

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) If accepted all recommendations made by this Review Group should be in progress by May 2008 and an Action Plan brought to the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel for monitoring on a regular basis.

Coordinating Groups

- 2) A review of the coordinating group terms of reference should be undertaken in consultation with all key partners and coordinating groups to ensure that there is a shared and agreed understanding and ownership of the coordinating groups role, purpose and decision making powers. The terms of reference should be included in the Council's Constitution once agreed.
- 3) Cabinet should consider developing clear routes for referral of issues, concerns and pressures from the coordinating groups to the relevant Council body such as the Performance Scrutiny Overview Committee or Cabinet Member.
- 4) All Members and partners in coordinating groups should be given clear opportunities to feed into agenda setting for the coordinating group meetings and the Area Assembly meetings.
- 5) Community representatives should be elected in an open and transparent process, good practice of the Community Empowerment Network (CEN) electing representatives onto the Local Strategic Partnership theme boards could be considered. It would need to be clear that any member of the community could apply, not just those specifically from a voluntary or community sector organisation.
- 6) Each Area Assembly should consult with the Parishes in their area about Parish representation on coordinating groups. This should link where appropriate to the Local Parish Network.
- 7) Good practice should be shared in undertaking task and finish groups to ensure they are used consistently in all Area Assemblies.
- 8) In light of the concerns raised about coordinating group membership, Cabinet should revisit the options proposed in the first Scrutiny Review and consider whether the current level of Councillor representation on coordinating groups is still appropriate.

Area Assemblies

- 9) A review of the Area Assemblies terms of reference should be undertaken in consultation with all key partners and coordinating groups to ensure that there is a shared and agreed understanding and ownership of the Area Assemblies role, purpose and decision making powers. The terms of reference should be included in the Council's Constitution once agreed.

- 10) The agenda should be set by the Area Assembly Chair and coordinating group, supported by the Area Partnership Managers, with suggestions from the local community. Where there are presentations they should be specifically shaped towards that local area and deemed relevant by the Coordinating Group and Area Assembly Chair.
- 11) Area Assemblies should receive increased and wider devolved budgets by May 2009 in line with the emphasis on devolved budgets and locality working in the 2006 White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous' Communities. Any budgets given should be clearly aligned to the priorities in the Area Plans. There

should be a one year notice of mandatory training, support and planning given to relevant Members, staff and partners. If Cabinet support this concept there is a need for further work by the Council in terms of identifying the structures, accountability and decision making routes for how this could be done.

- 12) Local communities should be consulted on how devolved budgets are spent.
- 13) Should there be a move to parish all the Borough through the Parish Boundary Review, the Council should review the role of Area Assemblies.

Area Plans

- 14) All partners in coordinating groups need to have full involvement and agreement in the production of a meaningful Area Plan. Where there are particular actions that relate to a Council or partner service appropriate officers need to be involved to assist the process.
- 15) The current Community Strategy refresh should evidence that the local issues and actions identified in the Area Plans have been incorporated. The service planning process should reflect the priorities identified in the Area Plans.
- 16) Greater links should be made between the priorities in the Local Area Agreement and actions in the Area Plans.
- 17) The time allocated to the development of Area Plans should be reviewed with Members, partners and officers to ensure the timescales are realistic.
- 18) Area Plan consultation currently taking place, and in the future, needs to involve all communities of interest including BME communities.

Area Assembly Chairs

- 19) A development programme of training should be provided for Area Chairs, Vice Chairs and coordinating groups to address gaps in support in conjunction with the Member Development officer.
- 20) Area Assemblies should consider giving specific areas of responsibility to Elected Members (see good practice at Tameside) with particular attention given to strengthening the role of the Vice Chair. Should this strengthening of the role of the Vice Chair take place there should be an appropriate review of Special Responsibility Allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel

- 21) Area Assembly Chairs should shape and control the agenda of the Area Assembly Chairs meeting, raising relevant issues and concerns that need to be addressed.
- 22) PSOC should have a standing item on its agenda where Area Assembly Chairs and Area Assemblies can directly refer issues of importance for consideration. (However this recommendation will need to ensure it is in line with the protocols for the Councillor's Call for Action that are currently being developed.)
- 23) Area Assembly Chairs meeting should meet 6 times a year.