aspirations of neighbourhood groups about the development of their area and the policy needs of the Borough as a whole, as well as the regional and national picture. The Council believes that the involvement of Neighbourhood Forums will bring an important added dimension to the planning process. Harnessing the involvement and enthusiasm of Neighbourhood Forums will make communities more cohesive and resilient and enable the Council to better understand local views on important issues.
- 1.3 In return, the Council expects to be able to develop a constructive and mutually respectful relationship with Neighbourhood Forums. The Forums should provide a vehicle for greater co-operation and joint working which will promote a fruitful relationship between the Council and the community.

2.0 **General Guidance**

- 2.1 It is for the community to bring forward such proposals as they wish in relation to neighbourhood forums and neighbourhood areas. There is no duty on a Local Authority to ensure that such arrangements are in place across its area, but there is a duty to ensure that applications for designation are properly dealt with. The Borough of Poole recognises that neighbourhood forums can bring a valuable extra dimension to the local planning process and will engage constructively with existing or proposed forums.
- 2.2 Groups who wish to submit an application for recognition as a neighbourhood forum are welcome to discuss their proposals with the Monitoring Officer (Tim Martin on 01202 633021 or email t.martin@poole.gov.uk) in advance of making a formal application. The Monitoring Officer will be able to give some general advice, but cannot indicate whether or not the Council will grant an application as this will be a decision for Elected Members

3.0 **Application Procedure**

Applications for designation i.e. for a Neighbourhood Forum must be made in writing to the Monitoring Officer. An Application Form will need to be

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completed and lodged with the Monitoring Officer and the application must contain sufficient detail for the Council to be able to assess the application and whether it meets the acceptance criteria set out below.

- 3.2 For applications for designation as a Neighbourhood Area, the form must include a statement explaining why this area is considered appropriate to be designated. The form also must be accompanied by a map which identifies the area to which the application relates. It is assumed that in normal circumstances an application to designate an Area Forum will precede the designation of a Neighbourhood Area.
- 3.3 Applications will receive initial checking to see whether they meet the basic requirements for registration and further assessment. If it seems to the Monitoring Officer that they are not yet in a position to proceed, that will be indicated to the applicants together with any advice that may be appropriate.
- 3.4 If applications are ready to proceed, they will be registered and will appear on the Council's web site. The Council will consider what other publicity is necessary to draw the application to the attention of the public. A six week period for representations will be allowed.
- 3.5 Once the application has been assessed, it will be presented to Members with an Officer recommendation as to its acceptability.
- 3.6 The Council's decision will be communicated to the applicants in writing following the meeting, but determinations will be held in public in any event and applicants will be encouraged to attend.
- 3.7 Applications will normally be dealt with within 13 weeks, but this may not be possible depending on the number of queries that are raised in relation to the criteria. The applicants will be kept informed of progress and the likely timescales for their application to be dealt with.
- 4.0 Acceptance Criteria
- 4.1 The Council's acceptance criteria are based upon those set out in Schedule 9 of the Localism Act 2011 and The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012
- 4.2 An application for a neighbourhood forum must demonstrate that the organisation has been established for the purpose of promoting the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the neighbourhood and that its membership is open to individuals who live and/or work in the Neighbourhood Area concerned or are elected Members for the area.
- 4.3 Neighbourhood forums must be able to demonstrate that they have a written constitution and formality over membership arrangements. The Constitution will deal with the organisations membership rules, its purpose, its arrangements for meetings and the election of Officers.

- 4.4 The forum must have at least 21 members who are individuals, either living, working within the area of the neighbourhood forum, or are elected Members of the Authority concerned.
- 4.5 The neighbourhood forum will also need to demonstrate that it has broad representation of key groups within the local area including (but not limited to) individuals, groups, or organisations representing young and old, people with disabilities and those from different cultural, social, or ethnic backgrounds as broadly represented within the community concerned.
- 4.6 The proposed forum will need to demonstrate a clear sense of vision and have the capacity to deliver which may be evidenced by:
- An active and representative membership
 - Clear, transparent, and accountable governance
 - A strong representative role in the community
 - A copy of the most recent statement of accounts or balance sheet
- 5.0 De-Registration
- 5.1 The Council recognises that in the case of strong and settled communities Neighbourhood Forums may have a long lifespan. It will be in the interests of both the Council and the community to have a long term relationship and vision.
- 5.2 Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 any initial designation of a Neighbourhood Forum may only be a maximum period of 5 years. Consideration may be given to further applications if appropriate.
- 5.3 The Council may also withdraw a body's designation if it considers that the body is no longer meeting the criteria for designation. Where the Council is considering de-Registration, it will give the body notice of its intention with an opportunity to respond. If the Council proceeds to de-Register it will give reasons for its decision.