



# **NEIGHBOURHOOD GOVERNANCE SPECIALIST SCRUTINY PANEL**

Final report to Cabinet from OSC

*August 2007*

## The Challenge

“Strong local representation is at the heart of a thriving democracy. Yet, for too long now, our local councillors have become ever more marginalised by what can be termed ‘managerialism’ from the centre. A progressive reduction of the power of local authorities by central government, the Cabinet system in local government, over-powerful senior officers and a bureaucratic mindset all in their own way contribute to the emasculation of the local elected councillor. And that is a key reason why turnout at local elections is at an all time low. Sadly, though, our frontline councillors are the very people who make our local democracy what it is and they are so often overlooked.

...So we’ve got to innovate and test out new ways of giving power to local people. And that means giving frontline councillors the influence and authority to make more of the decisions where it matters, because the strongest and most mature organisations are those that are not afraid to give power away.”

Pam Giddy, in his Foreword to *‘Frontline Councillor 2017: Empowering a new generation’* (written by Ed Cox and published by the Local Government Information Unit).

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# **Section 1**

## **An introduction to the Panel and its work**

### **1.1 Introduction from the Chair of the Panel – Cllr Liz Brookes**

We are pleased to present this report to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and to Cabinet. Pleased because this review is timely and important given the length of time Area Committees have been in operation but, more importantly, in view of the current focus on devolution, the Local Government White Paper, the need to enhance the role of local councillors in providing community leadership in their wards and areas, and the wish of many residents to be more closely involved in decisions which affect their lives.

The Panel hopes that serious consideration will be given to this report and that Cabinet will wish to take forward new governance arrangements. We have been very encouraged and appreciative of the interest which has been shown in our work - whether for or against specific issues. Residents, the community and voluntary sector, the Police, the PCT as well as Officers, Cabinet, Area Committees and councillors generally have all been engaged.

We have not managed to consider in detail all the issues which will need to be addressed and there will be a considerable amount still to do to finalise a model which meets most requirements - whether these are the wishes of residents, the needs of the Council or other agencies through to financial and administrative matters.

The Panel has been lively and pro-active. Members have considered many documents and papers, have met other agencies, attended Area Committees, LSP, Cabinet, etc. We have visited other local authorities in London and around the UK and have received visits and presentations from other authorities to Ealing.

All Panel Members have contributed substantially to the work and have given me excellent support. However I must thank Cllr Ashok Kapoor for his support as Vice-Chair and Cllrs Kapoor, Popham, Randall and Elliott for the time and effort they gave in our visits to other authorities.

Most of all I think Panel Members would join me in thanking Nigel Spalding, our Scrutiny Review Officer. Nigel has worked extremely hard and with great efficiency. He has given me a huge amount of help and support, has helped the panel make sense of and put in order very complex and lengthy debates and has produced excellent reports and briefings for us and others.

### **1.2 Origin and purpose of the Panel**

The Panel was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) in June 2006 with a remit to look at the neighbourhood governance arrangements in Ealing, including the operation of the Area Committees.

### 1.3 Membership of the Panel

The members of the Panel were appointed by Council and are Councillors:

- Liz Brookes (Chairman - Labour)
- Ashok Kapoor (Vice Chairman - Conservative)
- Joanna Dabrowska (Conservative)
- Michael Elliott (Labour)
- Swarn Singh Kang (Labour)
- David Millican (Conservative)
- Sonika Nirwal (Labour)
- John Popham (Conservative)
- James Randall (Conservative).

In addition, Councillor Gary Malcolm (Liberal Democrat) has also participated in the latter stages of the Panel's work. There has therefore been cross-party involvement in the development of the Panel's preliminary conclusions.

### 1.4 The scope of the Panel

At its outset, the Panel agreed that its **scope** should include consideration of:

- Ways in which the role of ward councillors can be enhanced
- Whether it is appropriate for more decision-making to be devolved to neighbourhood level and, if so, how best this can be achieved
- Ways of promoting and supporting active community engagement within neighbourhoods
- Whether it is appropriate for more services to be managed and delivered at localised level
- What is the most appropriate configuration of neighbourhoods for what types of statutory services within a framework that promotes and supports equality and diversity
- The Government White Paper on local government (now followed with further consideration of the Local Government and Public Involvement in the NHS Bill)

### 1.5 The Panel's work in outline

The Panel met a total of 8 times starting with its first meeting in July 2006.

Work completed by the Panel (or representative members thereof) has included:

- **Considering policy briefings and reform proposals** from bodies such as:
  - the Lyons Enquiry ('National prosperity, local choice and civic engagement) the Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Trust ('Power to the People' and 'Frontline councillors and decision-making')
  - LGIU ('Frontline Councillors 2017: Empowering a new generation')
  - IdeA ('The neighbourhood agenda and the role of the elected member')
  - LGA ('Closer to People')

- **Attending (in cross-party pairs) all 7 Area Committees** to stimulate discussion and written feedback on what members and local residents (a) think are the strengths, weaknesses and possible improvements to the current Area Committee arrangements and (b) whether there are seen to be other, possibly better, models of engagement between ward councillors and local residents.
- **Meeting with the Council Leader** to establish whether there are likely to be any practical/political parameters for the Panel's recommendations that need to be taken into account.
- **Reviewing information on alternative neighbourhood governance arrangements in other local authorities** in order to understand what are the key dimensions of the variations between local authorities and also in order to identify interesting local authorities to visit.
- **Receiving visits from representatives of 2 local authorities** to find out about their arrangements for neighbourhood governance – Tameside and Stockport.
- **Visiting 5 local authorities** to find out about their arrangements for neighbourhood governance – Brent, Croydon, York, South Tyneside and Bradford.
- **Meeting with all 3 party groups** to identify current issues and problems in relation to the operation of the Area Committees and neighbourhood governance generally
- **Considering the Local Government White Paper** and the relevant contents of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill in order to the implications and opportunities presented.
- **Reviewing the neighbourhood arrangements adopted by the other local bodies** – the Police, the Primary Care Trust, Local Strategic Partnership, local regeneration programmes and Ealing Homes.
- **Meeting the Local Strategic Partnership Executive Board** to stimulate discussion, feedback and ongoing engagement about the potential benefits and/or disbenefits of closer working with key partners on neighbourhood governance arrangements.
- **Meeting twice with the Police Borough Commander** to examine the possible inter-relationship between the Council's neighbourhood arrangements and those of the Police.
- **Meeting with Ealing Community Network** and considering a subsequent written response from the Network.

- **Reviewing the officer input into the Area Committees** and discussing the views and ideas of the Director of Built Environment/Transport Team.
- **Considering the output of five focus groups of local residents** (one for Ealing employees and one in each “quadrant” of the borough) to seek views from local residents about the accessibility of local councillors and their views on local decision-making.
- **Considering the views from local residents** received as a result of an article in Around Ealing and completed online questionnaires on the Council website.
- **Participating in two half-day workshops** (14 February and 7 March), with an independent facilitator, to enable members to (a) reflect on what they have Learnt (b) develop a vision for future arrangements and (c) build up a practical model for new neighbourhood governance arrangements in Ealing

### 1.5 Consultation on the Panel’s initial proposals

In May to the beginning of July, the Panel sought the views of interested parties on its initial proposals. Anyone interested in the Panel’s proposals was welcomed to comment. The Panel made specific arrangements to consult with:

- all 69 Ealing Councillors
- all 7 Area Committees (both councillors and members of the public attending)
- Cabinet
- the Local Strategic Partnership Executive, including the Police and Ealing Primary Care Trust
- voluntary organisations through a workshop arranged by Ealing Community Network
- senior council officers through the Corporate Leadership Team
- the residents who participated in, or had expressed interest in, the Focus Groups arranged by the Panel

Appendix 4 is a full listing of all comments received. Appendix 3 identifies the key themes and issues emerging from the consultation responses.

**Changes made to the Panel’s proposals in Sections 3 and 4, in the light of the consultation responses, are marked in red.** In addition, the proposal that “Each Ward Forum develop and agree a rolling 3-year ‘Ward Plan’ identifying current issues, listing priorities for action and outlining plans for future action” has been deleted and replaced with general observation that “Ward forums and ward councillors would need to consider and contribute to the establishment of priorities for their ward”.

## 1.6 Panel attendance

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Total possible</b>	<b>Actual attendance</b>	<b>Apologies received</b>	<b>Substituted</b>
Liz Brookes (Chairman)	7	7	0	0
Ashok Kapoor (Vice-Chairman)	7	6	1	0
Joanna Dabrowska	7	5	2	0
Michael Elliott	7	7	0	0
Swarn Singh Kang	7	4	1	Tej Ram Bagha (1) Julia Clements-Elliott (1)
David Millican	7	4	1	Wolodymyr Barczuk (1) Clifford Pile (1)
Sonika Nirwal	7	2	3	Ranjit Dheer (1) Param Singh Sandhu (1)
John Popham	7	7	0	0
James Randall	7	6	0	Marie Randall (1)

## Section 2 The case for radical change

### 2.1 A body of evidence

The proposals contained in this document have not emerged from some “one-off” back-room discussion but have been put together by the Scrutiny Panel after 12 months of intensive and extensive research, discussion and consultation.

For example, and Appendix 3 provides further details, the Panel’s research has included:

- seeking views – from a wide range of interested parties - on the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities presented by the current neighbourhood governance arrangements, principally the Area Committees (see Appendix 1)
- seeking the views of local residents – through focus groups – about ways in which the Council can best engage with residents on local issues
- examining the neighbourhood governance arrangements made by other local service providers and by selected other local authorities across the country
- exploring the reasons why central government, local government bodies and advisory bodies are all advocating arrangements that will be “closer to people”

### 2.2 Examples from elsewhere in the country

Panel members have been informed and greatly encouraged by reviewing the neighbourhood governance arrangements made by other local authorities around the country.

In particular, visits were made to meet councillors and officers in Brent, Croydon, York, Bradford, South Tyneside and visits were received from Tameside and Stockport.

For example, the Panel has been told about:

...the ward-working scheme operating in six wards of **LB Brent**:

- ward councillors are at the forefront of the ward-working arrangements making flexible use of focused consultation meetings, walkabouts and local networking to get things done
- councillors in each ward are allocated £30k to spend on local projects and there is a minimal level of bureaucracy in authorising and making payments.
- ward councillors use these funds to pump-prime projects, develop match-funding arrangements, bend mainstream services to local needs; and local interest in the use of the funds helps stimulate meetings of local residents and service providers to solve local problems
- each ward prepares its own Ward Plan from which an action plan is developed, containing 6 or 7 priority items for action and monitoring over the coming months
- good links have been developed with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams, members of which go on the "walkabouts".



- regular ward newsletters are produced and delivered to every household and there is a ward-working section in the Council newsletter.

...the Neighbourhood Forums and Area Committees run by **Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council**, where:

- the 20-25 regular Neighbourhood Forum meetings operating in the 5 areas of the borough do not subscribe to any set of rules or constitution but have a vital role in information provision, officer consultation with the public and as public discussion forums
- special issue “themed” meetings are also run at neighbourhood level covering similar or different geographical areas the Neighbourhood Forums.
- a total of 14,777 people attended the 252 scheduled Neighbourhood Forum meetings in 2005/6
- only selected councillors are members of the 5 Area Committees, even though these are part of the executive
- the Area Committees have Advisory Groups (the members of who are also non-voting members of the Area Committees) made up of 2 representatives from each Neighbourhood Forum and reps from partner organisations (such as the Police, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations)
- each Area Committee develops its own Area Action Plan through an annual Area conference for local residents and service providers. The conferences identify key issues priorities by locality and theme
- officer support is provided by the Neighbourhood Support Service (with an Head of Service and PA) which covers Neighbourhood Management (approx 17 officers), a Diversity and Inclusion Project (approx 5 officers) and 5 Area Based Teams (approx 43 officers in total including 2 Managers and 5 Area Co-ordinators)

..the Ward Committees running in **the City of York**, where:

- the 18 Ward Committees have been set up “to provide opportunities for all citizens to engage and participate in the local governance of their community”
- the Committees operate flexibly “one of our strengths – we’re not too bound up in red tape” with the Ward Committee and supporting officers setting the agenda for each meeting, including some items coming from members of the public, without the need for a formal sign-off the agenda and with the notes/minutes of meetings not following the traditional committee style and format
- Ward Committee meetings have been held in schools (to get young people’s views), in marquees in fields, in a park (with 430 people), on the back of a pop festival or at other selected open-air locations around the ward with other activities (eg sports competitions, cycle tagging by Police, mobile youth office) going on at the same time.
- Councillors run surgery sessions immediately before each Ward Committee meeting alongside the availability of the Police, Estate Managers and others who have arranged to speak at that particular meeting.
- the 18 Ward Committees have a total budget of £550k, of which 1/3<sup>rd</sup> has been capital and 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s revenue, with the money being available for use on any activities that are in keeping with Council policy

- quarterly ward newsletters are distributed to every household, providing details of the agenda for the upcoming meeting and material received from local groups and individuals
- the ward newsletters also invite all households in each area (and increasingly businesses) to vote for their first, second and third choice funding priorities, with councillors rarely going against the wishes of local people
- the work is supported by officers in a Neighbourhood Pride Unit, which also takes a community development approach to the support of community centre management committees and residents associations; the Unit consists of a Head of Service, 2 Neighbourhood Pride Managers each managing 1 Senior Neighbourhood Pride Officer (looking at action planning), 3 Neighbourhood Pride Officers and 1 generic post (eg dealing with budgets).

...the Community Area Forums and neighbourhood working at **South Tyneside Council**, where:

- the 6 Community Area Forums (each covering 3 or 4 wards) take the lead in identifying local issues and priorities and advise Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees on local matters, they assist local members to listen to and represent the interests of their community, they build partnerships, they influence strategies and plans through local consultation, they consider how the Council's policy objectives are being met in local areas ensuring their work programmes are aligned with the Council's priorities, provide feedback on the provision of and effectiveness of Council and Partner services in the area
- 71 "natural' geographic neighbourhoods have been identified which are not based on wards "as these seldom reflect communities on the ground", such that several neighbourhoods even straddle the Community Area Forum boundaries
- there is a particular focus on 19 neighbourhoods that are amongst the 10% most deprived areas in the country where Neighbourhood Action Plans are being developed using a process called "participatory appraisal" which views local residents as the experts
- the core officer team, pulling the work together, consists of a lead officer (a Head of Service) for each Community Area Forum, 3 Area Partnership Co-ordinators (each leading the work in 2 Community Area Forums) and 3 Co-ordinators working largely on community engagement.
- neighbourhood management initiatives have also been established for North Jarrow and Boldon, putting in a team of people to lead change in an area.

## 2.3 Aspirations for the future in Ealing

The Panel identified some aims for a new set of neighbourhood governance arrangements in Ealing. The Panel wanted the new arrangements to:

- i. enhance the role of ward councillors by placing them at the heart of decision-making about local neighbourhoods
- ii. devolve more decision-making to neighbourhood level
- iii. promote and support active community engagement within neighbourhoods
- iv. oversee, monitor, and contribute to the development of services.

## 2.4 General conclusions

Having reviewed the evidence, Panel's general conclusions are that:

- a *radical* re-think of Ealing's neighbourhood governance arrangements is required
- the primary focus needs to be, not on committee structures and bureaucratic procedures, but on effective ways of working
- whilst there is no appetite for abolishing Area Committees, the Area Committees alone will be unable to deliver the Panel's vision for the future
- there needs to be a renewed emphasis on ward-level working and on empowering ward councillors to make a difference in their local wards
- ward-level working needs to be supported and underpinned by the creation of ward-level bodies which operate on a flexible basis
- effective area- and ward-based working requires dedicated, specialist, officer support
- wherever possible, statutory bodies should dovetail together their neighbourhood governance structures, with democratically elected local councillors taking a visible lead
- changing the structures **must** go hand-in-hand with changing the culture.

By "changing the culture" the Panel means that, for example,

- it is time for ward councillors to take a stronger lead in shaping Council and other services for the benefit of their local constituents, in building local partnerships, in solving local problems, using and building up their knowledge and understanding of local people's aspirations and ideas
- ...but all local decision-making needs to fit within the framework of the priorities, policies and strategies rightly determined by Cabinet, progressing the achievement of the Corporate Strategy and the Community Strategy, so there needs to be a much closer working relationship between Cabinet and area-level bodies
  - the Council needs to break out from traditional methods of committee working at area-, and especially ward-level, and become much more creative in its methods of working, eg through active outreach, workshops, discussion groups, problem-solving groups, agendas and reports that make clear what is going to be discussed and communicate key information in straightforward language
- ward-level bodies should only need to switch into traditional committee style when they are taking formal decisions
  - there needs to be appropriate officer recognition of the role and influence of ward councillors

## 2.5 The time is right

Appendix 2 lists a range of background documents which demonstrate that more devolution to the local level, enhancing the role of councillors and bringing decision-making "closer to people" are all very high on the current national agenda.

Of particular significance is the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill which takes forward some of the steps towards decentralisation and deregulation first proposed in the Local Government White Paper, particularly around local political leadership, democratic representation and tackling bureaucratic burdens. As at July 2007, the Bill is under consideration in the House of Lords.

Of specific relevance to the Panel's aspirations is clause 166, which would allow councils to delegate executive functions to individual councillor in order to tackle issues affecting their ward.

## **2.6 A final word of introduction to the Panel's proposals**

The Panel's proposals, on the following pages, need be viewed as a *whole*, integrated, system. This means that it would be inappropriate to change any of the proposals in this document without considering how all the other proposals might be affected. In particular, the Panel can only support the proposed reduction in Area Committees from 7 to, eg, 4 if Ward Forums are also created.

If the Panel's recommendations are accepted, the Panel would wish to see the new arrangements put in place for the beginning of the 2008/9 municipal year.

## Section 3 Ward-level working

### 3.1 Establishment of Ward Forums

The Panel is seeking a fresh emphasis on ward-working, local decision-making, public involvement and on ward councillors exercising a leadership role in their local area. This will be, primarily, achieved through a change of culture but will also need to be backed up by the establishment of ward-based forums. Although these bodies would function as a part of the Council's committee structure, they would be responsive to local circumstances and would operate flexibly and largely informally, actively involving local residents.

*Recommendation 1: A Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards of LB Ealing*

*Further detail:*

#### **Membership and leadership**

Ward councillors would chair the Forums, and on those occasions when formal Council decisions need to be taken, would be the only voting members. Agendas would be decided locally **and overseen by ward councillors, with residents and officers also able to propose agenda items. Ward forums would not be party political and are likely to fail if they operate in this way. This is not intended to stifle debate or differing views but feedback indicates that residents are put off and unlikely to engage if forums become a party political arena. Residents expect their elected councillors to work together to achieve the best for their wards. The member development programme would be developed to support ward councillors in their role as leaders of Ward Forums.**

#### **Public participation**

Although ward councillors would be the only voting members when formal decisions are needed, meetings would be **fully open to**, and actively inclusive of, local residents.

#### **Meeting formats**

Ward forum meetings would not follow the traditional format for Council meetings. They would, instead, be designed around maximising public participation. Each Forum would be able to develop its own style of working and much would depend upon the networking that councillors undertake within their communities. Meetings might include:

- operating round a table
- agendas which explain the purpose and intent of each item
- information and discussion items presented orally
- short reports – where they are necessary - in plain English
- joint problem-solving
- only moving into formal meeting style when there are formal Council decisions to be taken

### Frequency of meetings

There would be minimum of 4 meetings per year, for each Ward Forum, scheduled in the Council diary. But ward councillors would also arrange additional meetings as and when required, without needing to obtain approval from any other parties.

### Localised meetings

In addition to the Ward Forums, ward councillors would be supported and encouraged to set up informal meetings at ward-level, neighbourhood-level or even individual street-level whenever this was felt to be productive.

### Joint Ward Forum meetings

There would be nothing to prevent two or more Ward Forums meeting together where local ward councillors deemed this to be desirable and appropriate.

## 3.2 Joining together the Police Safer Neighbourhood Ward Focus Groups with the Ward Forums

There would be clear advantages in co-ordinating the work of the Council and the Police at ward level, including the avoidance of duplication of effort and competition for attendees. The Police Borough Commander has indicated that she would welcome greater opportunities for the Police to contribute at ward level, not only on specific crime issues, but also on other wider issues. And, of course, crime is a key issue affecting local areas that the proposed Ward Forums would need to take into consideration.

*Recommendation 2:* Further discussion take place on ways in which the proposed Ward Forums might join together with the Police Ward Focus Groups, with a view to creating one co-ordinated ward-based body in each area.

*Further detail:*

### Options for achieving

The Panel is in discussion with the Police about how these aspirations might be progressed. An issue arising is that the national directives do not permit ward councillors to chair Ward Focus Groups, only local residents. However, **the Police Borough Commander does not see this as a major problem as there are practical ways of dealing with it. Her view is that the only item which must be chaired by a resident is when residents vote to set the police priorities and objectives. The Chair could be handed to a resident for this item.**

## 3.3 Devolution of decision-making to Ward Forums / Ward Councillors

In essence, the Panel believes that all decisions affecting a ward area, that can be taken at ward level, *should* be taken at ward level by the ward councillors. The box lists **some** areas that have, so far, been identified as fitting into this criterion.

*Recommendation 3:* Ward councillors, in the context of the Ward Forums, be empowered to make decisions on matters such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, **traffic calming schemes, the use of localised S106 monies**, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas.

*Further detail:*

### **Communications between officers and councillors**

To implement the proposal effectively, officers would need to take a pro-active approach to ensuring that ward councillors are provided with a flow of information about local issues and proposed/planned decisions and actions. Equally, councillors would need to live up to the demands of this increased role by taking a pro-active stance to requesting, receiving, utilising and sharing this information.

### **Consistency with corporate policies**

Ward level decisions would need to be consistent with corporate policies and strategies. A procedure may be necessary for responding to any ward-level decisions that are not seen to be consistent with corporate policies.

### **Decision-making process**

Two possible procedures for formal decision-making have been identified. Either:

- a) ward councillors, having actively sought out the views of local residents, could take decisions in principle with the decisions being submitted to another Council committee or individual (eg an authorised officer or the Portfolio Holder) for formal ratification, with the presumption being made that the officer or Portfolio Holder would simply endorse the decisions unless there is good reason why this cannot be done (eg it is in conflict with Cabinet policy); and/or
- b) decisions could be taken in Ward Forum meetings.

Two potential advantages of option a) are that:

- it would speed up decision-making, whilst also
- creating an expectation that ward councillors will actively seek out the views of local residents in order to demonstrate accountability to local constituents

Wherever possible, decisions would be made by consensus between the 3 ward members. If consensus cannot be achieved, the majority view would prevail. It is expected, however, that a clear steer will be given by local residents to ward councillors on most issues; this should help to reduce differences of view between ward councillors.

Whatever procedures are adopted they will need to meet the appropriate standards of probity and accountability.

### **Budgets**

There are several possible approaches to the budgetary arrangements:

- a) borough-wide (or area-wide) budgets could be held centrally, with officers releasing funds as directed by Ward Forums / ward councillors

- b) borough-wide (or area-wide) budgets could be held centrally, but with amounts pre-allocated for each ward, with officers releasing funds as directed by Ward Forums / ward councillors
- c) each Ward Forum / group of ward councillors could be allocated a budget, either for all types of expenditure or broken down by different areas of expenditure (eg parks, transport)

### Setting priorities

Ward forums and ward councillors would need to establish some priorities for future action but 3-year Ward Plans are not proposed.

### Cross-ward and multiple ward issues

Clearly, there would be occasions when a proposed decision would be likely to have an impact on more than one ward. The Panel has identified the following possible arrangements to ensure such issues do not lead to conflict include:

- having a clear view, at the outset, of the parameters for ward decision-making, drafting a protocol to outline what should happen in such situations
- officers taking responsibility for ensuring that councillors in all affected ward are given early notice
- ward councillors taking personal responsibility for liaising with colleagues in other wards to work out mutually acceptable arrangements
- Area Committee Chairmen having a role in brokering agreements and conflict-resolution – however, this is not seen as appropriate by all Panel members

## 3.4 Ward Budgets

Drawing on experience in other local authority areas, the Panel has learnt that budget allocations to ward councillors can have a significant impact on capacity of ward councillors to act as community leaders, taking action to make their area a better place to live. **This money would be separate from ongoing expenditure on matters such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, S106 monies, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas (as detailed in recommendation 3 above).**

*Recommendation 4:* Each ward be allocated a budget of, eg £30k, per annum for expenditure by ward councillors on minor local projects within their ward (and separate from expenditure on ongoing expenditure for general schemes).

*Further detail:*

### Costs

The difficulty of creating new budgets is recognised, so consideration should be given to funding this budget from current resources, eg from the current allocations to Area Committees and other areas of expenditure. **[NB Moved out of the recommendation.]**



## Impact

The Panel has seen, in other local authorities, that it is not so much the actual granting of funds that has made the difference but the enhanced capacity it has given ward councillors to draw different groups/people together to work to common aims and to shape mainstream budgets to better meet local needs.

## Procedures

Adequate arrangements to secure probity and accountability will need to be developed, including the recording of decisions, but the procedures and paperwork should be kept as simple as possible. It should be possible to draw on models used elsewhere. Options include decisions being taken by the three ward councillors or decisions being taken by ward councillors after consultation with their Ward Forum and others.

## 3.5 Ward newsletters

Ward newsletters would be a key means of publicising Ward Forum meetings, of inviting public participation in ward issues and a demonstration of the accountability of ward councillors to their local constituents.

*Recommendation 5: Ward newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward.*

## Content

Newsletters would be written locally with significant input from ward councillors in the form of identifying local issues to be discussed, feeding back on issues raised, consultation surveys, etc. They will not be party political. Corporate information could also be included but should not override ward issues.

Whilst most local authorities with ward working have adopted ward newsletters the key issue is ensuring that communication between ward councillors and residents is improved. If newsletters are not adopted then this will need to be addressed in some other way.

## Options

Options for the production of ward newsletters include:

- the production of separate ward newsletters for all 23 wards (eg as per the A5 newsletters distributed to the pilot ward-working wards in LB Brent)
- increasing the size of 'Around Ealing' to include information from all 23 wards
- adding a quarterly or bi-monthly pull-out section for each ward into 'Around Ealing', with householders receiving a pull-out section about the ward in which they live
- replacing, for example, four issues of 'Around Ealing' with ward newsletters.

## 3.6 Public engagement

In addition to the production and distribution of ward newsletters, arrangements for public engagement and involvement should include:

- A pro-active approach by ward councillors to engaging with local residents and organisations both on an ongoing basis and through the proposed Ward Forums
- a more visible lead by councillors, rather than officers, when local consultation is being undertaken, with councillors being able to use the council's postroom for this purpose
- the development, by each set of ward councillors, of their own database of people interested in local issues, broken down by topics/areas of interest and preferred method of contact (e-mail, text, post); there may be data protection issues arising from this proposals
- the use of this database as a means of advertising forthcoming meetings
- the identification, by ward councillors, of the different neighbourhoods within their ward so that information can be targeted more effectively when issues only concern one or more of these neighbourhoods
- the door-to-door distribution of information on forthcoming meetings and decisions
- the development of a section on the Council's website focused on ward-working
- the regular inclusion of information on ward-working within 'Around Ealing'

*Recommendation 6: A publicity strategy be developed in order to maximise awareness of, and effective public participation in, Ward Forum and Area Committee meetings.*

### **3.7 Officer support**

Observation of other local authorities has led the Panel to conclude that there must be some officers dedicated to the support of ward-working for this method of working to be successful.

*Recommendation 7: Officer posts be identified or created to support ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums.*

*Further detail:*

#### **The type of officer**

The officers concerned would need to be able to work flexibly and informally, and be equipped to support councillors and others in the operation of ward-working - providing information and advice to ward councillors and other partners, making links in the community, publicising ward-working and meetings of the Ward Forums, helping to set up meetings, making practical arrangements for Ward Forum meetings, compiling agendas for meetings, taking notes or, where necessary, formal minutes of meetings, writing articles for the ward newsletters and taking initiatives to make ward-working a success.

*For ward working to work the dedicated officers must have the right skills and approach. The existing approach of identifying senior officers has not been successful; equally just adding this on to committee section is unlikely to work either.*

Also the dedicated officers must be based and work locally to enable relationships and contacts to be built up and for closer working with ward councillors.

### **3.8 The number and location of officers**

A minimum of 1 dedicated officer would be needed for every 3 or 4 wards or, put a different way, there might be 1 officer working in the smaller Area Committee areas and 2 in the larger areas.

Further work needs to be done on identifying an appropriate location in the Council's officer structure for these posts. Ideally, the officers would be physically located in the wards, or areas, for which they were working.

## Section 4 Area-level working

### 4.1 Role of Area Committees

Area Committees should enable councillors to draw on their ward-working knowledge to exercise significant influence over the shaping of the council's budgets, policies and strategies. This will require a close engagement between the Area Committees and the executive. It also means that Area Committees would need to avoid getting bogged down in minor details and avoid over-concentrating, and exhausting considerable time and effort, on the use of relatively small amounts of money.

*Recommendation 8:* Area Committees be strategic by (a) being active in the development of corporate and area strategies (b) becoming a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (c) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area.

*Further details:*

Further consideration needs to be given to whether there are any budgets or financial decisions that should be delegated to the new Area Committees. In any case, the following arrangements need to be put in place:

- a) considerable delegation of powers to the ward level (as outlined in Section 3);  
**and**
- b) the provision of information about Council expenditure and service performance, in their area, to each Area Committee; **and**
- c) Area Committees being enabled to exercise significant **influence** over expenditure and service performance in their area.

### 4.2 Membership of Area Committees

The Panel has considered the membership of Area Committees and has recognised that all councillors are likely to want to be members of the proposed new Area Committees.

*Recommendation 9:* All councillors within each Area to be members of that Area Committee

However, there is an alternative possibility, and that is that only *some* councillors in each area be appointed to their Area Committee. This would have the advantage of reducing the size of membership of the Area Committees, which may be helpful for the functioning of the larger Area Committees. Furthermore, if the Council were to operate in partnership with other bodies (see 5.3 below) a reduced level of councillor

membership would achieve a more equal partnership. One option would be for only 1 or 2 councillors in each ward to be members of the Area Committee, on a rotational basis.

### 4.3 Working with partner organisations

A closer, more equal, relationship with key partners would be needed in order to develop closer partnership working with them in the interests of implementing and developing the Community Strategy. Area Committees would also then be in a better position to monitor and comment upon the policies and services of a range of agencies providing services in Ealing, not just the Council. Offering a *formal* position on the Area Committees, rather than simply inviting partner agencies, would help secure these relationships and opportunities.

*Recommendation 10:* Further consideration be given as to how best to develop the Area Committees as partnership bodies, in particular between councillors the Police and other agencies (including the NHS and voluntary sector).

#### Possible options

Possible options for developing the Area Committees as partnership bodies include:

- exploring whether it would be legally permissible for people other than councillors to be full voting members of the Area Committees
- examining whether agendas and decision-making items might be structured in such a way that partners could play a full part in all discussions and decision-making, except where formal Council matters are to be considered
- inviting partner bodies to nominate people to be appointed as non-voting advisory members

### 4.4 Attendance by Cabinet members

Only a close relationship with relevant Cabinet members will enable the Area Committees to operate strategically and become a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies.

*Recommendation 11:* Cabinet Members **should aim to attend Area Committees when key strategies are to be discussed or presentations made on major issues.**

**This will send the right messages and improve communication between residents, councillors and Cabinet. With a reduction to 4 Area Committees and a change of focus of meetings this should be a more manageable task than under the current system.**

### 4.5 The number of Area Committees

As described in 4.1 above, the Panel is proposing that Area Committees have a more strategic role. The Panel believes that:

- larger areas would be more conducive to the adoption of a strategic role,

- a smaller number of Area Committees would result in a more manageable workload for officers and Portfolio Holders
- moving to four areas would provide an opportunity to secure alignment between the Area Committees and area-based Council services (eg enviro-crime, community safety and – possibly – parks & countryside and planning)
- there would be benefits in aligning with the Police’s proposed 4 area bodies (see 5.6)

*Recommendation 12:* There be four Area Committees.

## 4.6 Geographical configuration of Area Committees

The Panel has identified four key criteria for use in shaping the geographical configuration of the four Area Committees (a) the area must be of manageable size (b) residents need to be able to relate the area of community (c) it must be demonstrate a community of interest (d) communities of interest should be prioritised over size and (e) no wards should be split between two Area Committees.

Using these criteria, the Panel has, on balance, decided to propose the following configuration:

*Recommendation 13:* The names of the four Area Committees, and the wards that they cover, be:

- **Acton** Area Committee- covering Acton Central, East Acton, **Hanger Hill**, South Acton and Southfield
- **Greenford, Northolt and Perivale** Area Committee – covering Greenford Broadway, Greenford Green, North Greenford, Northolt Mandeville, Northolt West End and Perivale
- **Ealing and Hanwell** Area Committee – covering Cleveland, Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Elthorne, **Hobbayne**, Northfields and Walpole
- **Southall** Area Committee – covering Dormers Wells, Lady Margaret, Norwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green

The Panel has come to the conclusion that the above names and configuration are its primary choices because:

- there are significant benefits in aligning the Area Committee boundaries with those of the Police and the Council’s Community Safety and Enviro-crime Teams
- it addresses the concerns that Elthorne and Hobbayne wards should be kept together within the same Area Committee
- it keeps the number of wards in the four Area Committees in the range of 5 to 8
- the above names are more meaningful to local people than using the labels “East, North, South (or Central) and West”

The Panel recognises that alternative configurations include:

- maintaining a separate Hanwell Area Committee – but this would result in a comparatively small Area Committee containing just two wards. It would not address the West Ealing question and would inhibit a coherent partnership approach with the Police and area-based council services. There would be nothing to prevent the two Ward Forums of Hobbayne and Elthorne meeting together when common issues arise.
- putting Hanger Hill into the Ealing and Hanwell Area Committee – but this would produce an Area Committee of 9 wards. The Panel did feel that Hanger Hill fits more naturally with the Ealing and Hanwell Area Committee and, importantly, that residents would more naturally identify with the centre than with Acton. The disadvantage is that this would not be coherent with the current police boundaries.

The Panel recognises that there is no perfect solution to this issue and that there are strongly held views. However, any move to four areas will require some compromise.

#### **4.7 Frequency of meetings**

Area Committees would meet quarterly.

#### **4.8 Public engagement and involvement**

The Panel expects that public engagement and involvement would take place at area as well as ward level but that some residents and local organisations might be more interested in ward-level issues and some in area and strategic issues.

The Panel proposes that Area Committee meetings continue to include an agenda item for public questions but these would need to be concerned with strategic issues rather than the local issues. The value of public question time would be enhanced by the involvement (as per 5.3) of partner bodies.

Area Committees should consider new methods of engaging residents and others, for example, by the use of workshops, seminars, single-issue meetings, different venues.

## Appendix 1

### The Panel's assessment of the current arrangements for neighbourhood governance in Ealing

The following assessment has been derived from the Panel's consideration of the views that it has received from a wide range of interested parties – see Appendix 4 for details of the bodies/people consulted. It compares the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements in relation to the Panel's vision for the future as set out in section 3.1 of the report.

<b><i>Enhancing the role of ward councillors</i></b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Participation in the Area Committees gives ward councillors a degree of local visibility and profile (both face-to-face and through occasional media attention)	Many councillors find that getting answers from officers to their enquiries is often difficult and this impacts on their ability to address local concerns and area committee matters.
All ward councillors have equal status at their Area Committee whether or not they are members of Cabinet or any other decision-making committee	The workload of councillors means that they spend too long at the Town Hall in meetings and not enough time getting out to meet their constituents
Ward councillors are seen to make decisions, together with colleagues, on local transport and environment projects.	The perception of ward councillors by Area Committee attendees is diminished by the frequently stated view that Area Committees do not consistently track, report back on and/or follow-up on their previous decisions and discussions and are sometimes seen as failing to get their conclusions/decisions implemented
Ward councillors details are available on the internet and in 'Around Ealing' with the latter also providing details of the ward surgeries	The perception of ward councillors by Area Committees attendees is diminished by the view of many that Area Committee meetings are sometimes too long, are only of interest in part (resulting in attendees leaving some meetings part way through), suffer from poor practical arrangements (eg hearing/sound difficulties, inappropriate room lay-outs, heating problems, extensive use of jargon, the quality of chairing), concentrate on minor details rather than more strategic matters and/or do not provide attendees with sufficient opportunities to participate and influence decisions



The role of all councillors is recognised through the provision of regular briefings on current issues and opportunities through 'Members Briefing' distributed through the Members' portal	Ward councillors are not consulted by officers on all local planning applications
	Ward councillors do not have access to any dedicated officer support for Area Committee issues (other than the committee administrators and designated "lead officers" whose role is unclear) or local ward issues
	Councillors commonly perceive agendas and decision-making at Area Committees to be driven by officers (with councillors having to be re-active) rather than shaped by councillors acting collectively, pro-actively and strategically
	Area Committees and, in particular, ward councillors are not always informed or consulted on all significant proposals for change in their area

<b><i>Devolving more decision-making</i></b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Councillors make decisions at area-level through the Area Committees on local environmental and traffic schemes to the value of between £25,100 and £81,000 per annum (2006/7 figure) depending on the geographical size of the Committee	The budget allocation to Area Committees (between £25,100 and £81,00 for environmental and transport projects in 2006/7) is tiny in comparison to total council spending in each Area Committee area
The Council constitution permits Area Committees to "agree road traffic orders"	Area Committees can only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>propose</i> "traffic and parking schemes to the cabinet for inclusion in the local transport plan bid and any other relevant funding programme"</li> <li>• <i>consider</i> "car parking charges and hours of operation proposed by the relevant portfolio holder"</li> <li>• <i>consider</i> "plans with an area dimension such as area transport plans, the UDP, regeneration plans and town centre plans, other plans produced by the councils partners and any specific proposals and</li> </ul>

	policies which have a localised impact e.g. a conversion of a particular facility, and give views to the cabinet”
The Council constitution permits Area Committees to establish “suitable arrangements with local town centre forums and partnerships”	Some councillors, at least, are unclear what Area Committees are for and feel too much time is spent in discussing issues without any obvious outcomes resulting

<b><i>Promoting and supporting community engagement</i></b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Area Committee meetings provide a general opportunity for local residents to speak to, meet, get to know, influence, lobby, etc their local councillors	Poor public awareness of Area Committees, and even lower levels of public attendance (which is hugely variable between the Area Committees) does not support effective community engagement
The one ward Area Committee (Perivale) is probably the most successful in attracting public attendance and participation	Conversely, it is difficult for large meetings (especially Area Committees with up to 18 members) to enter into close dialogue with individual organisations/people on detailed issues without losing the interest of almost all other public attendees and some members of the public find the large meetings intimidating
The Area Committees are now a familiar part of the political landscape for those local residents who are “in the know”	Councillors often engage with much the same, limited, group of people at each Area Committee meeting
Area Committees engage a committed/interested group of local residents	Most local residents, it appears, lack any knowledge about the Council’s structures, seeing the committee arrangements as complex and the decision-making arrangements as opaque
Area Committee meetings are publicised in ‘Around Ealing’ and on the Council’s website (dates and full papers)	Some Area Committees give the impression that public involvement is unnecessary or unwelcomed
Area Committee meetings have an allocated agenda slot for up to 5 public questions during which a wide range of issues are raised	Area Committees and councillors largely lack the resources to reach out beyond regular public attendees to the wider local population

<p>Area Committee's tend to listen to the views of members of the public attending before making decisions</p>	<p>Until very recently, no attempt was made to build up a contact list and database of people interested in Area Committee meetings; (data protection issues must be taken into account in any proposal to create such a database)</p>
	<p>Current arrangements inhibit ward councillors from taking a pro-active approach to engagement with local residents through local meetings and forums which they initiate and/or participate in.</p>
	<p>The role of Area Committee and Area Committee meetings are a relatively low profile in Ealing Council's overall communications programme (eg only the dates of meetings are provided in 'Around Ealing')</p>
	<p>Area Committee agendas are often a mixture of items for decision, information, consultation, debate and listening to public views – the purpose and intention of each item is not always clear, sometimes making it difficult for attendees to understand when and how they can become involved and exercise any influence</p>
	<p>The Council's website does not provide information on current area or ward issues (other than Area Committee papers and statistical profiles)</p>
	<p>There are a number of different decision-making bodies at area/neighbourhood level, making oversight and co-ordination of the planning and delivery of services at local services difficult. Eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Council has 7 Area Committees</li> <li>• the Police have 23 Ward Focus Groups</li> <li>• the Police are also proposing the creation of 4 area bodies</li> <li>• the Primary Care Trust has 7 Neighbourhood Forums (a different configuration to the Council's Area Committees)</li> <li>• Local GPs have set up 4 Practice-based Commissioning Groups</li> <li>• Ealing Homes has East and West Ealing area bodies</li> </ul>

**Overseeing, monitoring, and contributing to the development of services.**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<p>The Council's constitution permits Area Committees to consider a wide range of issues, including traffic, transport, parking schemes, parking charges, agreeing road traffic orders, "considering plans with an area dimension such as area transport plans, the UDP, regeneration plans and town centre plans, other plans produced by the councils partners and any specific proposals and policies which have a localised impact...and give views to the cabinet", "establishing suitable arrangements with local town centre forums and partnerships", "monitoring progress on local regeneration and improvement initiatives and monitoring the quality of council services as part of a co-ordinated programme of monitoring for area committees". (But see also "weaknesses")</p>	<p>In general, Area Committees do not take a long-term, strategic, approach to the development or planning of local services but mostly react to issues brought to their attention by officers and members of the public</p>
<p>Each Area Committee meeting receives an update on the transport and environmental projects approved for funding by the Committee</p>	<p>There are no established reporting arrangements for Area Committees to monitor "progress on local regeneration and improvement initiatives" and monitor "the quality of council services as part of a co-ordinated programme of monitoring for area committees" (as permitted in the council's constitution)</p>
<p>There has been an increasing amount of information being provided to the Area Committees by the Police allowing councillors and members of the public to question the work of the Police</p>	<p>Cabinet rarely consults Area Committees when it is developing council policies and strategies and portfolio holders do not see attendance at Area Committees as a key channel for communicating information and views upwards and downwards</p>
	<p>Area Committees have no apparent involvement in the development or monitoring of the Local Area Agreement or in the LSP's Neighbourhood Renewal Programme</p>
	<p>Insufficient attention to the future of West Ealing has been highlighted by some people</p>

## Appendix 2

### Key National Documents

*Closer to People* (2006), Local Government Association vision for the future of local government

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/closertopeople.pdf>

*Frontline councillors and decision-making – broadening their involvement* (2006), Joseph Rowntree Foundation, written by Tracy Gardiner, Policy Officer at the Local Government Information Unit

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/9781859354490.pdf>

*The neighbourhood agenda and the role of the elected member* (2006), IDeA Knowledge

<http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/4031717>

*Power to the People - An independent inquiry into Britain's Democracy*, the centenary project of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (2006) (especially pp 153-166)

[http://www.powerinquiry.org/report/documents/PowertothePeople\\_002.pdf](http://www.powerinquiry.org/report/documents/PowertothePeople_002.pdf)

*National prosperity, local choice and civic engagement: a new partnership between central and local government for the 21st century* (May 2006), Lyons Inquiry into Local Government (see especially the section on Councillors, paragraphs 4.39 - 4.53, pp 66-68)

<http://www.lyonsinquiry.org.uk/docs/20060504%20Final%20Complete.pdf>

*Frontline Councillor 2017: Empowering a new generation*, Local Government Information Unit (January 2007).

<http://www.lgiu.gov.uk/publication-detail.jsp?&id=156&md=0>

### Legislation

*Strong and prosperous communities - The Local Government White Paper* (October 2006)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503999>

*Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill* (December 2006)

[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200607/local\\_government\\_and\\_public\\_involvement\\_in\\_health.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200607/local_government_and_public_involvement_in_health.htm)

## Appendix 3

### Consultation responses - key themes and issues

Appendix 4 is a full compilation of all comments received in response to the Panel's consultation document. An 8-page A3-sized tabular listing of all the comments, in response to each of the Panel's 12 proposals, has also been compiled and is available on request from [spaldingn@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:spaldingn@ealing.gov.uk) or 020 8825 8182.

At the risk of over-simplification of the 50 pages of comments, the key themes and issues emerging from the consultation have been identified as:

1. The majority of respondents were supportive of the general thrust of the Panel's proposals, but many had comments on the detailed arrangements (see below).
2. Those who expressed explicit opposition to the general thrust of the Panel's proposals did so mainly because:
  - a) they did not regard the proposed expenditure to be value for money for the taxpayer and do not believe the public will wish to bear the costs through the Council tax (two residents)
  - b) they were concerned that it will result in councillors further ignoring the needs and interests of local businesses (Southall Traders' Association)
  - c) councillors and participants at Perivale Area Committee did not want their Area Committee to be abolished
  - d) councillors and participants at Hanwell Area Committee did not want their Area Committee to be abolished or, more strongly, did not want Elthorne and Hobbayne wards to be split into different Area Committees
3. The majority of respondents were supportive of the Panel's 13 specific proposals, with the possible exception of further consideration of joining the proposed Ward Forums with the existing Police Ward Focus Group. There were surprisingly few responses on this issue: the Police, only one member and two residents' associations expressed specific support; two members, three residents and the Police & Community Consultative Group expressed a degree of opposition.
4. Perhaps inevitably, the proposals which generated the strongest response – a roughly equal mixture of support, alternatives and opposition – were those concerning the number and configuration of new Area Committees (see below for further details)
5. In the context of majority support for most of the Panel's specific proposals (which are not repeated below), issues raised on the Panel's specific proposals (from both supporters and opponents) included the following:
  - *In General*
    - Need to address issues concerning the impact on officer resources, audit process and the chairing of Ward Forums

- The Council should consult with residents' groups again once firm proposals have been developed
- A massive culture change will be needed to support it
- Members and officers may need additional support with community leadership and engagement techniques to make it work, eg
- Might there be a trial period?
- *Establishment of Ward Forums*
  - Why formalise/duplicate existing arrangements for meeting with residents associations?
  - Effectiveness of ward councillors is key
  - May create another level of bureaucracy – how can this be avoided?
  - Need meeting and report formats that are more accessible.
  - Members may become overburdened – not all are capable of supporting the process
  - Does not solve the problem of supporting 'natural communities'
  - Meetings should start at 7.30pm
  - Need to have clear terms of reference
  - The terms of reference should be framed jointly with residents' associations
  - Formally constituted groups (only) should be represented on the Ward Forums
  - Concerned about possible agenda overload
  - Public will expect to see action – if not taken, the value of Ward Forums will be called into account
  - Suggest a pilot experiment be tried, perhaps at Perivale, where surgeries (attended by a range of council officers as well as councillors) are held before each area committee or ward meeting
- *Further discussion on joining Ward Forums and Police Ward Focus Groups*
  - May have to run the two groups in tandem, the main issue being the chairing of the Police element of the meeting
  - Danger of losing sight of the purpose of the Police Focus Groups
  - Impractical to combine
  - Lots of issues would get less attention if safer policing is the main focus
  - Possible perception that the council will have undue influence on policing matters
  - Concern about democracy and the potential turn-off for some groups of Police involvement
  - How long will the agenda and meetings be?
  - Should see how effective the Police Focus Groups are before considering an amalgamation
- *Ward Forum decision-making*
  - Broaden remit to include any issues that affect the local community, not just issues delegated by Cabinet
  - Would need to be formalised, so this would make them effectively like Area Committees
  - Should look at Area Committee agendas and see what could be delegated to Ward Forums

- Where would discussion of the LAA take place – Ward Forum or Area Committee?
  - Decisions in one ward would affect others, eg car crime
  - Issues to be discussed should be agreed between Forum participants
  - Parking must be dealt with in the context of borough-wide policies
  - Remit should include consultation on use of local S106 monies
- *Budget of £30k*
    - Must be probity and members will be put under pressure
    - Not happy for individual members to make decisions
    - £30k isn't enough
    - A good carrot but raises expectations
    - Reluctant for money to be allocated to an informal structure
    - Influence over the Council's total budget is more important than a small sum of money
    - Too much time will be spent arguing over a comparatively small sum
    - Might be better to increase it to £50k
- *Ward Newsletters*
    - Twice yearly (not quarterly)
    - Style and authorship are key to ensuring it isn't boring
    - Distribute via Around Ealing
    - Many questions on funding, production and distribution – massive undertaking
    - Questions on Police/community safety input
    - Probably best to put on the Council website
    - Concern over possible arguments about content
    - A Borough-wide report to all 23 Forums would be better
    - Will need to be designed and printed via PrintOut Team and probably authored/edited by Marketing and Communications
    - Replacing some editions of Around Ealing not conducive to maximising the impact of Council communications
      - Shift/increase in resources required to produce
- *3-year Ward Plans*
    - Police have an annual planning cycle, so would be out of sync with the Police
    - Would be helpful for the plans to identify issues for the NHS to try to address
    - Potential problem of nimbyism
    - Will not be popular with residents as may tie up the agendas of Forums for years ahead and exclude new items
    - Who/how would the plans be orchestrated across 23 wards?
    - Bold idea but most Forums will be dealing with day-to-day matters
- *Supporting officer posts*
    - Officer support essential
    - Need one officer per ward as a minimum
    - Locating in the ward a good idea
    - Non-Council officer support would demonstrate greater independence



- Identify posts not create them
  - Staffing must be cost-effective
  - Draft job descriptions should be circulated for comment
  - Key issue is relationship between these officers and officers who oversee the provision of services
  - Does not guarantee any change or effect
  - How will other officers support the Ward Forums?
  - No extra funding = no new officers
- *Strategic Area Committees*
    - If delegate to wards what is there left for Area Committees to do?
    - Difficult to see how, eg Ealing Area Committee could take responsibility for Dickens Yard/Arcadia
    - If wards have budgets, Area Committees should not
    - Need to consider the links with the Ward Forums and other Council committees
    - Would they be advisory or have executive powers?
    - Area Committees should retain their existing role but with additional input from Police Ward Focus Groups and Cabinet or their deputies
    - Should have more funds and political power
    - Would Area Committees be in competition with Cabinet?
    - Define Area Committee role after the Ward Forums have been established
  - *All councillors as members of their Area Committee*
    - One from each ward only
    - What happens when only one attends or two attend and disagree?
    - Has consideration been given to co-opting residents?
  - *Further consideration on developing Area Committees as partnership bodies*
    - And include regular Area Committee attendees as partners
    - Should generally confine discussion to Council issues and Police should attend
    - Police and other agencies are not in a position to become partners as they have to report to other structures
    - Do the proposals do anything to address the fact that many residents and organisations leave as soon as their items has been dealt with?
  - *Cabinet members to attend Area Committee*
    - No issues raised
  - *Four Area Committees named East, North, South and West*

Hanwell and West Ealing issues:

- Two wards of Hanwell should be kept together, probably in North Area
- Concerned about splitting Hanwell – some parts relate more to Greenford than Ealing
- Should not split Hanwell; so should be 5 Area Committees of differing sizes
- Hanwell should stay together; Brent river is the dividing line
- Agree with much of the above about Hanwell

- At least it's clear that all of West Ealing is in one of the Area Committees (South); but Hanwell would be sliced into two
- The proposal does not tackle the question of the heart of Ealing being split between Walpole and Elthorne wards but there is some progress with both wards being included in the proposed South Area Committee; but think West Ealing would be better served by having one single ward (ie re-drawing the ward boundaries); if revising ward boundaries are impossible then urge Council to consider what other formal and informal means can be put in place to unite the currently divided heart of West Ealing
- Object to proposal to split Hanwell across North and South area committees due to identity of W7 postcode, good signposting of Hanwell and town centre boundaries, unique character and history, strong community bond; want to keep existing Hanwell Area Committee

#### Perivale:

- Reject the proposal to dissolve the Perivale Area Committee
- Should retain the current number of Area Committees, including Perivale

#### Names of Areas:

- "South" is not a meaningful name for Hanger Hill
- Retain names of Acton, Southall and South should be Central incorporating all Hanwell, North is OK
- There is no such thing as a Greenford, Northolt and Perivale area

#### Number/general configuration of Area Committees:

- Would prefer to see 5 Area Committees – 2 in Ealing North constituency, 2 in Ealing South and 1 in Ealing Acton
- 4 Area Committees a bit artificial
- To create even bigger Area Committees, especially without changing their purpose and effectiveness, seems counter-productive

#### Police and PCT responses:

- For a perfect match, Hobbayne should be in the South Area, then each Area Committee would be matched with the Police and LBE areas for enforcement/envirocrime, and the 4 Safer Neighbourhood Areas
- PCT has considered whether there are any NHS factors that have a bearing on the proposed Area geographies and has concluded that while in principle there would be some benefits in consistency, none or so important as to merit for them to influence these proposals'; the PCT will be mindful of these four Areas when structuring its services.

## Appendix 4

### Responses the consultation document

Respondents	pages
1. Individual Members	36-41
2. Cabinet and Area Committees	41-44
3. Ealing Police	44-46
4. Ealing Community & Police Consultative Group	46
5. Ealing Primary Care Trust	46-47
6. Voluntary and business organisations	48-56
7. Individual Public	57-65
8. Council officers	66-69
9. Partnership for Ealing LSP Executive Board	69

#### 1. Comments from individual Members

##### 1.1 Notes of comments made at private all-party meeting 14 May 2007

Ward Forums great. Good direction. Ward-budget good. But concerned over changes to Area Committees. People identify at different levels – ward or town. We should not move to areas that are not natural communities. So Hanwell should be retained, probably in the North Area Committee. Not happy to split Hanwell. “South” is not a meaningful name for Hanger Hill.

Like more informal arrangements. But it's perfectly possible for ward councillors to arrange local meetings now. Why the need to formalise? The ward money would be a big draw but would be reluctant to give money to an informal structure. If money is given out, there should not be informality. Nothing to stop us from having forums now, eg with greater publicity. If wards have budgets it would not be sensible to have area budgets. But if areas have no budgets then they just becomes a talking shops. Perivale works well – 70-80 people attend. Would want to retain the existing Area Committees and informal ward forums.

Quite interested in Perivale. Works because it is self-contained. Hanger Hill is much more joined to Ealing wards and couldn't go into Acton. Most of the ward looks to Cleveland/Ealing Broadway. Hanger Hill would be against a ward forum. We have 7 residents associations and 7 AGMs to attend. We know our ward. We meet the Police. To formalise it would not work. There is a responsibility on councillors (eg through their allowances) to account to their electorate and parties. We have got to work to build up contacts locally and work with officers. All areas will have an enviro-crime person. We know who the officers are. Went to the scrutiny committee about issues on access to GPs in the north of the ward. There are plenty of avenues for councillors to work through.

But don't want to be negative – there is something wrong with Area Committees – it's the usual people attending (but same at the AGMs). If we impose structures it will not work. May not allow for tailor-making local meetings. Pay tribute to Glen Murphy in Northolt. It's up to ward councillors. Bureaucratising it is not the right way. Do not agree with ward forums. But may agree to 4 Area Committees.

Worried about the structure. Understand that Hanger Hill is difficult. Hanger Hill is the exception. If delegate down to wards, what is there left for the Area Committees to do? Area Committees would be redundant.

Should not get too hung up on boundaries. Should have a few and stick to them. The issue is whether Ealing Council is performing. We need to choose boundaries we can agree on. And bring officers to account. Lots of ways that we can make our views about areas know. Important that stuff does not fall through the cracks.

Each residents' association has its own structures. If we have no extra finance we can have no new officers.

Endorse separation of strategic from tactical. Anyone could pick holes in every sentence. Not agree with the view that ward forums would prevent current ward-working from continuing. It's been built up over years. The issues of capacity and competence are key: for members, officers, residents. For officers, a massive culture change is needed to support it. Capacity building is worrying. Informal structures are worse than herding cats and worry me.

Enhancing the role of councillors is a good idea. It's defeated when councillors do not get support from officers. There should be a co-ordinating officer – not know who to link with.

Concerned about splitting Hanwell. It's moving the West Ealing issue west. Agree about the problems of formalizing/bureaucraticising. Agree that if Area Committees are bigger they should only deal with strategy, but then they would then be in competition with Cabinet. There are advantages in working together. Thought about Hanwell for long time. Some parts are more related to Greenford, not just central Ealing. There are times when we don't have any structures in our wards. Not everyone is as organised as Hanger Hill. Have to be other ways of getting other residents in.

Ward committees are a way of formalizing things that are already happening. How do we determine what is a ward issue? Area Committees – we should look at the agendas and see what could be delegated to ward committees.

Lot of sensible things in the report. Believe present Area Committees are not working – very few residents want to come. Area Committees talk of parochial issues; councillors let others get on with it. But cannot ignore the financial costs of the proposals. We spend £300k on Area Committees. This contrasts with the proposal for each ward of the 23 wards to have a budget of £30k. Worried about the capacity of officers to deal with so many bodies. On the whole, officers don't like the Area Committee structure. A lot of officer time is spent on Area Committees and if we go from 7 Area Committees to 23 Ward Forums there are significant capacity and financial implications. Have real concerns about the newsletters – there would be rows over content. Boundaries issues we can never win on. Everyone has looked at this issue. But overall would rather do something new.

Go along with the main thrust of the proposals. Do think that ward working is the way forward. It works in other areas, so why not in Ealing, even if we are a more diverse borough. Would love to see a sum of money dedicated to each ward but there must be probity and councillors will be put under pressure. Would not be happy for individual councillors to make decisions. We must keep Area Committees. Many issues concern more than one ward. Must have a wider perspective than one ward but less than the whole borough. The idea of 4 Area Committees is a bit artificial. Police structures should not direct what we decide. We should not split Hanwell. Have put in the option for 5 Area Committees of differing size. It is acceptable for us to unite communities but not split them. The main thrust is a positive way forward.

The Police Ward Focus Groups are not chaired by councillors, chaired by residents. A lot of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams are anti- councillor involvement. Commander may be supportive but that's not what I am hearing at a local level.

We would lose sight of the purpose of the Ward Focus Groups if they were amalgamated with Ward Forums.

Hanwell should stay together. The dividing line is the Brent river. There is a case for Hobbayne and Elthorne going with Ealing or Hanwell going with Southall as for the Parliamentary boundary. [But Hobbayne is not in the Southall Parliamentary constituency]. Greenford, Northolt and Perivale stand on their own. So does Acton. Concerns over ward-level working. Wards are more designed to equalise the number of voters. Areas are more valid than wards. Wards could make decisions leading to Areas needing to make decisions.

Excellent ideas. We can organise committees in many ways. Our recent problems are not necessarily about structures. When we started with Area Committees, people came and expectations were raised. But it's been downhill since then. Southall Area Committee is not delivering what we promised. Officers do not share our aspirations, eg about a specific park. Officers do nothing between meetings. It took 1½ years to install CCTV outside Macdonalds, despite the fact that this is what the Area

Committee wanted [and two bus stops – but that was TFL]. In many cases, officers have done the opposite. The unity of Southall councillors is legendary but on this issue all the councillors were of one mind. Have come to the conclusion that Area Committees are not in the political control of members. Lots of officers attend. There is cynicism about the Area Committee in Southall. Officers run the Committees. Difference is when Area Committees begin to deliver.

Hanwell – agree with what has been said.

Welcome much. Ward-working tremendous. Having money to spend, simply, would be fantastic – could get things done. Concerned about the Area Committees – there's no such thing as Greenford, Northolt and Perivale. The parliamentary constituencies East/West would be an alternative.

On ward-working, have looked at the decisions being taken at Area Committee level. Many Area Committee decisions impact on more than one ward. Should bring things down to ward level, where decisions need to be made. One Area Committee convinced is working is Perivale. Better than any other. Perivale model needs copying elsewhere. Concluded that not in favour of ward budgets. What matters is our influence. We spend time deciding how to spend money. Cabinet is spending £300m – we need to influence this for the benefit of our own ward; compare this with just £30k per ward.

## 1.2 Comments from Members using the form in the consultation document

1. A Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards of LB Ealing

*Cllr Peter Allott*

This is unnecessarily formal. Cllrs are able to have informal meetings/discussions with constituents now. I oppose this.

*Cllr John Gallagher*

Yes.

2. Further discussion take place on ways in which the proposed Ward Forums might join together with the Police Ward Focus Groups, with a view to creating one co-ordinated ward-based body in each area.

*Cllr Peter Allott*

Any Ward Forum must be chaired by elected councillors. SNT sergeants and Chairs of PWFGs should simply be encouraged to report to existing Area Committees.

*Cllr John Gallagher*

Yes.

3. Ward Forums be empowered to make decisions on matters such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas.

*Cllr Peter Allott*

Any decisions such as this would need formalised decision-making processes. This would effectively make Forums into Area Committees.

*Cllr John Gallagher*

Except where on borders with other wards which should go to Area Committees.

4. Each ward be allocated a budget of, eg £30k, per annum for expenditure by ward councillors. The difficulty of creating new budgets is recognised, so consideration should be given to funding this budget from current resources, eg from the current allocations to Area Committees and other areas of expenditure

*Cllr Peter Allott*

Again, this would need the same formalised structures as Area Committees. No money

<p>should be devolved without the strictest and most formalised decision-making processes.</p> <p><i>Cllr John Gallagher</i> Yes.</p>
<p>5. Ward Newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward.</p> <p><i>Cllr Peter Allot</i> Agreed.</p> <p><i>Cllr John Gallagher</i> Twice yearly.</p>
<p>6. Each Ward Forum develop and agree a rolling 3-year 'Ward Plan' identifying current issues, listing priorities for action and outlining plans for the future action</p> <p><i>Cllr John Gallagher</i> Yes.</p>
<p>7. Officer posts be identified or created to support ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums.</p> <p><i>Cllr Peter Allott</i> Why must officers report to Area Committees? This seems to be behind much of the expense. Wouldn't it be better if Cabinet Members (or their Deputies) reported to Area Committees as the ones democratically accountable?</p> <p><i>Cllr John Gallagher</i> Yes.</p>
<p>8. Area Committees be strategic by (a) being active in the development of corporate and area strategies (b) becoming a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (c) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area</p> <p><i>Cllr Peter Allott</i> Area Committees should retain current role but with additional input from the Police Ward Focus Groups and input from Cabinet Members and/or their deputies.</p> <p><i>Cllr John Gallagher</i> Yes.</p>
<p>9. All councillors within each Area to be members of that Area Committee.</p> <p><i>Cllr Peter Allott</i> As now.</p> <p><i>Cllr John Gallagher</i> One from each ward.</p>
<p>10. Further consideration be given as to how best to develop the Area Committees as partnership bodies, in particular between councillors, the Police and other agencies (including the NHS and voluntary sector).</p> <p><i>Cllr Peter Allott</i> Agree.</p> <p><i>Cllr John Gallagher</i> Yes and ECN.</p>

11. Cabinet members to attend Area Committee meetings whenever issues in their remit are under consideration.

*Cllr Peter Allott*  
Agree

*Cllr John Gallagher*  
It should be encouraged.

12. There be four Area Committees.

*Cllr Peter Allott*  
No. The current number should be retained (including Perivale).

*Cllr John Gallagher*  
Yes.

13. The names of the four Area Committee, and the wards that they cover, be:

- o **East** Area Committee- Acton Central, East Acton, South Acton and Southfield
- o **North** Area Committee – Greenford Broadway, Greenford Green, Hobbayne, North Greenford, Northolt Mandeville, Northolt West End and Perivale
- o **South** Area Committee – Cleveland, Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Elthorne, Hanger Hill, Northfields and Walpole
- o **West** Area Committee – Dormers Wells, Lady Margaret, Norwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green

*Cllr John Gallagher*  
East should be Acton. West should be Southall, South should be Central and incorporate all Hanwell, North OK without Hanwell.

### **1.3 Other written responses/feedback from Members**

#### **1.3.1 Cllr Colm Costello**

Thank you for the opportunity to listen to your presentation and to speak to you re your work. The only other thing I wanted to say that I don't think was mentioned was that my understanding of the reasons or one of the reasons for the panel in the first place was to try to find ways to involve the public more in the decision making process. There are areas where the public are involved or more involved than in other parts of the borough and this is down mainly to the Cllr's in those wards.

In Cllr Sumner's ward this is due to the experience and hard work of the cllrs there and in Perivale I think this is down to the cllrs working very hard to raise their profile in that ward. This has resulted in high levels of public participation in the process.

What I think needs to be addressed in your report is how to get more out of our cllrs through training or mentoring which will result in them being more effective in involving the public in the process. It is often just a question of more senior cllrs mentoring new cllrs or less confident cllrs. This I think could involve whips pairing cllrs together for mentoring or senior cllrs giving talks in group settings on how they do the job. This would be done on an informal basis so no cost would be involved. I'm not convinced that formalising a lot of these things is the way to go.

#### **1.3.2 Cllr John Popham's feedback from Hanwell Area Committee**

We had a good session. I was allowed about ten mins to present and had about the same in questions and comments. The feedback was clear. They liked the current arrangement and want to keep it. Hanwell has a strong identity. People associate more with Hanwell than the two wards. People will talk to one of six Hanwell councillors and they do not always understand where Elthorne stops and Hobbayne begins. Not a lot of support for the ward forums as many issues and in particular traffic affects both wards. Totally opposed to splitting Hanwell across two areas and if it went ahead would want the whole of Hanwell in the South area.

Copying to the Hanwell councillors who can add their comments or concur or not with my brief feedback (see below). [Also see minutes of Hanwell Area Committee]

### **1.3.3 Cllr Jonathan Oxley**

I concur with your feedback, though I'd add that many people, including myself, believe that the Area Committees should be provided with significantly more resources - both capex and officer support.

### **1.3.4 Cllr Colm Costello**

I thought the idea to put Hanwell into the South was interesting and if it has to go into one of the other Area Committees this should be given consideration. Splitting it is not an option as far as I am concerned.

### **1.3.5 Cllr Phil Greenhead**

It is true that the central block of wards is unhelpfully large, but simply adding Hobbayne to Greenford would lead to marginalisation of this ward, would split a unified and unique area and would do nothing for it.

The two Hanwell wards are closely linked - there are at least 6 churches throughout Hanwell and people come and go to church from the two wards and elsewhere in the borough. We have 3 major high schools and at least 6 primary schools - further links between the wards. The churches and schools make Hanwell a destination for hundreds if not thousands of people daily, throughout the week (Drayton Manor alone has 1500 students).

The major environmental feature of Hanwell is that it is bordered by the River Brent and the Brent River Park and has a lot of green spaces and parks - another unique feature of the town, and which are also a destination for crowds of people throughout the week. The canal system, flight of locks and 3 bridges are an ancient monument built by Brunel. The Wharnccliffe viaduct is a world heritage site (also Brunel). - part of the Great West Railway.

The existence of a mainline train station and a branch line station means that people who choose to live here can (and do) access work in West London and the City to the east, and Reading/Maidenhead/Slough etc. to the west. The station is heavily used at peak times. So the demographics of Hanwell are different from those of Greenford and the more outlying areas.

Like other areas (eg West Ealing, Acton), the shopping parades have suffered from increased prosperity and mobility but Ealing Council has put a lot of work into maintaining them and encouraging small and medium businesses, with some success.

Local families spread across the two wards and see no distinction - it's all 'Hanwell'. Some local families descend from children cared for in the Victorian children's home, which is now the Community Centre. They settled in Hanwell when they left the home. There is also a very strong Irish population here and a very strong Catholic community. They all relate to Hanwell, rather than one ward or the other.

## **2. Comments from Cabinet and Area Committees**

### **2.1 Cabinet 26 June 2007 (decision-sheet)**

**Resolved** : (i) That the Cabinet comment on the initial proposals contained in the attached 'Consultation Document' as follows:-

That the Cabinet welcome the report and express their support for the proposals, in particular the notion of Strategic Area Committee's and Ward working, the principle of delegating decisions at a local ward forum level which Members believe is far more appropriate than the current system and will lead to greater engagement of local residents with community issues.



The Cabinet also felt however, that there were issues concerning the impact on officer resources and audit process that would need to be addressed as well as thought given to who would Chair Ward Forum meetings.

## **2.2 Area Committees**

### **2.2.1 Southall 16 May 2007 – extract from minutes**

The Chairman introduced Councillors Elliott and Randall, members of the Neighbourhood Governance Specialist Scrutiny Panel. Councillor Elliott, referring to the document included as part of the supplementary agenda, explained that the Panel's conclusions were currently out for consultation and that a decision would be made by Cabinet following the exercise. The meeting noted that key proposals include a move to 'ward working', where each ward will have a local forum with the same boundaries as the police forums; each ward to have a dedicated sum of money for small local projects to be spent in consultation with local residents; and a continuation in area committees but at a reduced number of 4 (North, South, East, West) rather than the current 7.

Councillor Randall stated that, as the Chairman of Acton Area Committee, he often has to deal with fine local detail that would be better managed at a ward level and that area committees should focus on strategic issues. He explained that when meetings are more relevant to residents and at a ward level, they are better attended.

Councillor Kang said that he supported the Neighbourhood Governance proposals in principle as they are democratic, will give power to the people and involve councillors more at a grassroots level. He encouraged members and residents to read the consultation document carefully and complete the response form (Appendix 4, pp36-38).

Councillor M Singh asked how the Council could afford the proposal to allocate £30 K to each ward and what would happen if this money was not available. Councillor Elliott replied that the £30 K per ward is not new money and is currently being spent by officers across the borough. He explained that some extra funding would be needed for ward forum support.

Councillor Gupta asked what additional powers ward members would have. Councillor Elliott replied that his has not be decided, but there are suggestions that the 3 ward councillors should have complete say and the power to make decisions on local funding, without the decisions being referred onto Cabinet.

DS Bhasin said that local accountability and connecting with local issues are important and highlighted a recent problem relating to a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ). Biljinder Takhar (Southall Traders Association) said that local businesses need a forum where they can connect with councillors. Councillor Randall replied that ward forums could deal with CPZ's and that he speaks to the business community in Acton where he is a ward councillor. Councillor Elliot said that the deadline for responses is Monday 2 July and drew the Panel's attention to the contact details on the response form. He said that the current feeling of the Panel is that ward forums should be informal.

Councillor Noori said that she would support the scheme if it were implemented, as good working relations between councillors and the community are important and some local decisions need to be addressed immediately.

Peter Sylvester (Southall Community Centre) said that it was important for councillors to contact all community groups based in their ward. Kathleen Young said that it was important for councillors to promote local decisions that have been taken and to support groups who may wish to access local funding.

Resolved:

- i) To note the contents of the consultation document.
- ii) To support the proposals contained in the consultation document.
- iii) To note that members and residents can respond to the Panel's proposals by completing Appendix 4 of the consultation document and replying to the contact details provided.

### **2.2.2 Hanwell Area Committee 6 June 2007 – extract from draft minutes**

Councillor John Popham introduced the report, which set out the panel's proposals for comments prior to its final report and recommendations to cabinet. He explained that an all-party panel had been set up a year ago in order to look at how effectively area committees were operating and whether more power and influence could be given to local people.

#### **Resolved:**

Members of the committee and residents were against splitting the wards and wished to retain Hanwell Area Committee as it was felt that Hanwell had a strong identity with three major schools and. Generally it was felt that ward forums might entail another layer of bureaucracy and there would not be sufficient funding to properly support them. Both members and residents were of the opinion that more funds and political power should be allocated to area committees.

### **2.2.3 Acton Area Committee 6 June 2007 - extract from minutes**

Councillor Brookes (Chair of this Scrutiny Panel) introduced the report. The recommendations were summarised on page 21 and included in a reduction in the number of Area Committees from seven to four. The arrangements in Acton would remain largely as they are.

Bill Davidson noted that Ealing Community Network is holding a workshop on 13<sup>th</sup> June to discuss the proposals. He also asked if the consultation period could be extended. In response Councillor Brookes noted that the 2<sup>nd</sup> July date for comments was still some way off – and that the finalised report will not be submitted until September.

#### **Resolved:**

- (i) - that the recommendations of Neighbourhood Governance Scrutiny Panel be noted
- (ii) - that responses to the consultation be sent to Councillor Brookes or to the officer named in the report by 2 July.

### **2.2.4 Greenford Area Committee 12 June 2007 – extract from draft minutes**

Lynn Woodcock, local resident, stated that she did not feel it would be prudent to combine Police Consultative Committees with the proposed ward forums, as she felt that the amount of business that would need to be conducted would be impractical. Cllr Brookes replied that the research that had been undertaken showed that often police committee meetings and area committees considered the same issues and that by combining the two there would be less duplication of work. Issues would also be dealt with more effectively through the partner agencies working in tandem.

Graham Preedy, local resident, felt that it was vital that any ward forum and area committee meetings be as widely publicised as possible, as the vast majority of residents were largely unaware even of the existence of the current area committees.

Stephen McKenzie, local resident, stated that whatever new structure was implemented, it was vital for its success that local decisions be implemented quickly and efficiently, so that residents would have confidence that any concerns they may have had would be addressed.

Fred Varley, local resident, felt that establishing ward forums would lead to local councillors becoming overburdened with too large a workload, especially when considering that most had full-time jobs in addition to being a councillor. He was also concerned that local forums for each ward would lead to a lack of cohesion in areas of the borough when implementing schemes such as CPZs and traffic calming measures.

Cllr Bell welcomed the proposals and stated that in his view currently the most successful area committee in the borough was the Perivale Area Committee, which consisted of one ward and therefore only three ward councillors. He felt that this should be made the model for every ward, as well as establishing strategic committees to deal with larger issues that affected entire areas of the borough.

Cllr Stacey also welcomed the proposals. He stated that the majority of business conducted at area committees could be more effectively dealt with at a ward level, meaning there would not be the delays that currently existed in implementing schemes due to the need for decisions to be made at area committees that only met four times a year.

**2.2.5 Northolt 12 June 2007 – extract from draft decision sheet**

Resolved:

- i. To note the contents of the consultation document.
- ii. To note that members and residents can respond to the Panel’s proposals by completing Appendix 4 of the consultation document and replying to the contact details provided.

**2.2.6 Perivale Area Committee 25 June 2007 – draft decision sheet**

Resolved

- i. To note the contents of the report.
- ii. To note that members and residents can respond to the Panel’s proposals by completing Appendix 4 of the consultation document and replying to the contact details provided.
- iii. To reject the proposals to dissolve Perivale Area Committee.

**2.2.7 Ealing Area Committee 25 June 2007 – draft minutes**

That the Committee welcome the report and express their support for the proposals. The Committee agreed that the principle of delegating decisions at a local ward forum level will empower the Forums and lead to a greater overall participation at meetings.

The Committee felt that there were issues concerning whether the £30k budget currently being allocated to Ward Forums would be sufficient, concern was also expressed at the implications for officer time and resources and it was felt that the meetings should take place at 7.30pm in order to encourage greater attendance.

**3. Comments from the Police**

From Colin Wingrove (Inspector for Performance, Planning and Strategy), Chief Supt Paul, and Supt Jenkins

1. A Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards of LB Ealing
We currently match this and therefore support this.
2. The Ward Forums join together with the Ward Focus Groups established by the Police to ensure there is one, co-ordinated, ward-based body in each area.
Broadly in favour, may have to run 2 groups in tandem, main issue is the Chair of the Police element of the meeting.
3. Ward Forums be empowered to make decisions on local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas.
Concern around CPZ’s due to impact on Borough car crime. I.e. a decision in one area may have impact on neighbouring area.

<p>4. Each ward be allocated a budget of £30k per annum for expenditure by ward councillors on local environmental and social projects.</p> <p>No comment</p>
<p>5. Ward Newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward.</p> <p>Fully support, just questions on funding, production, police/community safety input, and distribution</p>
<p>6. Each Ward Forum develop and agree a rolling 3-year 'Ward Plan' identifying current issues, listing priorities for action and outlining plans for the future action</p> <p>MPS has a difficulty with the 3 yr plan as would be out of sync with our annual planning cycle. Also Ward panels determine the Safer Neighbourhood priorities balanced against Borough targets and objectives.</p>
<p>7. Two Council meetings per year be replaced with "Councillor days" allocated for councillors to knock on doors in their ward.</p> <p>In support</p>
<p>8. A new set of officer posts be created to support ward-working, ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums.</p> <p>In support</p>
<p>9. Area Committees be strategic by (a) becoming a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (b) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (c) having an overview of ward issues (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) by being relieved of the constraints imposed by financial responsibilities.</p> <p>Agree, leave ward matters to ward panels.</p>
<p>10. All councillors within each Area to be members of that Area Committee.</p> <p>An observation regarding numbers, could this be in danger of becoming a talking shop?</p>
<p>11. Cabinet members to attend Area Committee meetings whenever issues in their remit are under consideration.</p> <p>Yes, and an expectation that Safer Neighbourhood Inspectors and CSLO's from LBE would attend</p>
<p>12. The Police, Ealing Primary Care Trust and Ealing Community Network be invited to nominate co-optees (non-voting advisory members) to the Area Committees</p> <p>as 11.</p>
<p>13. There be four Area Committees.</p> <p>Yes, same as LBE and Police areas (see 14 below)</p>

14. The names of the four Area Committee, and the wards that they cover, be:
- **East** Area Committee- Acton Central, East Acton, South Acton and Southfield
  - **North** Area Committee – Greenford Broadway, Greenford Green, Hobbayne, North Greenford, Northolt Mandeville, Northolt West End and Perivale
  - **South** Area Committee – Cleveland, Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Elthorne, Hanger Hill, Northfields and Walpole
  - **West** Area Committee – Dormers Wells, Lady Margaret, Norwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green

For a perfect match, Hobbayne should be in the South Area, then each Area Committee would be matched with The LBE areas for enforcement / envirocrime, and the 4 Safer Neighbourhood Area's.

#### **4. Comments from Ealing Community & Police Consultative Group**

**From C. Gallichan, Chairman**

As a statutory body, we were very disappointed not to have received the consultation document directly, particularly as councilors have a seat on our Management Committee.

We would like to make it clear that we welcome close co-operation between the council and the police, in particular the work being done within the Safer Ealing Partnership. We also welcome the principal of setting more local involvement with the community at ward level, be that by participation in police ward panel groups or through encouraging more localised discussion with councilors and council officers.

We do, however, have strong reservations concerning the proposal to amalgamate ward meetings with the police panel (focus) groups. Our opinion on this is based on the following:

- We are concerned that a meeting chaired, or partially chaired, by a councilor will give the perception that the council has undue influence over purely policing matters.
- The structure of the evening will give the perception that they are 'Council Led' and that this will be a deterrent to those who wish to engage with the police, but have no desire to participate in 'political meetings'.
- Finally, that the proposal is simply not practical, as the agenda will become too long. Resulting in meetings running for a number of hours, which will deter involvement. Indeed, we are aware that attendance at the existing Area meetings has been falling-off; purely because people feel the meetings run for too long.

#### **5. Comments from Ealing Primary Care Trust**

**From Robert Creighton, Chief Executive**

1. A Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards of LB Ealing

Happy to support this, as it creates new opportunities for engagement between statutory bodies and local people.

2. Further discussion take place on ways in which the proposed Ward Forums might join together with the Police Ward Focus Groups, with a view to creating one co-ordinated ward-based body in each area.

<p>3. Ward Forums be empowered to make decisions on matters such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas.</p> <p>Need to ensure that Forums bear in mind need for access by care workers to clients, and that they deal with parking in the context of the agreed borough-wide policies.</p>
<p>4. Each ward be allocated a budget of, eg £30k, per annum for expenditure by ward councillors. The difficulty of creating new budgets is recognised, so consideration should be given to funding this budget from current resources, eg from the current allocations to Area Committees and other areas of expenditure</p>
<p>5. Ward Newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward.</p> <p>The PCT would be glad to contribute to these newsletters.</p>
<p>6. Each Ward Forum develop and agree a rolling 3-year 'Ward Plan' identifying current issues, listing priorities for action and outlining plans for the future action</p> <p>The PCT would find it helpful for these plans to identify issues for the NHS to try to address (though recognising that the Forum would have no formal role in this respect).</p>
<p>7. Officer posts be identified or created to support ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums.</p>
<p>8. Area Committees be strategic by (a) being active in the development of corporate and area strategies (b) becoming a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (c) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area</p> <p>This proposal seems a natural and reasonable consequence of the Ward proposals. The PCT will be keen to engage closely with Area Committees.</p>
<p>9. All councillors within each Area to be members of that Area Committee.</p>
<p>10. Further consideration be given as to how best to develop the Area Committees as partnership bodies, in particular between councillors, the Police and other agencies (including the NHS and voluntary sector).</p> <p>The PCT will be very keen to engage in such discussions.</p>
<p>11. Cabinet members to attend Area Committee meetings whenever issues in their remit are under consideration.</p> <p>PCT staff are also willing to attend Area Committee meetings when relevant.</p>
<p>12. There be four Area Committees.</p>
<p>13. The names of the four Area Committee, and the wards that they cover, be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>East</b> Area Committee- Acton Central, East Acton, South Acton and Southfield</li> <li>○ <b>North</b> Area Committee – Greenford Broadway, Greenford Green, Hobbayne, North Greenford, Northolt Mandeville, Northolt West End and Perivale</li> <li>○ <b>South</b> Area Committee – Cleveland, Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Elthorne, Hanger Hill, Northfields and Walpole</li> <li>○ <b>West</b> Area Committee – Dormers Wells, Lady Margaret, Norwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green</li> </ul> <p>The PCT has considered whether there are any NHS factors that have bearing on the proposed Area geographies, and has concluded that while in principle there would be some benefits in consistency, none are so important as to merit pressing for them to influence these proposals. The PCT will be mindful of these four Areas when structuring its services.</p>

## 6. Comments from voluntary and business organisations

### 6.1 Ealing Community Network workshop 13 June 2007 (Approx 16 participants)

It's a positive step to bring it down to a local. Acton Forum works with us. One issue is the change of culture and how to translate it into action, making it accessible and enabling people to feel empowered.

Area Committees operated well in the beginning – robust – nearly 200 people come to some meeting. Then some Area Committee chairs, because of capability, workload and being driven by officers, stopped public questions from being taken on board. Follow-up questions are only allowed 2 minutes. The public are not really able to talk.

Concerned about whether only white middle-class people are responding to consultations. An unrepresentative set of people is contributing.

Many people would welcome the devolution of power. One issue: how at that level can we avoid bureaucracy (as occurs at Area Committees) using the Council format for meetings? Need to have a format for meeting which is shorter, with proper interaction and less paperwork, which puts people off. Area Committees have been dominated by the usual suspects. The Ward Forums need new people expressing their views. Need to reflect the changing nature of the population – a lot of people need the opportunity to interact. Otherwise, the proposals are fantastic – would enable residents and community groups to share their good work.

Agree. Wonder if the wheel is going to be re-invented. We have an arrangement that is tried, tested and proven – would be a good idea to transfer this to the Area Committees and Ward Forums, ie the Service Improvement Group and Neighbourhood Improvement Fund in Acton. This is a small fund to do things, without bureaucracy. Also proven by central government. Ealing is light years ahead on planning and cohesion. Culture – councillors will have to bite the bullet and deal with officers going off sick.

Would like to inject more reality into the issues of effectiveness and cost. If there is a difficulty in getting things done in 7 Area Committees how is it going to be achieved in 23 Ward Forums? There will be greater demands. Will it all depend on the officers? Will the proposed new officers just be “passers-on”? Or is there a special job description? Effectiveness needs officers “savvy” and councillors “clout”. It will generate more demands for services.

Should have smaller groups than wards. Eg South Acton contains some large areas. Need to concentrate on what people want. People are not listening to the views of local residents. Officers must work on anti-social hours, not just 9-5.

What would be the role of officers at Ward Forum level? Councillors would be acting as advocates for the people.

Agree the principles. What worries me is that councillors need to be more empowered to get things done. It's bizarre what a rigmarole it is to get things done, eg took months and the involvement of numerous people to get a noticeboard removed from a lamppost. There needs to be a “want to do – can do” attitude; we shouldn't need loads of reports to get these simple things done. People do not like change. In respect of the “same culprits”, tried to get people to come to meetings but it's difficult. The size and environment of meetings is critical. Wish you well to get people to do it.

Some excellent ideas. Congratulations. Those attending Area Committee meetings find them a bit of a disappointment. They raise expectations but things do not get achieved. It's partly about the relationship between councillors and officers. We need to make sure expectations can be delivered by councillors directing officers what to do. Some specific issues:

- How would the new Ward Forums relate to residents' associations – is there potential for duplication?
- Partnership with other statutory bodies would be good. Not just the Police. Greater interactivity would be good – where councillors, residents and other statutory bodies get together to resolve issues and get shared solutions.

- £30k isn't much. A 3-year budget would be a good idea. The 1-year funding for Area Committees has been crippling.

The funding offers a carrot. Individual membership should be allowed, with people of different ethnicity. Police – who decides in the end? If funding is given it needs to be provided equally to all areas for community events.

Ward Forums would talk about specific things. Ealing has an LAA. Where would discussion of the LAA take place – at the Ward Forums or Area Committees?

## **6.2 Roger Jarman, Vice Chair, Ealing Fields Residents' Association**

### Introduction

We see this as an important initiative by the Council. Unfortunately this consultation exercise is seriously flawed. The first time EFRA Committee members saw the consultation paper was at the Ealing Area Committee on 25 June. Furthermore the full paper is not on the Ealing Council website and we were therefore unable to fill out the consultation questionnaire on line. We would have liked to have considered the paper at a Committee meeting of the residents association but this has not been possible in the time available. We would urge the Council to consult with residents groups again once it has come up with firm proposals on this idea. We believe the Council needs as a matter of course to consult with residents groups on these matters in a coherent and consistent manner. Hitherto this has not been the case.

EFRA (Ealing Fields Residents Association) is a residents association in Northfields Ward.

Q1: We support the creation of Ward Forums in the Borough as long as their terms of reference are framed jointly with residents groups and others organisations that are members of the Forums. We are of the view that formally constituted groups should be represented on the Ward Forums. We are concerned about individuals being given access to these meetings to air their own grievances and concerns.

Q2: We strongly support the combination of the Police Ward Focus Groups with the proposed Ward Forums.

Q3: The issues to be discussed at Ward Forums need to be agreed between participants on the Forums but generally the issues listed seem to be appropriate. It would be helpful if the Forums could discuss performance in relevant services at Ward level e.g. street cleaning and waste collection.

Q4: A budget of £30,000 per annum seems very small. This would fund less than one small traffic improvement scheme. This issue needs to be thought through carefully. Also it may mean that certain parts of the Borough receive funds that do not match their needs when measured across the Borough as a whole.

Q5: We are not sure that the production of Newsletters for individual Wards will bring much benefit. This could be expensive and there is always the possibility that they will become confused with other newsletters distributed locally. If this idea does proceed it would perhaps be best if they were inserted in editions of *Around Ealing*.

Q6: We support the idea of a rolling 3-year Ward Plan identifying current issues and outlining plans for future action.

Q7. The Ward Forums will need to be resourced. However this could be expensive and needs to be considered very carefully. Staffing arrangements must be cost effective. It is important that resources found for this activity are not diverted from front line services.

Q8: The strategic objectives set for the four proposed Area Committees seem right. Their links with Ward Forums and other Committees within the council need to be carefully considered. What role for instance would the Ealing Area Committee have over planning applications affecting Ealing Town Centre? Also, would the Committees be advisory or would they have executive powers?



Q9: It would be sensible for all Councillors to be members of their relevant Area Committees.

Q10: We believe that the Area Committees should generally confine themselves to discussions about Council issues linked to planning, the environment, transport and traffic, waste management, street cleaning, etc. Also the Police should attend these meetings so that issues about criminal and anti social behaviour can be considered. These are universal services that affect all households. Discussions about other public service issues such as education, health and housing could be problematic in such forums. They might be a diversion.

Q11: We would welcome the attendance of Cabinet members at Area Committees whenever issues under their remit are considered.

Q12 & Q13: We support the creation of four Area Committees. We also advocate the creation of a South Area Committee that would cover the area currently under the remit of Ealing Area Committee. That Area Committee would cover our Ward.

### **6.3 West Ealing Neighbours**

- West Ealing Neighbours welcomes the basic principle of taking decisions at a local level as possible.
- We also welcome the proposal to set up Ward Forums as the means of delivering this local decision making. We also urge the Council to ensure that these Ward Forums have very clear terms of reference as to their role. We believe it is essential that it is very clearly laid out as to who makes decisions, when and how these decisions are made, what the consultation process is and how the Ward Forum fits into this consultation and decision making process. The process of decision making and consultation is unclear and confusing with the current area committee structure. Residents may attend these area committee meetings in the belief that they are part of the democratic consultation process, whereas decisions have frequently been made by councillors before these meetings. The result can be anger, frustration and disillusionment with local politics and that is unhealthy for local democracy.
- We agree on the need to empower ward councillors to make a difference in their local ward and support the suggestion of more 'joined up' working and partnerships with, for example, the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Envirocrime officers and so on to bring about one co-ordinated ward-based body for each ward
- With the proposed ward newsletters we suggest thought is given to councillors and council officials commissioning some third party content to give the newsletter greater credibility. At present, there is an argument that Around Ealing is simple a piece of Council puff and propaganda as it sets and controls the agenda for its content.
- We agree that Ward Forums need adequate professional support from the Council otherwise they will fail
- We agree on the proposed strategic and over-seeing role of area committees
- We note that this report does not tackle the question of the heart of West Ealing being split between the Walpole and Elthorne wards. There is some progress with both wards being included on the proposed South Area Committee along with the other three wards that cover parts of West Ealing. However, we feel that West Ealing would be better served by having one single ward responsible for the West Ealing retail centre along the Uxbridge Road.
- Ideally, we would like to see the ward boundaries re-drawn to move the area bounded by Drayton Green Road on the east, Eccleston Road on the west, the railway line on the north and the Uxbridge Road on the south from Elthorne ward to Walpole ward. This would then mean that one group of councillors would have the responsibility for ensuring the best interests of the commercial and communal heart of West Ealing were properly looked after and represented. The Walpole Ward Forum would also offer the opportunity for all those living

and working in the heart of West Ealing to make their views heard in one place and in a meeting where people really cared about the future of West Ealing.

- If re-drawing this part of the ward boundary is impossible then we urge the Council to consider what other formal and informal means can be put in place to unite the currently divided heart of West Ealing. Without some form of body that can take a strategic view of West Ealing, give all its residents and businesses a voice, and enable it to be seen as the whole that it is then we will have made no progress whatsoever towards remedying the effective disenfranchisement of West Ealing that has been created by current anachronistic ward boundaries.
- We suggest that a pilot experiment is tried, perhaps at Perivale, where surgeries are held before each area committee or ward meeting. These surgeries would be attended not only by councillors but by council officials such as Envirocrime officers, Safer Neighbourhood officers, housing officers to allow residents to ask questions of immediate and local concern which may not be appropriate to ask at an area committee or ward meeting.

#### **6.4 Bill Bailey, Chair, Hanger Hill Garden Estate Residents Association**

##### **More power to the People!**

The proposals of the working party reflect the “Challenge” identified at the start of the review. It has to be said that while the principal of giving power to the people may be laudible it should not be forgotten that the people have elected Councillors and their Council to do a job on their behalf. We presume that the large majority of the electorate probably don’t want to have the job handed back to them and to pay the Council for the privilege. Certainly if my experience as Chair of our Residents Association is anything to go by then the elected few are expected to get on with the job and 99% of residents don’t want to or haven’t the time to get involved. The secret I believe is good communication, though regular newsletters and consultation documents. If residents don’t like matters, they make their grievances known at the AGM and can vote us out. Similarly the Council and Councillors have to remain accountable and it is at the time of elections that any dissatisfaction with performance is measured.

##### **The Decision Making processes**

The key then to this review is the decision making process relating to the services supplied by the Council. Basically at what level should decisions be made and the public involved. If the proposals contained in the review result in speedier and more pertinent decision making at each level and a reduction in bureaucracy then so much the better.

Good decisions are about identifying real issues, making recommendations and consulting on their likely effectiveness and effectively implementing the agreed solution.

##### **The Local Residents Associations**

The Hanger Hill Garden Estate is a close nit neighbourhood, a designated conservation area and has had an active Residents Association for over 50 years. Will it benefit from a Ward Forum when by definition there is already a well established working relationship with Council Officers and our Ward Councillors, working at the micro level on matters effecting living in this neighbourhood? The key issue the proposals do not appear to have addressed is the role of local Residents Associations, which are actually an established local public consultation channel.

As far as Hanger Hill is concerned there are nine Residents Association, with whom the Ward Councillors already have a regular dialogue. A formal quarterly forum will not necessarily change that, particularly if issues need resolving quickly.

##### **Key Points**

Andy Roper has identified the key points of the proposals. Changing the structure and delegating the powers over more local issues is a step in the right direction. Will the new Ward Forum actually make for more open and informal meetings for residents and local groups (Residents Associations)? Are not informal meetings more akin to discussion groups? The meetings need to be carefully structured and chaired, otherwise nothing will be achieved.

## **On specific issues:**

### *1. Ward Forums in all 23 LB Ealing Wards – Agreed*

#### *1.1 Area Issues / Ward Issues*

The proposals are for a formalisation of ward level governance to deal with the here and now situations of each local neighbourhood makes sense. Separating local issues from wider issues which bog down the Area Committee should make for better use of everyone's time and for more effective governance. We support this move.

#### *1.2 Meeting Venue*

Where are the meetings to take place?

#### *1.3 Agenda overload*

A quarterly Ward Forum meeting when our local issues are debated along with those of all the other neighbourhoods in the ward, may however see a replication of exactly the problem identified in the Area Committees, namely most of the meeting is about issues not pertinent to my neighbourhood. This will not attract more public involvement. This is a major concern and the practicality of so many wards attending together needs careful attention when setting agendas.

#### *1.4 Public Engagement*

In a ward where there are already a large number of active Residents Associations the engagement of an even wider public is questionable. The benefits of the Ward Forum will be to formalise the interaction between local Residents Associations, an advantage over the loose arrangements which exist currently.

#### *1.5 Culture / Attitude*

Will the forum become a meeting for the sake of a meeting.? A change of culture will be required and the change will be welcomed and made to work by some and not so much by others. The public will attend and expect to see action taken. If not then the value of Ward Forums will be called into account.

### *2. Ward & Police Forums*

Combining the two sounds great however, just how many agenda items will there be and how long will the meeting last. We don't believe this is practical.

### *3. Ward Forums empowered to decide on local matters - Agreed*

### *4. Budgets - Agreed*

A local budget is a good idea but how long is a piece of string. £30k won't go anywhere and how will the priorities be decided?

### *5. Newsletter – Agreed*

A ward newsletter would probably best be put on the Council website. Our Residents Association experience with our Newsletter is that readership is not very high and recall is virtually nil.

### *6. Ward Plan - Agreed*

The proposal for a 3 year rolling Ward Plan has quite some merit. There is the potential problem of nimbyism. For example say a Traffic Management Plan which is a real local issue but is contrary to say the Council's overall plan. If a real local issue is not addressed satisfactorily then the Ward Forum will lose its credibility and become non effective..

### *7. Officer posts to be identified – Agreed*

Administrative support will be necessary. We propose the redefining of existing jobs rather than employing more staff. The whole point of this exercise is to redefine how existing decision making is undertaken; ie to improve input and output by making the existing structure more focused. The work load should not increase, the process should be more streamlined.

8. *Area Committees to be strategic - Agreed*

9. *All Councillors in each Area to be members of that Area Committee- Agreed*

10. *Further consideration on the development of Area Committees – Agreed*

Vital for the development of an effective Area Committee. The first step should be to define its role following the creation of Ward Forums. We suggest similar research elsewhere in the country as was undertaken for Ward Forums

11. *Cabinet members to attend Area Committee meetings whenever issues in their remit are under consideration - Agreed*

12. *There to be four Area Committees – Agreed*  
Make up of Hanger Hill Ward agreed

### **6.5 Nigel Bakhai, Chair, Hanwell Steering Group**

On behalf of the Hanwell Steering Group, I would like to object to the proposal to split Hanwell across North and South area committees. Local residents clearly identify with the Hanwell area through the W7 postcode and the boundaries of both Hanwell and its town centre are well signposted. Local people also recognise Hanwell's unique character and its history including having a separate council in the past, the logo of which, the Phoenix, is maintained by the Steering Group as its emblem. Residents in Hanwell have a strong community bond which is often shown by the high numbers of people who are interested in local issues and attend the Hanwell Area committee despite the lack of publicity for these meetings. The Steering Group therefore does not believe that this proposal would be in the best interests of Hanwell and we want to keep our existing Hanwell Areas Committee.

### **6.6 Timothy Tyndall, Chairman, Acton Green Residents' Association**

1. A Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards of LB Ealing

A simple idea but much more work needs to be done before implementation on:

1. Ability to meet expectation
2. Cost and effectiveness
3. Potential for greater public involvement
4. Extra work-load for councillors + officers
5. Involvement with Police Ward Panels (see comments at end of table)

2. Further discussion take place on ways in which the proposed Ward Forums might join together with the Police Ward Focus Groups, with a view to creating one co-ordinated ward-based body in each area.

The Police Ward Panel and the proposed Ward Forums are different animals. We should not have Ward Forums just because the Police have Ward Panels. Let us first see how the Police Panels establish themselves and how effective they are (see comments at end of table).

3. Ward Forums be empowered to make decisions on matters such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas.

Yes. And also consultation on spending S106 monies that become available in the area of the Ward.

4. Each ward be allocated a budget of, eg £30k, per annum for expenditure by ward councillors. The difficulty of creating new budgets is recognised, so consideration should be given to funding this budget from current resources, eg from the current allocations to Area Committees and other areas of expenditure

Yes - £30k is a good carrot but it does raise expectations.

<p>5. Ward Newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward.</p> <p>Around Ealing is vastly improved and well read. Concentrate information on a successful method, backed up by a web-site.</p>
<p>6. Each Ward Forum develop and agree a rolling 3-year 'Ward Plan' identifying current issues, listing priorities for action and outlining plans for the future action</p> <p>3-year Plan is a bold idea, but I suspect most Forum agendas will be dealing with day-to-day matters, or if there is a major redevelopment in the area, decisions will fall to the Area Committee.</p>
<p>7. Officer posts be identified or created to support ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums.</p> <p>Job descriptions for officers should be drawn up and circulated for comment. The key issues is the relationship between Ward officers and officers who oversee the provision of services. Also agreement about how the demands from 23 wards are going to be met, so that there is no favouritism.</p>
<p>8. Area Committees be strategic by (a) being active in the development of corporate and area strategies (b) becoming a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (c) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area</p> <p>Yes.</p>
<p>9. All councillors within each Area to be members of that Area Committee.</p> <p>Yes.</p>
<p>10. Further consideration be given as to how best to develop the Area Committees as partnership bodies, in particular between councillors, the Police and other agencies (including the NHS and voluntary sector).</p> <p>This can be done whether Ward Forums are established or not. For instance one Area Committee Meeting a year which concerns the Police would be a good start.</p>
<p>11. Cabinet members to attend Area Committee meetings whenever issues in their remit are under consideration.</p> <p>Yes, + officers also need to come when major concerns about their departments are under review.</p>
<p>12. There be four Area Committees.</p>
<p>13. The names of the four Area Committee, and the wards that they cover, be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <b>East</b> Area Committee- Acton Central, East Acton, South Acton and Southfield</li> <li>o <b>North</b> Area Committee – Greenford Broadway, Greenford Green, Hobbayne, North Greenford, Northolt Mandeville, Northolt West End and Perivale</li> <li>o <b>South</b> Area Committee – Cleveland, Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Elthorne, Hanger Hill, Northfields and Walpole</li> <li>o <b>West</b> Area Committee – Dormers Wells, Lady Margaret, Norwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green</li> </ul>

Further comments:

Forgive me if I write at length to add to the printed response. The Acton Green Residents' Association Committee held a special meeting to consider this, and so I write in their name as well as my own.

To give the context of their reply, the Residents' Associations concerns about a third of Southfield Ward, an area with clear boundaries. There are about 1500 households in the area, and 120-200 of these are members. We hold two open meetings a year with an average of over 50 people attending. I have been to almost every meeting of the Acton Area Committee since it started, and am one of the few – 8-12 – members of the public who regularly attend and stay to the end.

### **Establishment of Ward Forums**

1. This will lead to great expectations of effective action locally, especially with a budget of £30k. I suspect most wards will want to spend it to prove effectiveness. How will this be met unless preparations are made by the departments who provide service? Will they have increased resources? And it is already difficult to provide services to 7 Area Committees, how will they meet demands from 23 Ward Forums? And what order of priority will be arranged, or will response depend on the influence of particular Councillors?
2. Expectation of effective action locally will rouse interest. But if there is delay, then expectation will wither + participation by the public diminish. This has been displayed in the Area Committees. I only know of Acton, but my experience is that there was much participation at first, but when so many things were not followed up, or else got lost from the agenda, confidence by the public in the Area Committee declined, and now there is much less participation. I think a great deal more effective work could have been done, if attention had been paid to procedure, and especially if the role of Chairman had received more training + help.
3. I have said that only 8-12 members of the public attend regularly. It may be cynical but I don't think there are a great many more of the public who will attend Ward Forums regularly, and those 8-12 will be split among four Wards. It is my experience that evening in the Residents' Association most people are only concerned with matters right under their nose + when that is over they melt away. Also I find that there is even no interest in my Residents' Association with matters affecting the rest of the Ward, Bedford Park could be as far away as Greenford. We are fortunate in our Councillors + have excellent relationships with them + are therefore well served, + they are ? about what happens locally. I think the Ward Forum is the wrong size. Not small enough to command the support of the whole Ward + not big enough to deal with any matters beyond its locality. In Acton, for instance, the three Acton Wards have many overlapping issues, + if we from Southfield did not go to the Area Committee, we would know nothing of the life of the Borough. Southfield is already distant + self-contained, which is sad for Southfield + for the Borough.
4. I fear the proposal will add an extra layer of bureaucracy, meaning more work for Councillors, more work for officers, more officers + more costs, which do not seem to have been anticipated in the proposals. I also suspect that the establishment of the Police Ward Panels may have been found threatening, and the Borough has responded without thinking matters through thoroughly. I am dubious about the proposal. Certainly we should not be hurry. Meanwhile there is still much mileage in the Area Committee – especially Acton which I know – given help in the process and the Chairmanship, although I have to say that the current Chairman is doing very well.

### **Integration with the Police Ward Panel**

We had the advantage that the Lay Chairman of the Southfield Ward Police Panel is a member of the Residents' Association Committee. The Police Ward Panel + the proposed Ward Forum are two different animals.

The Police Ward Panel has a constitution, a lay Chairman, elected members of the Panel, including Ward Councillors + the Police Ward Team is a member of the Panel. They have not yet decided whether the public will be invited to their meetings. Panel members are elected at an AGM.

The Ward Forum is in the hands of the Councillors. The meetings will be open to the public. If the Police attend, they will be servants of the Forum as Borough officers are. There will be some overlap as the Police panel deal with what it terms 'environmental crime'.

The Police Panels have got a head-start and are finding their way. They should be given time to establish themselves, so that it can become apparent how effective they are, and what their remit is. There are always some members of the public who are particularly concerned with police matters, + they may well attract people who would not be interested in Ward Forum matters. Meanwhile, as they get established, the Councillors will become aware of what the gaps in provision are, + then they will discover if Ward Forums are necessary + how they might fit in. Co-operation is better than competition, + the Police have got in first, even, if they are having difficulty finding their way in what is new territory for them. And if anything arises from the Police panels that the Borough should deal with, the Councillors have the current Area Committees in which to bring these matters forward.

I strongly recommend waiting a while, until the Police Panels are established.

### **6.7 Biljinder Takhar, President, Southall Traders Association**

One wishes to express its views on granting greater power to local councillors. The facts of the matter are that the local councillors have elected by the local residents. In the history of Southall, most if not all local decisions have been made in favour of local residents; over and above the concerns of the local businessmen.

Southall is a diverse town which offers a vast range of products and services; those not available in regular towns. For instance, such products and services include a selection of jewellery sops; clothing; authentic food etc.

With the introduction of the Controlled Parking Zone, there was no consideration on behalf of the councillors with regards to the impact that this would have on local businessmen. Furthermore, after a few months, most parking bays were not removed from side streets; and thereafter, the timing was increased. A safer, cleaner and more prosperous town thrives on a balance between responsible care for the business community and the residents.

If the business community prosper, the town will prosper simultaneously. For Example, Ealing Town itself with the forethought of the New Dickens Yard Development; the new Daniel's Apartment Development; and also, to make life easy for the shoppers, the new scheme set up by the Council with the arrangement of parking in the Car Parks via 'Text and Park.'

In Southall, the story is grim and depressing. There has been no forethought and no help from local Councillors. The further powers granted to local Councillors will eventually turn Southall into a run-down and derelict community.

A recent Southall Parking and Scrutiny Panel was set up. The report ended up with no formal, constructive decisions being taken. The apparent conclusions to this meeting are enclosed.

### **6.8 Tony Palmer**

I write on behalf of CARA, of which I am the Chairman.

First, I would like to congratulate you on a most interesting paper, full of useful & constructive ideas.

Second, although our committee does not meet next until the beginning of July, I am certain that your proposals will have our total support. As I mentioned at the Area Meeting, I can see that a problem might be ensuring that the relevant Member of Cabinet attends the Area Meeting to answer your (and our) questions. Busy though they are, I see this as an obligation of service.

Let us know if we can be of any help. Your proposals deserve serious consideration & recommendation, so thank you.

## 7. Comments from individual members of the public

### 7.1 Eric Leach

#### Introduction

This report contains some interesting ideas and poses some interesting questions. It's clear a lot of constructive effort has gone into this review.

Put quite simply the role of elected Councillor (and in fact elected Member of Parliament) is one which is virtually impossible to carry out 'successfully'. In the Electoral Ward I live in (Cleveland), there are just three Councillors who attempt to represent the interests of some 14,000 people. For my Parliamentary Constituency (Ealing North) the sitting MP attempts to represent the interests of 110,000 constituents.

If all the adults in Cleveland decided they had a problem one week which required contacting one of their local Councillors it would probably jam up each of the Councillors' email boxes; their phones would be ringing off the hook; the postman would need a truck to deliver their mail; and Police would be required to control the queues up to their front doors!

Our democratic system seems very 'heavy' above us mere mortal residents. At the top laws and edicts come down from Brussels; our UK Parliament fiddles around with this stuff and generates its own laws and edicts; the London Mayor also makes up laws and directs the TfL juggernaut; Ealing Council Cabinet also generates laws on things like car parking, waste re-cycling and street lighting; and finally just below this level we have the humble Councillor who 'interfaces' with the resident and local businesses.

Some Ealing residents and businesses contact Councillors for a variety of reasons which include reporting when local service delivery doesn't work; when a decision made by a Council Officer is not to their liking; inviting them to attend local events and speak at meetings; or to bring to the Councillors' attention some intractable local problem.

Ealing Councillors attend a whole raft of meetings, many of them internal to the Council; a minority maintain web sites; some have Cabinet roles with specific functional responsibilities; some have full time jobs and some don't. They all run Councillor Surgeries which anecdotally are very poorly attended and there's little if any written follow-up with the few residents who turn up.

However it's not entirely clear to me what being a Councillor is all about. One wonders on a day-to-day basis to whom they are accountable? Because of this I find it hard to judge whether they are being effective. In fact I suppose it's only at Councillor re-election time that residents make some kind of judgement of a Councillor's past performance.

As to who the Councillors appear to be accountable to I would have to say that it's their political party. I'm led to believe that 5 or 6 Labour Councillors stopped attending Ealing Area Committee (EAC) meetings when the Conservative's came to power in May 2006. Similarly Conservative Councillors who had never attended an EAC began attending after the May 2006 coup. These Councillors' secondary accountability one would like to think is to their local electorate.

As for WEN's specific interest in this review of neighbourhood governance in Ealing, the report does not explicitly address our primary concern, which we raised with Scrutiny in September 2006. This is West Ealing's lack of District status.

#### 2. General Comments on the Report

Although research has been carried out in other local authorities, there appears to have been no targeted, research carried out by those who are being governed. I guess this consultation **after** the panels and its workshops has met many times is the actual consultation. This is not ideal at all.



I think the concept of local decision-making – ie Ward Forums - to solve local problems with delegated budgets is in principle a good one. An annual budget of £30,000 however buys you very little for 10,000+ residents and businesses – 15 stop and shop car parking bays maybe.

The current Ealing Area Committee meetings are large affairs already and although I've attended three of them in 2006/7 I'm still not clear about what they are trying to achieve; how the agenda topic list is created and prioritized; whether they are debating vehicles or vehicles for announcing decisions; who can speak for 3 minutes and who can speak for 20 minutes; and how one evaluates their 'success'. To create even bigger Area Committees, especially without re-engineering the meetings' purpose and effectiveness, seems counter productive.

Many residents want to stop bad things happening, and I've always found it a measure of effectiveness of any set of processes or organisational systems the ease with which it's possible to stop things happening. For example, my local Chinese fish and chip take-away has recently had real problems in the alley alongside their premises in The Avenue. Street drinkers have congregated there for hours at night leaving cans, rubbish, vomit etc. The owner and his wife have to clean it up and bag up the rubbish almost every morning. He contacted the (traditional) Police but they didn't respond. I tried to help on 25<sup>th</sup> April by emailing his three Ealing Broadway Councillors, his local Safer Neighbourhood Police Team and St Mungo's homeless agency which is part funded by Ealing Council to help these street drinkers. I did receive some emails from some of these folks over the next few days, but by 19<sup>th</sup> May nothing appeared to have been done to deal with this problem. The drinkers were getting more numerous and bolder. On 15<sup>th</sup> May one of them wandered into the take-away and asked the owner's wife for the loan of a bottle opener to open their bottles of wine.

Eventually I had to get in touch with the Leader of the Council on 19<sup>th</sup> May to try and get something done. To his credit he did get quickly involved and some action was eventually taken. However, there's got to be some flaw in a system whereby residents can only get some problem tackled by contacting the Leader of the Council emailing me at 11:00 pm on a Sunday evening telling me what he's initiated to deal with the problem.

None of the people I emailed has had the courtesy to contact the take-away owner and tell him what might be done about this; what has been done about this; or merely to sympathise with him. Maybe all these people are too busy doing other things. Should I have contacted a Council Officer to deal with this problem? If so which one, and how would I know who to contact? Typing 'Street Drinkers' into the Council's web site search engine doesn't direct me an email, telephone number, department name or named Officer responsible.

On reflection part of the problem with any problems in The Avenue retail centre is that its residents and businesses are represented by Ealing Broadway Ward Councillors whose interests and energies pretty obviously lie somewhere to the east of The Avenue. It would be much more sensible and logical if The Avenue were to be located in Cleveland Ward, as it is geographically part of W13 and not W5.

The above comment brings me neatly onto my next observation. The proposal makes no attempt to solve the knotty problem of supporting 'natural' communities. By natural communities I mean communities, which have a distinctive geographic, architectural and demographic 'profile'. In Cleveland there are quite a few of these. Examples include Gurnell, Copley, Pitshanger and The Draytons. The Ward Forum structure would provide no targeted support for these areas, which have different and distinctive social, regeneration, housing and 'cultural' needs.

### 3. Specific Comments

In 4.1 the report talks about only Ward Councillors voting on formal Council decisions at Ward Forums. As there are just three Councillors in each Ward, what happens when only one of them attends – does he or she make the decision? What happens if just two attend and they disagree. Do the three Ward Councillors also decide on the meetings' agendas? Are these Ward Councillors required to create and maintain a plan for the Ward – akin to a Parish plan which small, rural democracies appear to enjoy. Remember each of the Ealing Wards are 10,000+ people strong ie the size of small towns.

In 4.2 in the proposal to join together the Police SNT Ward Focus groups and the Ward Forums seems completely inappropriate. I'm sorry but living in Cleveland Ward is not just about better local Policing, and the issues brought up in the SNT Forums may have some relevance to the Ward Forums – but so would issues about culture, sport, transport, health care, education, car parking, street lighting, waste collection and recycling, which would get less attention if safer policing were enshrined in the Ward Forum structure. The two forums have a different reason for existing and should be kept separate.

In 4.3 CPZ decisions are included in the bailiwick of Ward Forums, and yet the level of cost for a contemporary CPZ (at Ealing Dean for example) is £76,000 would have blown the putative Ward budget for two years for two Wards. £30,000 would not go very far in creating new or maintaining new sports facilities for example.

In 4.3 the successful implementation of this Ward Forum vision would need a dedicated Officer to support each Ward. In fact to be fair to Ward Councillors they don't appear to enjoy any dedicated or shared Officer administrative support.

In 4.4 it talks about Ward Budgets being 'in addition to the budgets required for decisions that are detailed in 4.3 above' yet it doesn't say what the Ward Budgets would be and how they would be calculated.

In 4.5 it talks about Ward Plans and neighbourhoods. Many Wards are not neighbourhoods as such but arbitrary divisions of population into 10,000 ish parcels of population.

Who will and how will the three year Ward plans be 'orchestrated' across the 23 Wards?

In 4.6, the writing, publishing and distribution of 23 Ward newsletters throughout the borough is a huge undertaking. (presumably the references twice to '32 Wards' are typos).

In 4.7 to develop and maintain Ward pages for each of the 23 Wards on the Council's web site would be a massive undertaking. Regular door-to-door distribution of information of forthcoming meetings and decisions to reach 118,000 households is a massive undertaking as well.

In 4.9 it's postulated to have one Officer per three Wards ie one per 30,000+ residents and businesses. This is not adequate. One Officer per Ward would seem to be a minimum requirement to support 10,000+ Ward residents and local businesses and their three Councillors. Locating Officers in their local Ward might be a good idea. If Safer Neighbourhood Teams ever get to achieve this themselves maybe the Ward Forum Officer could share the SNT office. (It's great news by the way that Northfield SNT along with the Ealing Common SNT are in the Autumn to occupy the old Bullseye shop on South Ealing Road and will run a counter service).

In 5.1 e) it talks about the new larger Area Committees 'taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area'. It's very hard to see how the South AC could take responsibility for Dickens Yard/Arcadia and also 'take responsibility for' West Ealing regeneration.

In 5.6, as far as West Ealing is concerned, at least it's clear that all of it is in one of the four super Wards - ie the South Area Committee (SAC). That means that WEN would want to attend just one Area Committee and not two (Hanwell AC and Ealing AC) as it did in 2006 /7). However, for those who live in Hanwell, these super Area Committees slice the village into two, with part of it in NAC and part of it SAC.

## **7.2 Nic Ferriday**

I have been involved with a wide range of committees, consultations and related processes in LBE for over 20 years and have represented Ealing Friends of the Earth, Selborne Society, Ealing Wildlife Network and the Brent River & Canal Society.

1. A Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards of LB Ealing

Generally supportive of the idea.

At the governance consultation meeting, it was indicated that councillors would have an important role – far more than just turning up for meetings. This will place considerable demands upon them. While some are capable, not all are of the calibre to support the process and engage with communities in the way that will make the fora effective. Others who are capable may not be able to find the extra time that the fora will inevitably require.

2. Further discussion take place on ways in which the proposed Ward Forums might join together with the Police Ward Focus Groups, with a view to creating one co-ordinated ward-based body in each area.

Agree that further discussions take place.

Strongly disagree with it being joined with police group, especially if not on equal basis with the other 'partnership bodies'. There are widespread concerns about the 'police state' and the systematic removal of civil liberties supported by the police. Having the police intimately tied up in this part of the democratic system, as opposed to being an 'arms length' body which is invited to take part on the same basis as others, could compromise local democracy. Presence and close involvement of police will turn off certain groups, especially young people, Muslims and those with more radical views.

3. Ward Forums be empowered to make decisions on matters such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas.

Yes.

4. Each ward be allocated a budget of, eg £30k, per annum for expenditure by ward councillors. The difficulty of creating new budgets is recognised, so consideration should be given to funding this budget from current resources, eg from the current allocations to Area Committees and other areas of expenditure.

Funding is all-important. If such groups get only a tiny amount of money (relatively) it sends a clear message – "despite all the hype you are not important enough to entrust with serious money." £30k per ward is a fraction of a percent of council expenditure and the money being talked about is not new money anyway – most or all of it would be spent anyway on the sort of schemes being devolved.

5. Ward Newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward.

Probably, but absolutely key is style and authorship. If it is seen as council propoganda or if it is boring because difficult or controversial issues are omitted, it may not be popular.

6. Each Ward Forum develop and agree a rolling 3-year 'Ward Plan' identifying current issues, listing priorities for action and outlining plans for the future action

Seems sensible.

7. Officer posts be identified or created to support ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums.

Yes, some officer support is necessary. However, if it were possible to get funding for posts that were not occupied by council officers, that could make the forums seem more and indeed be more independent than a committee perceived as entirely council run. A forum chaired by a councillor and supported by officers who are instructed by councillors may be perceived (rightly or wrongly) as a device to make people think they have a say when in fact they don't.

8. Area Committees be strategic by (a) being active in the development of corporate and area strategies (b) becoming a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (c) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area.

Generally yes.

9. All councillors within each Area to be members of that Area Committee.

Yes.

10. Further consideration be given as to how best to develop the Area Committees as partnership bodies, in particular between councillors, the Police and other agencies (including the NHS and voluntary sector).

Agree that further discussions take place. Strongly disagree with it being joined with police group, especially if not with the other 'partnership bodies' on an equal basis. There are widespread concerns about the 'police state' and the systematic removal of civil liberties supported by the police. Having the police intimately tied up in this important process of the democratic system, as opposed to being an 'arms length' body, invited to take part on the same basis as others, could compromise the democratic principle. Presence and close involvement of police will turn off certain groups, especially young people, Muslims and those with more radical views.

11. Cabinet members to attend Area Committee meetings whenever issues in their remit are under consideration.

Yes.

12. There be four Area Committees.

Probably yes.

13. The names of the four Area Committee, and the wards that they cover, be:

- o **East** Area Committee- Acton Central, East Acton, South Acton and Southfield
- o **North** Area Committee – Greenford Broadway, Greenford Green, Hobbayne, North Greenford, Northolt Mandeville, Northolt West End and Perivale
- o **South** Area Committee – Cleveland, Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Elthorne, Hanger Hill, Northfields and Walpole
- o **West** Area Committee – Dormers Wells, Lady Margaret, Norwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green

**Other points**

Written materials for the fora need to be concise and written in plain accessible language. Ie not 'council speak'. Turgid 38 page documents (for example) are a turn-off. Key and maybe controversial issues need to be highlighted, not avoided.

**7.3 George Twyman**

Proposed amendments to some of the Panel's proposals (wording in *italics*):

2. Further discussion take place on ways in which the proposed Ward Forums might join together with the Police Ward Focus Groups, with a view to creating one co-ordinated ward-based body in each area, *which should also include PCT and any other service providers.*

3. Ward Forums be empowered to make decisions on *all matters [delete: such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas] which effect the local community not just those items the Cabinet decide to delegate.*

5. Ward Newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward *via "Around Ealing"*.

7. Officer posts be identified *[delete: or created]* to support ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums *and for contact by ward residents.*

8. Area Committee *ward councillors* be strategic by (a) being active in the development of corporate and area strategies (b) becoming a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (c) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area.

Comment: These are surely the current duties of all ward councillors.

10. Further consideration be given as to how best to develop the Area Committees as partnership bodies, in particular between councillors, the Police and other agencies (including the NHS and voluntary sector) *and regular Area Committee attendees.*

11. Cabinet members to attend Area Committee meetings whenever issues in their remit are under consideration *together with chief officers.*

#### *Additional proposal*

14. *Question and answer sessions at all Ward and Area Committees to be continued with answers on a follow-up basis until satisfactory answers are obtained or relevant actions taken.*

### **7.4 Mr F K Impey**

1. A Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards of LB Ealing

No the cost benefit will have no effect. £30k is too little to make an affect in a Ward, plus Wards vary in size and population. The total spend in the 23 Wards is £690k. The spend on 6 officers is £276k this represents 40% of the money spent in the Wards. The total cost is approx £1,020,000 not value for money for the taxpayer.

2. Further discussion take place on ways in which the proposed Ward Forums might join together with the Police Ward Focus Groups, with a view to creating one co-ordinated ward-based body in each area.

The Area Committee as a forum brings the elected representatives to account, they must explain their actions and intentions to the public. The police are not elected, they cannot divulge their operation activities to the public.

3. Ward Forums be empowered to make decisions on matters such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas.

The money (£30k) is too little to make any effect in a Ward. The larger issues may go to an Area Committee for consultation but the final decision is made by the Cabinet and full Council.

4. Each ward be allocated a budget of, eg £30k, per annum for expenditure by ward councillors. The difficulty of creating new budgets is recognised, so consideration should be given to funding this budget from current resources, eg from the current allocations to Area Committees and other areas of expenditure

The proposed £30k is just a fig leaf to cover up the lack of democracy in the executive Cabinet system of local government. The major and minor decisions must be endorsed by Cabinet they will make the final decision. Lets hope that the consultation process is genuine and is accepted by Cabinet.

5. Ward Newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward.

No Ward information should be included within 'Around Ealing'. This would also demonstrate if Ward councillors are doing the job they were elected for. It would give other Wards information on what is going on in other Wards in Ealing.

6. Each Ward Forum develop and agree a rolling 3-year 'Ward Plan' identifying current issues, listing priorities for action and outlining plans for the future action

Ward councillors should be pro-active in bringing issues and problems to their Groups and to Cabinet and Council. Petitions and questions in Council should highlight such issues to other Councillors and Officers as to the problems and issues in the Borough Wards.

7. Officer posts be identified or created to support ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums.

This is extra expenditure that does not guarantee any change or effect to any issue or problem. The old committee system was the best way to identify and resolve problems. They should be brought back and made more open.

8. Area Committees be strategic by (a) being active in the development of corporate and area strategies (b) becoming a key channel for consultation by the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (c) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area

The political mandate and manifesto is the promise to make and take promised action. The elected Council must take the responsibility to deliver these promises made to the electorate. They must be responsible to make sure that Council officers implement the decisions of the Council. Area Committees can't.

9. All councillors within each Area to be members of that Area Committee.

Councillors and the elected member of Parliament should be members of Area Committee. Those non-elected persons or people holding officer should not.

10. Further consideration be given as to how best to develop the Area Committees as partnership bodies, in particular between councillors, the Police and other agencies (including the NHS and voluntary sector).

There can be no partnership unless the people who hold office or are elected representatives are equal partners. The Police and other agencies are not in a position to become partners, they have to report to other levels within their formulated structure, they cannot go out of certain remits.

11. Cabinet members to attend Area Committee meetings whenever issues in their remit are under consideration.

This should be the case, this will enable those responsible for specific issues that related to their portfolio to be present to judge the strength of feeling on those issues.

12. There be four Area Committees.

I would prefer to see five area committees. Two in Ealing North Constituency. Two in Ealing Southall Constituency. One in Ealing Acton Constituency. They should be co-terminus with the Wards in those Parliamentary Constituencies.

13. The names of the four Area Committee, and the wards that they cover, be:

- o **East** Area Committee- Acton Central, East Acton, South Acton and Southfield
- o **North** Area Committee – Greenford Broadway, Greenford Green, Hobbayne, North Greenford, Northolt Mandeville, Northolt West End and Perivale
- o **South** Area Committee – Cleveland, Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Elthorne, Hanger Hill, Northfields and Walpole
- o **West** Area Committee – Dormers Wells, Lady Margaret, Norwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green

As I have stated above there should be 5 Area Committees. This would give a better strategic value to the issues raised at such forums. The members of Parliament should also be members of the Area Committees in their constituencies. Local Ward and Constituency issues and concerns will be brought to the public's attention. I would also invite the GAL member and the European Parliamentary local member to meetings that relate to their sphere of influence.

### **7.5 John Gashion, South Acton Resident and Committee Member of EPTUG**

I have thought long and hard before deciding to comment on the above. The document is, as I understand it, the result of discussions chaired by Councillor Brookes; who, as most active residents know, was a senior member of the Labour controlled Council which adopted the Cabinet system; and within which she became a Cabinet member.

In "The Challenge" a number of factors are cited as reasons for the turnout at local elections being at an all time low. The reduction of power by National Government was not actively canvassed by Labour Councillors in the Borough at the last two General Elections. Surely over powerful senior officers should be reigned in by Councillors, or their Leader. If we have a situation where the tail is wagging the dog, then that is the fault of the elected Councillors.

However I would beg to differ in the reason for the lack of public interest It is the very factor which does not appear in "The Challenge", namely that the public have been cut out as well. The idea that "Consultation" is to have a document put in front of you and you are asked if you have any comments, but you are not permitted to suggest alterations to the document; is not consultation in the eyes of most members of the public, it is just a rubber stamp process. Many of the public have the view that taking time, such as I am now with this document, will make no difference to the outcome of the consultation, it has already been decided. Let me quote some examples:-

Wearing another hat, I receive plans for road schemes from the Councils' contractor Mouchel Parkman. They have a closing date for comments. Having received one of these consultations I go out to examine the site, before the closing date, only to discover that the work is already in progress or in some cases completed. Wasting my time and journey costs.

Prior to the last Council election the Conservatives campaigned in the Northolt area that they would abolish the bus lanes if they were elected. They were elected and then found that they did not have sufficient powers to abolish the bus lanes; they could only reduce the operating hours on a trial basis. A failure to check that they could carry out their promise to the electorate.

*[Section deleted for legal reasons]*

With Councillors and officials like the above is it any wonder the public have given up on local, and indeed National, Government. The whole system is operated by people who "must be in charge" all the time.

Last week someone presented a Bill in the House of Lords the aim of which was to restrict to two terms, the number of times an individual could be elected as Mayor of London. This really brings home the fear of the political hierarchy. The post of Mayor of London is the only major political post in England which is directly voted for by the relevant electorate. So if that electorate want to elect him or her, why shouldn't they re-elect the holder two, three, four or more times? It is because the politicians want to be able to intervene into who stands for election to the post. The electorate do not elect the

Prime Minister, Leaders of County Councils or Leaders of Local Councils. In that respect the post is unique.

*[Section deleted for legal reasons]*

Let me now turn to another aspect contributing to low turnouts. I live on the South Acton Estate, which is in the South Acton Ward (though it is in the Acton Central Controlled Parking Zone). Although it may not be typical I have a few figures for population on the estate to illustrate the situation. It is generally accepted that the estate population is between five and six thousand people. The "White British" content is now down to 33%, and the "Black British" is about 11%. Together with a few other groups eligible to vote it's probable adds up to approximately 50%. So who are the other 50%? Well there are Asylum seekers, Refugees, Long stay visitors (workers?) from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the Eastern European EEC states and some other minorities. As I understand it none of this second 50% are eligible to vote. Thus a turnout of just over 30%, is, in fact, 30% of those on the voters rolls i.e. 30% of 50%. This is only some 15+% of the total population. Contrast this with 30 or 40 years ago when probably 80% or 90% were on the electoral roll and one can see that the turnout, although it could be better, is never going to reach the figures of years ago. Who or what do we blame for this? Well it must be an unrestricted immigration policy coupled with membership of the EEC.

From the foregoing you will realise that I am not in favour of the proposals. Considerable Council Tax payers money has already been spent on this exercise with visits etc, having to be paid for. An estimated figure of one million pounds per year is quoted at para 4 of the covering document, I can only assume that this figure has used the same yardstick as the original estimates for the 2012 Olympics! Basically the public will not wish to bear the costs through their Council Tax. It has been reported in the Daily Telegraph today (June 23) that Ealing has the 11th highest increase in Council Tax bills throughout the whole of the country over the last 10 years. An increase of 133%. It is proposed to allocate 30,000 to each ward to decide what it wishes to spend this sum on. No doubt the figure has been arrived at because that is the figure being allocated by other Councils e.g. LB of Brent (6 wards only); City of York (18 wards). Bradford and South Tyneside apparently do not allocate any funds. Ealing is talking about 23 wards so it will be more expensive, but I feel that if this scheme goes ahead too much time will be spent arguing over the spending of a comparatively small sum; and it will do nothing to bring together the various residents groups who will all be pursuing their own agendas to get their share of the money Also, of course, at the end of the day it will be the Councillors who make the decisions, it will not be a joint decision. This puts us firmly back to square one as the politicians apparently must be the decision makers.

Figures. The average Council Tax to be collected in each ward for Ealing Services only in 2007/8 is 5.122 million. The proposed 30,000 is just over one half of one per cent of this figure. If the amount was increased to 1% (about 50,000) and this could be spent on a single project to benefit the majority of the ward, this may be a better way to approach the problem.

One serious problem with the present Area Committee Meetings is that residents and other organisations e.g. the Police, Transport for London, Thames Water only stay for their item on the agenda and then leave. Thus as the meetings progress the audience gets smaller and smaller. I am not sure that the proposals do anything to combat this.

I am afraid that 3 year plans etc. will not be popular with residents as they are very likely to tie up the agendas of the Forums for years ahead and exclude any additional items that arise in the meantime.

Ward Newsletters. It is apparent that the separate ward newsletters, however they are produced and circulated, will be specific to each Ward Forum. This will continue a long standing principle in Ealing, namely that residents in one part of the Borough have no idea what is happening in other parts of the Borough. We need a Boroughwide report to all 23 Forums, even if each item only consists of three or four lines. This enables residents to identify problems etc, which are common to more than one ward.



## 8. Comments from council officers

### 8.1 Comments at Corporate Leadership Team 9<sup>th</sup> May 2007

Report is well put together. Contains some really good ideas. In a previous area had experience of Community Forums operating in each ward feeding into Area Committees. Community Forums were led by councillors and initiated by councillors. Meetings were much more informal, consultative. Areas took a view and made decisions. Police were engaged in the Community Forums. Lot of public issues about community safety and crime. Gave each Area Committee a modest budget (£10k), not tied in to specifics. They focused on influence. It seemed to work. The issue is how do we use existing resources. Well-argued.

Less concerned about budget but officer resources would be needed. This is one reason the Area Committees have not been a success – they have not had the level of officer support that they needed. This is key. The proposals will fail unless officers are properly resourced. Note that Bradford has a total of 43 officers. Governance issues are all ones which, given the will, can be resolved.

Risk of the 'usual suspects' attending meetings. They cannot speak for others and do not have a mandate to do so. Borough procurement – not allowed to discuss street lights. Need to change – should not have a one-size fits all model.

There are other aspects of wards/areas that are of public interest, such as housing. In certain wards, there are concerns about maintenance.

Has any local authority opted for decisions on transport schemes at a ward level? How do we avoid chaos, ie if we take the current Area Committee budgets down to ward level?

We have to be consistent across the whole borough.

Might there be an experimental period?

It's a really useful report after the JAR. We need to do more about responding to **local** community needs. Should also integrate the Children and Young People's Act and local schools. And ensure that there is youth participation. Build on how to secure.

All the financial points have been made. We need better governance arrangements to secure service improvements not to increase overheads. We need to strike the balance. This thinking has been around. Some places have got it spectacularly, eg Brent and Tower Hamlets. Some have had a difficult time.

### 8. 2 Comments from Democratic Services (from Janet Smith, Head of Democratic Services)

The general view of managers in the service is that the proposals are innovative, exciting and challenging we are sure that some of our existing staff in Committees and Members Services would be interested in the new posts proposed.

To give you some idea of the current cost of servicing area ctees please see below:

Current costs for Committee services include:

1.5 full time equivalent grade 8 Democratic Services Officer based on 7 area committees meeting 4 time per year – requiring 7 days DSO time per meeting – allowing for annual leave etc- Approx.£45k

- additional time for uploading all printed material on web – unknown - new task to begin at the end of May . This is due to lack of resource in the Web Team.

28 venues per year a  
@ approx £120 each (some are cheaper)

Printing of agenda  
Depends on size of reports but between £115 and £390 per meeting

Equipment hire eg PA systems approx £53

Taxi where necessary to transport DSO and equipment - various

### **Future Costs**

These will be dependant on the final proposals but an increase in meetings would increase the venue cost, printing costs (Cllrs are currently prepared to receive agenda electronically) and certainly increase officer cost – whether this be for committees, members services or elsewhere in the organisation.

### **Governance**

The report refers to the importance of probity. We feel there are Issues of governance that will need to be carefully thought through to ensure that access to information regulations are met and that decisions are taken in public and properly recorded (we realise that there are likely to be future changes in legislation to address this but this is still an unknown area)

The document implies that oral reports at meetings will be acceptable. Committee officers are concerned that this might create a lack of clarity and focus and could exclude members of the public not able to attend. It will necessitate verbatim notes to ensure that full details of the decision are recorded.

Legal and Dem Services would need to be consulted fully to ensure proper processes are followed and that decision making is legal and transparent and in line with our Constitutional arrangements. For this reason we would recommend that final decision be deferred pending the changes in law.

The proposal that each meeting may operate differently is a little worrying. We understand that each area is different but would recommend that basic process is in place for all meetings to avoid confusion for all concerned.

### **Corporate Goals**

When making decisions locally attention would need to be drawn to borough wide policies and corporate goals.

### **Meetings Programme**

If there were 23 ward forums meeting 4 times per year careful timetabling of meetings would be needed.

23 Ward forums will require 92 extra meetings a year. If area ctees are reduced to 4 meetings 4 times a year this will be 16 rather than 28 as at the moment. This gives a total increase of 80 meetings. Leaving aside officer resourcing for the moment, Will be able councilors cope with this when they struggle to make meetings now? Will Cabinet Members have time to attend their area committees and ward forums.

### **Staffing**

How was the figure of 6 support posts calculated? Some of the work in the profiles for these posts is already carried out by staff based in Committees and Members Services and as said above some staff would be suitable to carry out these duties. How were they assessed to be worth grade 11? There is a wider problem of grading within the Authority and how they compare elsewhere. Our Committee officers are currently graded at scale 8 and as far as we can read there are no management responsibilities for the new posts.

If officers from our service areas, i.e. traffic and transport, are going to be required to attend regular meetings has thought been given to how this will be resourced? There have been problems in the past with Lead officers and service officers meeting the current Area Committee requirements

### **Public involvement**

If we want local people to be involved will consideration be given to co-opting resident reps onto the Ward Forums or the 4 Area Cttees? Have we consulted any of the public on these arrangements i.e. Citizens Panel?

### **Publicity**

Increase in meetings and the nature of the business will need a good communications plan to involve and notify public.

### **Development**

Members and officers may need additional development and support with Community Leadership and engagement techniques. This may require additional resourcing.

These are the initial views of the Division. We hope to more fully contribute to the final consideration in July.

## **8. 3 Peter Morris, Marketing & Communications Director**

As you know, the Neighbourhood Governance Specialist Scrutiny Panel that looked at future options in Ealing sought comment and suggestions from me re ways in which area committees could be better communicated.

I note that the consultation document which resulted from the panel's work makes reference to these. I am concerned though that the implications for my service should these be acted on are not clear.

### **Proposal 6: Ward Newsletters**

Publishing these would have significant implications for Marketing & Communications. At the very least they would need to be designed and printed via the PrintOut team. In practise I suspect we would also get involved in editing.

Any of the options to utilise space in the Around Ealing residents' magazine would either incur additional cost (to publish more pages) which would need to come from Neighbourhood Governance budgets, or would reduce the space for other existing coverage (which is already under pressure).

The proposal to replace certain editions of Around Ealing with ward newsletters is not, in my professional opinion, conducive to maximising the impact of Council communications.

### **Section 4 Proposal 4**

The Web team in Marketing & Communications would not be able to "absorb the additional work" relating to putting forum agendas, minutes and reports on the internet. This team has had to be reduced in size from 5 to 2 posts to achieve savings targets.

Other staff across the Council are being trained to be able to prepare and post web content. This approach would have to be adopted for Neighbourhood Governance.

### **Section 6 Proposal 8**

All the costings presented are highly indicative. If ward newsletters are to be properly considered it will be necessary to prepare more more specific briefs against which accurate costings can be secured.

## **General Points**

The 2007/8 Marketing & Communications service Business Plan does not feature any allocation of resource (people, time or budget) to implementing any of the proposals presented in the Neighbourhood Governance consultation.

We recognise the attraction of improving current approaches and believe we can play an invaluable role in achieving this. We can not however do so without a shift/increase in resources and a change in priorities.

## **9. Partnership for Ealing Executive Board – extract from draft minutes 2 July 2007**

### **Neighbourhood Governance**

Councillor Liz Brookes (Ealing Council, chair of the Neighbourhood Governance Scrutiny Panel) updated the Board on the general conclusions reached by her Panel, following an extensive consultation. She reported that there was a continuing debate concerning the proposed future number of Area Committees and also how the plans for ward forums would enhance the role of local councillors.

Colette Paul (Ealing Police) confirmed that her organisation had responded to the consultation. She was in favour of the proposed four Area Committees, which coincide generally with the Police's own service delivery boundaries.

Andy Roper (Ealing Community Network) reported that an ECN sponsored workshop to discuss the proposals had produced many supportive views. He added that ward forums needed to be given real control over local issues, with clear lines of accountability.

Edmund Michaels (Ealing Refugee Forum) asked how funds would be made available at ward level. Councillor Brookes replied that significant Council resources are already allocated at area level, in addition to Area Committee's own budgets. However the proposals were not intended to be an additional cost to the Council.

Councillor Stacey believed the Panel's proposals gave a lot of information to digest. He was encouraged to learn that the planned Area Committee boundaries had the police's support.

Councillor Brookes confirmed that Panel's proposals were scheduled to be considered by the Council's Cabinet in September. There was thus still time for further comment, which should be directed to the responsible Scrutiny officer, Nigel Spalding [spaldingn@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:spaldingn@ealing.gov.uk). **All to note.** It was also noted that any agreed changes to neighbourhood governance were likely to be implemented at the start of the Council's 2008/09 municipal year.



<b>Report for:</b>  <b>ACTION</b>
<b>Item Number:</b>

Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	<b>No</b>
<b>Title</b>	Executive response to report from the Neighbourhood Governance Specialist Scrutiny Panel
<b>Responsible Officer(s)</b>	Graeme McDonald, Director of Policy and Performance, 020 8825 7485 <a href="mailto:mcdonaldg@ealing.gov.uk">mcdonaldg@ealing.gov.uk</a>
<b>Author(s)</b>	David Colley, Policy Officer, 020 8825 5833 <a href="mailto:colleyd@ealing.gov.uk">colleyd@ealing.gov.uk</a>
<b>Portfolio(s)</b>	Leader of Council (Cllr Jason Stacey)
<b>For Consideration By</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date to be Considered</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2007
<b>Implementation Date if Not Called In</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2007
<b>Affected Wards</b>	All
<b>Area Committees</b>	All
<b>Keywords/Index</b>	Neighbourhood governance, area committees, ward forums

**Purpose of Report:**

This report considers the work of the recent Neighbourhood Governance Specialist Scrutiny Panel and makes recommendations to take neighbourhood governance proposals forward.

## **1 Recommendations**

- 1.1 It is recommended that Cabinet instruct the Director of Policy & Performance, working with the Director of Legal & Democratic Services, to bring back to a future meeting of Cabinet a series of proposals based on the following principles:
  - 1.1.1 Any new structure for neighbourhood governance in the borough is centred around ward councillors;
  - 1.1.2 That £40k of capital funding is made available to each ward and that this is expended taking into account the recommendations of ward councillors, who will utilise and develop informal and formal networks to consult local people. Existing Area Committees' current revenue budgets (£80k) and current capital budgets (£280k) may be used to address any support resource requirements;
  - 1.1.3 The current Area Committee structures are abolished and their community involvement role is transferred to ward councillors;
  - 1.1.4 Where cross-ward initiatives or projects are being considered, councillors from different wards will be encouraged to work together to develop bespoke consultative arrangements and make joint recommendations;
  - 1.1.5 The Director of Marketing and Communications work with ward councillors to develop protocols for local publicity materials; and develop a format for ward newsletters to publicise key meeting dates and consultations;
  - 1.1.6 Appropriate and affordable governance arrangements in relation to decision-making and financial/resource controls are put in place, whilst allowing the new ward arrangements to operate in a flexible and responsive way, and;
  - 1.1.7 Consider the comments and feedback from the meeting of OSC on 8<sup>th</sup> November. Owing to the deadlines for submission of reports to Cabinet, officers will table these comments as a separate paper.

## **2. Reason for Decision and Options Considered**

- 2.1 On 26<sup>th</sup> June Cabinet considered and made recommendations on the draft scrutiny panel report and recommendations on Neighbourhood Governance, as part of that panel's consultation. The report to Cabinet noted that there was substantial and detailed further work to be undertaken, particularly in relation to value for money considerations. Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> July agreed the panel's report and this document proposes a response to that final scrutiny report.
- 2.2 The principle of delegated decision-making and budgets can play an important role in galvanising local interest and involvement. However, this aim needs to be balanced against the requirement to obtain value for money from any new arrangements and the need to ensure strategic co-ordination across

the borough and maintain economies of scale. It is also important that any solution creates the correct balance between flexible local structures and robust corporate governance. This report makes recommendations that will enhance the role of ward members whilst ensuring additional expenditure is directed to locally determined projects.

- 2.3 Whilst Area Committees in Ealing have sought to provide a local focus and input into the democratic process, it is widely viewed that the current structures for local governance have failed to develop public engagement as intended. Additionally, the success of Area Committees has been compromised because the strictures within they operate has often led to slow and unwieldy decisions making. This report makes recommendations that aim to address these issues.

### 3. Key Implications

- 3.1 This report recommends a “light touch”, grass-roots approach to the implementation of the scrutiny panel’s neighbourhood governance arrangements in Ealing that keeps bureaucracy to a minimum. The recommended approach will build on the key recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel report. The proposals would involve:

- 3.1.1 Abolishing the current Area Committee structures;
- 3.1.2 Placing ward councillors at the centre of an informal system of local involvement in, and influence on, decision making;
- 3.1.3 Harnessing local knowledge and enthusiasm, whilst avoiding unpopular and resource-hungry committee meetings, and,
- 3.1.4 Ensuring that funds earmarked for local determination are expended efficiently and effectively.

- 3.2 This approach **is recommended** because:

- 3.2.1 The current Area Committee structure is not generally viewed as operating either efficiently or effectively in most areas.
- 3.2.2 Funding would be directed towards local projects rather than funding support structures;
- 3.2.3 Ward councillors would be placed at the heart of the approach, developing their role as community leaders in their area. These proposals offer opportunities to link in with the Community Call for Action, which is the subject of a separate report being considered by OSC on 11<sup>th</sup> October;
- 3.2.4 Local councillors would utilise their existing informal networks for consulting local people and organisations, and develop these on a “what works best” basis;

3.2.5 Recent focus group consultation has indicated little appetite for regular ward-based newsletters or inserts in Around Ealing. It is appreciated, however, that ward councillors will wish to publicise important meetings and consultations, so the possibility of a six-monthly newsletter will be explored with the Director of Marketing & Communications.

3.2.6 A model which gave the new ward structures power to make recommendations but not to take implementation decisions should result in support cost savings. The ward structures would not need to be formally clerked and minimal governance controls would be required. Technical advice and support would only be required once schemes were being recommended to go forward for decision for implementation. In this way, advice and resource spent on schemes that do not proceed due to lack of local support should be minimised.

3.3 The table below shows officer responses to each of the Specialist Scrutiny Panel report recommendations. More detailed consideration of financial and legal issues are outlined later in this report where appropriate.

	Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	Recommendations	Financial Implications	Legal Implications
1	A Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards of LB Ealing.	<b>Amend</b> – that ward members establish flexible ward forums, the format of which should suit their locality. The purpose of these forums would be to give grass roots feedback and make recommendations to Cabinet on issues in their locality.	See recommendation 4 below	Legal implications will depend upon what powers and functions are to be exercised by the forums
2	Further discussion to take place on ways in which the proposed Ward Forums might join together with the Police Ward Focus Groups, with a view to	<b>Accept</b> - subject to the implementation of Rec. 1. Ward members would be free to adopt a locally-configured approach toward consultation in their locality,	None specific	Ward members are not permitted to chair Police Ward Focus Groups



	Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	Recommendations	Financial Implications	Legal Implications
	creating one co-ordinated ward-based body in each area.	which could include engagement with other ward networks, Police Ward Focus Groups, etc.		
3	Ward councillors, in the context of Ward Forums, be empowered to make decisions on matters such as local car parking zones (CPZs), minor traffic issues, the use of localised S106 monies, small parks, sports facilities and multi-use games areas.	<b>Reject</b> – this does not represent value for money	If accepted Ward Forums would be considered ‘fully constituted meetings’ and thus require significant officer support both in relation to administration of the Forums and in technical advice on <b>all</b> options under consideration	There is currently no legal power for individual ward councillors to take decisions. A ward forum would need to be fully constituted and appropriate governance controls put in place if decision-making was to be placed at that level.  Money paid to the council under s106 agreements can only be spent strictly in accordance with the terms of the specific agreement under which it was paid. If this does not happen the council could face legal challenge and be required to repay the developer who originally provided it.
4	Each ward be allocated a budget of £30k per annum for	<b>Amend</b> - augment with a further £10k per ward to total £40k per annum	Capital budgets currently within the Area Committee remit total £280k	There is currently no legal power for ward councillors to take decisions

	Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	Recommendations	Financial Implications	Legal Implications
	expenditure by ward councillors on minor local projects within their ward (and separate from expenditure on ongoing expenditure for general schemes).	(capital for local projects) and £1k revenue for administration, venue hire, etc).	for capital. It is recommended that the bulk of the existing budget is retained within the sphere of local decision-making and is augmented with a further £640k of capital funding. This would bring the total amount of funding determined locally to <b>£920k</b> . There would also be a requirement for a further £23k revenue funding.	on such matters. Ward members would, however, be free to recommend decisions to Cabinet or portfolio holders following consultations within their wards.
5	Ward Newsletters be produced and distributed for each ward.	<b>Amend</b> – Recent focus group consultation has revealed little appetite for regular ward newsletters. It is appreciated, however, that locally determined consultations would require some publicity to encourage attendance and involvement. It is proposed that a six-monthly newsletter serve this purpose.	Ward Newsletters as proposed in the Scrutiny report would require additional funding of £80k. Further discussion with the Director of Marketing & Communications would be required to determine costs for a six-monthly newsletter. Budget would have to be identified for this before the proposal could proceed.	It is unlawful for council money to be spent on party political literature. This restriction would need to be observed within any ward newsletters.

	Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	Recommendations	Financial Implications	Legal Implications
6	A publicity strategy be developed in order to maximise awareness of, and effective public participation in, Ward Forum and Area Committee meetings.	<b>Amend</b> – that the Communications division work with ward members to: i) Maximise the impact of, and involvement in, ward-based consultation initiatives, and; ii) Determine the format and costs of providing a six-monthly Ward Newsletter.	This would require further discussion with the Director of Marketing & Communications.	Any publicity materials produced locally would need to be of a non-political nature, as per 5, above.
7	Officer posts be identified or created to support ward councillors and the work of the Ward Forums.	<b>Reject</b> – this would not be containable within existing budgets and would not represent good value for money.  This report suggests a locally-determined member driven approach to supporting ward working.	Officer support as proposed in the Scrutiny Report would require estimated net resources of £360k.  The proposals contained in this report would produce a net revenue saving as outlined in section 4 below, although further discussions are required on the technical support resources that will be required.	None specific
8	Area Committees be strategic by (a) being active in the development of corporate and area strategies (b) becoming a key channel for consultation by	<b>Reject</b> – it is felt that these issues are better dealt with at local level, where grass roots opinion can be best represented by ward councillors.	Delegating the functions of the current Area Committee structure to ward level would enable most of the £360k in officer support costs identified by the Scrutiny Report	This could be achieved within the current legislative framework.

	Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	Recommendations	Financial Implications	Legal Implications
	the executive on proposed budgets, policies and strategies (c) being equipped to monitor and comment upon service delivery in their area (d) becoming a key vehicle for constructive partnerships with other service providers and (e) taking responsibility for over-seeing area-wide issues such as regeneration and projects affecting the whole area.		to be spent directly on ward level projects.	
9	All councillors within each Area to be members of that Area Committee.	<b>Reject</b> - this would not be applicable if officer Recommendation 12 is accepted.	None	None
10	Further consideration be given as to how best to develop the Area Committees as partnership bodies, in particular between councillors, the Police and other agencies (including the NHS and voluntary sector).	<b>Reject</b> – this would not be applicable if officer Recommendation 12 is accepted.	None	A number of the functions currently exercised by Area Committees would not be legally permitted if those committees included members who were not also councillors.

	Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	Recommendations	Financial Implications	Legal Implications
11	Cabinet members should aim to attend Area Committees when key strategies are to be discussed or presentations made on major issues.	<b>Reject</b> – this would not be applicable if officer Recommendation 12 is accepted.	None	None
12	There be four Area Committees.	<b>Reject</b> - this would not be applicable if officer recommendation 12 is accepted.	Outlined in section six of the Scrutiny report and Section four of this report.	None
13	The names of the four Area Committees, and the wards that they cover, be:  <b>Acton</b> Area Committee- covering Acton Central, East Acton, Hanger Hill, South Acton and Southfield. <b>Greenford, Northolt and Perivale</b> Area Committee – covering Greenford Broadway, Greenford Green, North Greenford, Northolt Mandeville, Northolt West End and Perivale. <b>Ealing and Hanwell</b> Area Committee – covering	<b>Reject</b> – this would not be applicable if officer Recommendation 12 is accepted.	None	None

	Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	Recommendations	Financial Implications	Legal Implications
	Cleveland, Ealing Broadway, Ealing Common, Elthorne, Hobbayne, Northfields and Walpole. <b>Southall</b> Area Committee – covering Dormers Wells, Lady Margaret, Norwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green.			

3.4 Set out below are detailed responses to each of the Scrutiny Panel Report recommendations where it is advised they be rejected or amended:

- 3.4.1 **Recommendation 1** (*Ward Forum be established in all 23 wards*)  
**Recommendation 3** (*Ward Councillors be empowered to make decisions on local issues*)

Under current legislation there can be two approaches to ward-based decision making: fully constituted “committees” enabling members to make decisions on local issues; or advisory bodies reporting to another executive body (e.g. cabinet).

A fully constituted committee with full decision making powers requires the support of an extensive officer support structure to meet legislative requirements for access to information, to cover general governance requirements to ensure that decisions are robust in the face of legal challenge and financial audit, and to cover the need technical feasibility advice on all proposals up for consideration. This inevitably adds significantly to their cost and severely constrains the informal and flexible approach recommended by the Panel.

Establishing ward forums as constituted bodies would not enable the flexibility sought by the Specialist Scrutiny Panel. This approach would also offer poor value for money in relation to the additional staffing resources that would be required to administrate the 23 newly constituted forums. In the face of other competing council priorities, it is extremely unlikely that appropriate support resources could be identified.

It is therefore proposed that officers take forward the proposals based on a bureaucratically “light-touch” advisory model. Ward members already have considerable informal and formal networks with which to consult local people and organisations in their respective areas. These could be developed according to the needs of the locality in order to provide opinion and steer to decisively inform local decision making and expenditure of delegated ward budgets.

It is proposed that further proposals are worked up to empower ward councillors to make recommendations to portfolio holders or Cabinet. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for decisions to be taken by officers acting under delegated powers. The relationship between ward networks and Cabinet/portfolio holders would be codified within a protocol. This would also ensure that recommendations of ward networks support and take forward the shared objectives of the council and its partners as outlined in key strategies such as the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy. Further this proposed approach would enable Cabinet and portfolio holders to recognise and where possible support the local mandate of the ward networks.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, currently moving through Parliament, proposes a review to examine ways in which councillors can more effectively become “democratic champions” for neighbourhoods. Additionally, the Bill has a number of provisions that may impact on the ability of councillors to make decisions affecting neighbourhoods.

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services is monitoring the provisions of the Bill and will make recommendations on any new opportunities that become available following enactment of the Bill, particularly in relation to the Community Call for Action.

#### 3.4.2 **Recommendation 4** (*Each ward be allocated a budget of £30k per annum for expenditure..on minor local projects*)

Delegated decision-making and budgets can play an important role in galvanising local interest and involvement. The Scrutiny Panel recommendations would, however, dissipate much of the additional funding sought into costly support structures. Abolishing Area Committees could liberate £280k capital and £80k revenue (2007/08) allocated to the current Area Committee structure for expenditure on ward recommended projects.

The Scrutiny Report recommendation would entail an estimated financial commitment in excess of £450k annually, in addition to £690k capital funding for local projects. The net £360k estimated for administrative and technical support costs would be better directed towards local projects. Through the new proposals, it should be feasible to re-direct budgets currently determined by Area Committees to a ward level.

The proposals in this report offer revenue savings in estimated at between £17 – £57k over Scrutiny Panel recommendations, whilst allowing the amount

allocated to each ward to increase to £40k. This would represent a more efficient and value for money approach.

### 3.4.3 **Recommendations 5 & 6** (*Ward newsletters and publicity strategy*)

During the summer focus group research was undertaken with Ealing residents that indicated little support for localised newsletters or articles in Around Ealing. It is therefore recommended that such an option requires further investigation before expenditure is committed. A better approach within the context of the simplified proposals outlined above would be to explore with residents support for a six-monthly ward newsletter, the purpose of which would be to:

- Inform local people of meetings or events related to ward based consultations;
- Seek views on local issues;
- Advise local people about how ward based budgets have been allocated.

In relation to a communications strategy for ward based work, local members should be free to determine their own publicity according to local needs. It should be noted that any publicity materials funded through public funds cannot lawfully be of a political nature. It may be prudent to put in place some support or monitoring systems to ensure that this requirement is being followed. Protocols and design templates to facilitate this, and training could be provided to those producing the newsletters.

Publishing ward newsletters would have a considerable impact on the workload of the Marketing and Communications department. This would include writing and editing in addition to design and print commissioning. Capacity does not exist to tackle this additional work within current team resources, and resource would have to be identified before the proposal could proceed.

### 3.4.4 **Recommendation 7 - 13** (*Relating to the establishment and servicing of strategic Area Committees/Ward Forums*)

The proposals for strategic Area Committees as outlined in the Scrutiny Report would require six FTE staff to support members and deal with the administration of Ward Forums (Recommendation 7). The report to Cabinet in August indicated that the equivalent of one-and-a-half FTE staff are engaged in servicing the current structure. Assuming a member of staff can be assimilated into one of the new roles, this would equate to the creation of five additional posts. This would require additional revenue funding of £315k p.a for the provision of administrative support. It is not felt that this would represent an efficient use of resources.

It is appreciated, however, that ward forums will require some administrative support, even if established as informal networks. It is proposed, therefore, that each ward forum receives an annual £1k revenue allowance to cover the following costs:



- Minuting of ward meetings as required;
- Hire of halls or other meeting venues;
- Stationery and materials, refreshments at meetings, etc.

The financial implications of this proposal have been fully considered in the Financial Summary below.

Equally, informal ward meetings are likely to require specialist or technical advice from officers from time-to-time. It is proposed that a protocol is developed between ward members and senior officers to provide a guide to occasions when officer attendance would be appropriate. If officers were required to attend ward meetings regularly then this could not be accommodated within existing resources.

The new expanded strategic role for area committees (Recommendation 8) is potentially the most significant change proposed by the Panel, and could fundamentally alter the way the council makes decisions and develops strategy. The proposal creates a remit for area committees which covers all services that the council, and its partners, provide. While potentially increasing engagement, it may also lead to a slowing down of decision making in these areas. This approach will be very new to Ealing and is one which has been tried with mixed fortunes elsewhere (e.g. Brent, Tower Hamlets and Birmingham). A comprehensive and agreed strategic vision across statutory partners already exists for the borough in the form of the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, which have been developed following extensive consultation. There is a significant risk that strategic Area Committees would undermine progress towards the council's vision.

In respect of Recommendation 9, larger area committees that included all councillors from that area would lead to up to 22 councillors sitting on some committees. It is felt that such an approach would be unmanageable and not conducive to effective decision-making.

Recommendations 10 – 13 would not be applicable assuming strategic Area Committees are not adopted, but it should be noted that Recommendation 10 (relating to partnership working with other agencies) could equally, and possibly more effectively, be achieved through ward working. Police Ward Focus Groups, for example, already function at a ward level giving ample opportunity for synergistic working.

- 3.5 In summary, strong and empowered ward members with a flexible mandate and local budgets would provide a more efficient and responsive catalyst for wider community involvement.

#### **4. Financial**

- 4.1 As advised in the June Cabinet report, implementation of the proposals contained in the Special Scrutiny Panel report has significant financial implications. These are outlined in section six of the Scrutiny report. To

summarise, the total costs of the Scrutiny Panel recommendations are estimated in excess of £1.1m annually, which will depend on approval of additional funding for costs of servicing the 23 Ward Forums. This additional funding would need to be included as a growth item in the budget setting process for 2008/09.

- 4.2 Effectively, our amended proposals divert administrative costs into local project budgets and therefore offer significantly enhanced value for money. They would require additional capital funding of £640k along with already budgeted £280k diverted from Area Committee capital budgets – total being £920k capital funding for ward projects. Annual revenue costs are being reviewed and are not expected to require additional annual funding on top of existing £80k Area Committee revenue budgets.
- 4.3 Assumptions for ward working arrangements are that technical support and advice could be provided from within existing resources. If in practice this is not possible, or if wards demand additional information, then those costs will increase.
- 4.4 The table below sets out funding requirements for the Scrutiny proposals compared to those based upon this paper’s recommendations, and whether they are additional to, or contained within, existing budgets:

Activity	Description	Scrutiny Recommendations			Officer Recommendations		
		Total Cost	Existing Budgets	Growth Required	Total Cost	Existing Budgets	Growth Required
1	<b>Ward budgets for local projects</b> £30k proposed by Scrutiny Report/£40k proposed by this report	£690k capital.	Area Committees:  £280k capital  £80k revenue (2006/07)	£410k capital	£920k capital	£280k capital	£640k capital

Activity	Description	Scrutiny Recommendations			Officer Recommendations		
		Total Cost	Existing Budgets	Growth Required	Total Cost	Existing Budgets	Growth Required
2	<u>Ward-working administrative support</u> a) Committee Section support to ward forums as indicated by Scrutiny Panel Report b) £1k revenue funding per ward to provide minute taking, administrative support and venue costs as outlined in this report	£360k p.a  N/a	Estimated @ £45k approx.	£315k p.a	N/a  £23k	£80k revenue (2006/07)	Nil
3	<u>Ward forums printing</u> For recommendations of this report these are contained within item 2 above	£21k additional funding p.a	N/a	£21k p.a	Tbc	N/a	Tbc
4	<u>Venue costs</u> For recommendations of this report these are contained within item 2 above	£14k additional funding p.a.	N/a	£14k p.a	N/a	N/a	Nil

Activity	Description	Scrutiny Recommendations			Officer Recommendations		
		Total Cost	Existing Budgets	Growth Required	Total Cost	Existing Budgets	Growth Required
5	Ward newsletters As proposed in Scrutiny Report – requires further work by Director of Marketing & Communications (Two six-monthly editions accommodated within proposals of this report)	£61k - £78k p.a.	Nil	£61k - £78k p.a	£0 to £40k	£80k revenue (2006/07)	Nil
	<u>Totals</u>	£690k capital/ £456k- £473k revenue	£280k capital/ £125k revenue	£410k capital/ £331k- £348k revenue	£920k capital/ £23k to £63k revenue	£280k capital/ £80k revenue)	£640k capital/ £57k to £17k revenue saving)

## 5. Legal

- 5.1 The council's constitution will require amendment in order to implement most of the recommendations of this report. There are statutory consultation requirements for this, and the final decision must be made by full council.
- 5.2 There are access to information rules which impose upon the council strict agenda and minute publication requirements whenever decisions are made by committee. In practice, this necessitates a skilled and professional officer corps to administer and clerk such decision-making committees. Most of these access to information rules will not apply to informal advisory bodies.

5.3 It should be noted that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill currently passing through Parliament recommends further work in relation to the role and empowerment of individual members. The Director of Legal & Democratic Services will be exploring the implications and opportunities of this emerging area of legislation.

## **6. Value For Money**

6.1 After careful evaluation, it is felt that the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel report do not represent good value for money as currently configured. This is because the bulk of the additional costs of the Scrutiny proposals would fund administrative arrangements. It is considered that the proposals outlined in this report represent a better compromise between the aims of the Scrutiny Panel Report and value for money considerations.

## **7. Risk Management**

7.1 The new expanded strategic role for area committees proposed by the Panel would fundamentally alter the way the organisation makes decisions and develops strategy. Whilst potentially increasing member engagement the proposal creates a remit for area committees which covers all services provided by the council, and potentially those of most of its partners. This approach will be very new to Ealing and is one that has been tried elsewhere with mixed fortunes. There is a significant risk posed by this approach in relation to strategic co-ordination and economies of scale. It may also lead to a slowing down of decision making.

7.2 It should also be noted that rejection of the proposals in this report, and the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations, would mean that concerns about the current functioning of Area Committees and the role, influence and contribution of non-Cabinet members would go unaddressed.

## **8. Community Safety**

None

## **9. Links to Strategic Objectives**

9.1 Neighbourhood governance potentially impacts on the following Strategic Objectives:

- Environment, housing and culture - to make Ealing a better place to live
- Safety - to make Ealing one of the safest places in London
- Organisational improvement - becoming a high performing organisation, focussed on the needs of its communities

## **10. Equalities and Community Cohesion**

10.1 No Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in relation to the recommendations of this report, nor those of the Specialist Scrutiny Panel.

Any equalities or community cohesion issues will need to be considered during the implementation of those recommendations which are agreed.

11. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation Implications

11.1 These are currently unknown but will be explored before final proposals are made.

12. **Property and Assets**

None.

13. **Any Other Implications**

None.

14. **Consultation**

14.1 Extensive discussion has taken place at senior officer level in the production of this report.

14.2 The Neighbourhood Governance Scrutiny Panel consulted with key stakeholders on its initial proposals before the production of its final report and recommendations. Details are contained in section 1.5 (p6) of the full Scrutiny Panel Report at Appendix A.

15. Timetable for Implementation

15.1 Assuming the recommendations set out in this paper are adopted, the indicative key next steps include:

Activity	Date	Responsible Officer
<b>Governance milestones:</b>		
Cabinet response to scrutiny recommendations	13th November	Director of Policy and Performance
Cabinet agree budget allocation proposal for ward budgets	29th January	Director of Strategic Finance
Full Council agree constitutional changes required	22 <sup>nd</sup> April	Director of Legal & Democratic Services
Re-assessment of Officer support for current Area Committee structure	1st May	Director of Policy and Performance
<b>Legal Considerations:</b>		
Establish governance & reporting framework for ward based decision making, including amendments to council standing orders as necessary.	January 2008	Director of Legal & Democratic Services

Activity	Date	Responsible Officer
Examine any new freedoms that may result from the review of member decision-making emanating from the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Bill	June 2008	Director of Legal & Democratic Services
<b>Financial Considerations:</b>		
Develop detailed audit and reporting arrangements for delegated Ward Development Budgets	January 2008	Director of Policy and Performance
Develop detailed costs for any new Ward newsletter & associated publicity	March 2008	Director of Marketing & Communications
<b>Marketing &amp; Communications:</b>		
Discuss and develop proposals for ward-based annual newsletters	Jan 2008	Director of Marketing & Communications
Complete and consult on protocols for ward based consultation materials	March 2008	Director of Marketing & Communications
<b>Miscellaneous:</b>		
Undertake consultation with staff/trades unions if required	December 2007 – March 2008	Director of Legal & Democratic Services
Discuss new arrangements with statutory partners	December 2007 – March 2008	Director of Policy & Performance

## 16. Appendices

### **Appendix A:**

Final report of the Neighbourhood Governance Specialist Scrutiny Panel 2006/7.

## 17. Background Information

Agendas, minutes and reports of the Neighbourhood Governance Specialist Panel 2006/2007.